For the Love of Snuffles

by DamnGoodCoffee1

Summary

What would have happened if Harry was actually expelled from Hogwarts before his fifth year, and went to live with Sirius? Order of the Phoenix AU, Harry/Sirius slash

Notes

There isn't enough Harry/Sirius out there, here is my take on it! This fic is already on ff.net so you may have read it already, but if this is new to you I hope you enjoy and please let me know if you like it
Chapter 1

Everything was black. Confusing flashes of colour and light came from different directions, but he couldn’t tell where he was. Something dark and terrible was here, and he wanted to get out. Another flash of colour, and he thought he could make out piles of gold and jewels before it all went dark again. The blackness felt like it was swarming around him like a thick, oppressive fog. Through the vapour he saw the distant outline of something like a necklace, which morphed into a crown.

Suddenly, the scene changed and he was running down an empty corridor towards a door at the end, but the door wasn’t getting any closer. He reached out his arm, stretching forwards, but it pulled further away. Feeling a sense of urgency building, he quickened his pace but to no avail. Dark shadows crept in from every angle, filling him with dread, and he awoke suddenly in a cold sweat.

Opening his eyes, Harry Potter gazed at the plain white ceiling of his bedroom in Number 4, Privet Drive, and tried to catch his breath. This was just one of many similar dreams he had been having over the course of the summer. The dreams were suffocating, terrifying, and he always woke up drenched in sweat with a feeling of terror upon him that took hours to shake off.

Harry Potter was not your average teenager. He had jet black hair, which stood up at the back and refused to do what it was told. This contrasted startlingly with his pale skin and bright green eyes. The thin, lightning bolt scar on his forehead stood out clearly on his forehead this morning, a darker red than usual as if it was sore.

Harry shivered, and turned over to look at the time. 4:48am. Sighing, he turned over again and tried to get comfortable. There was no point getting up yet, not until his aunt rapped on the door at 6:00am sharp and commanded him to come down and cook the breakfast. If it wasn’t for his family bossing him around, Harry wasn’t sure he would summon the effort to even get out of bed. What was the point? He still had no idea when he was going to be able to leave this place, no idea where the others were or what was happening in the wizarding world, no idea what Voldemort was doing now that he had returned to full power.

Ron and Hermione had been sending letters of course, but every time he received one Harry was left feeling unfulfilled and disappointed. The letters were empty of news, empty of anything that would give Harry comfort. It was obvious they were together, wherever they were, and having fun without him. At least the letters from Sirius had been much more comforting, even if it was obvious he wasn’t allowed to tell Harry anything important via post either.

As Harry lay in bed thinking absentmindedly about what on earth Voldemort was up to, he heard the distinctive sound of scratching at the window and sat bolt upright to see an owl looking impatiently through his window at him. He leapt out of bed immediately and bounded to the window, gently opening it up as quietly as he could and ushering the owl into his room. Offering the owl some treats, he extricated the letter from it and unfurled it, a grin spreading on his face when he recognised his godfather’s handwriting.

Dear Harry,

I hope you’re still holding up ok with those muggles. I know it must be frustrating for you, not knowing what’s going on out there, but I promise I’ll tell you what I can as soon as I see you. Just try not to attract attention and whatever you do, DON’T USE MAGIC!! It really shouldn’t be long now, and we’ll be able to see each other again! Miss you.

Love Snuffles

Harry read and reread the letter, smiling fondly. The letter, of course, didn’t hold any news but he was used to that by now. It was still nice to know that someone out there cared about him, and understood the frustration he was feeling at the moment. Harry carefully tucked the letter under the loose floorboard with his other letters, and climbed back onto his bed. The clock now said 5.23am, and Harry resigned himself to the fact that he wasn’t going to get any more sleep.

Harry kicked at the ground, shouting at the top of his lungs until he felt like they were ripped to shreds. He glanced up to see a mother with a pram looking at him nervously and quickening her pace as she rushed away from him. Sneering moodily, Harry sat back down on the swing and rocked slowly backwards and forwards, staring at the dead, yellowing grass at his feet.
The injustice of it all was simply infuriating, why on earth was Harry still here, none the wiser, when he was the one that saw Voldemort return in the first place? He was the one that was tied up in that graveyard and tortured, he was the one who saw Cedric murdered in front of his own eyes, and yet Dumbledore had conveniently forgotten him and left him here to feel isolated for weeks on end. Feeling the anger bubbling up inside him again, Harry took a deep calming breath and tried to think about something else.

He looked up and saw a group of teenagers walking boisterously past the park, smoking and laughing together. The vast figure at the front of the group could only be his cousin, Dudley. Sighing, Harry got up and slowly walked after them, knowing that if Dudley was going home then he should too if he didn’t want to be burdened with all the chores tomorrow.

Harry walked surreptitiously behind the group until they all split up, then he fell into step with his cousin. Dudley gave him a suspicious look, but kept on walking silently, shooting occasional glances nervously at him.

“What’s the matter, Big D? Scared of me?” Harry sneered at him, knowing it was stupid to rile him up but he was full of anger and needed to take it out somehow. Dudley ignored him, speeding up slightly in an attempt to walk away from him but Harry was having none of that.

“You’re not so brave when you’re not backed up by your group of mates, are you? I heard you beat up a 10 year old last week. Pathetic.” Harry watched with satisfaction as Dudley’s cheeks flushed with anger.

“You don’t know anything, you freak. He was giving me cheek, so I showed him who’s boss around here.” Dudley angrily responded, clenching his fists. Harry knew that Dudley would give anything to punch him right now, but there was no way he would do it.

They entered the dark alleyway between Wisteria Walk and Magnolia Crescent, the place where Harry had first seen Sirius. It was dank, gloomy, and the only light Harry could see was the twinkling of the distant stars in the sky. It felt good to let out his frustration on Dudley, when he had been harbouring it all day.

“You think you’re so big and powerful, carrying that thing around with you,” Dudley said, breaking the tense silence.

“What, you mean this?” Harry replied, pulling out his wand and twirling it between his fingers. Dudley looked sideways at it, a terrified expression on his face.

“Don’t you dare use that thing on me!”

“Why shouldn’t I?”

“You’re not allowed, that freak school of yours will chuck you out.”

“How do you know they haven’t changed the rules?” Harry grinned at him. Dudley muttered something under his breath and stopped walking.

“You’re not so brave at night, are you? I hear you screaming in your sleep, ‘Help me Mum, Dad, they killed Cedric, they killed him!’ Who’s Cedric, your boyfriend?” Dudley grinned at him, clearly feeling that he’d got the upper hand. Harry stared at him, his face white, anger pulsing through his veins.

“Don’t you dare mention that again, you have no idea what you’re talking about!” Harry began angrily, but suddenly he felt a cold chill descend upon him and he stopped talking at once.

Darkness was pressing around them, chasing them down from both ends of the alleyway. Harry breathed out and saw his breath mist in front of him, he was suddenly freezing and filled with a cold fear. Not here…not in Little Whinging, surely? He looked up and saw that the stars appeared to have gone out. Harry listened carefully, but suddenly all he could hear was Dudley shouting.

“What are you doing? Why is it so cold, stop it!”

“I’m not doing anything, I swear!” Harry shouted back. In the silence that followed, Harry could hear the distinctive rattling breath in the darkness behind him, and he raised his wand in his shaking hand.

“Expecto patronum,” Harry said, his voice weak and shaky. A small white cloud erupted from his wand and immediately disappeared. “Expecto patronum!” he shouted this time, his voice clearer, but the patronus still didn’t come. Horrible thoughts were starting to take over and he heard Dudley whimpering in the back ground. Scrunching up his face, Harry tried hard to think of a happy thought. The face of Sirius appeared in his mind, followed by Ron and Hermione. He was going back to Sirius soon, he was going to be with people who cared about him, and he shouted
out the spell with Sirius’s face in his mind.

“EXPECTO PATRONUM!” Harry shouted, and a large silver stag erupted from his wand and raced down the alley, chasing away the dementor that had been inches away from Harry’s face. He looked down the alleyway and saw Dudley on the floor down the other end, a second dementor edging towards him with its scaly, scabby hand outstretched. Harry pointed his wand down the alley and the stag chased after it, pushing it away from Dudley with its antlers and then racing back towards Harry before disappearing.

The stars twinkled back one by one, and Harry walked wearily towards Dudley to see how he was. He was laying on the floor, face pale and clammy, a look of terror plastered onto his face. As Harry briefly considered leaving him in the alley and walking home, he saw the figure of Mrs Figg his elderly neighbour at the end of the alleyway and hastened to put away his wand.

“Don’t put it away, you silly boy, what if there are more of them? Oh, I’m going to kill Mundungus!”
Harry stood at the door to Privet Drive, sagging under the weight of his cousin Dudley, whom he was currently attempting to hold up. It seemed that after the dementor attack he was almost at the point of fainting, and he seemed most reluctant to talk or even attempt to walk by himself.

After the surprise of his neighbour Mrs Figg turning up and apparently knowing what dementors were, Harry had questioned her and found that she was a squib. This had been almost as surprising as being attacked by dementors in the sleepy muggle town of Little Whinging, especially considering he had gone to stay with her every year when the Dursleys were busy celebrating Dudley’s birthday or going on holiday without him. Of course, the Dursleys wouldn’t have left Harry with her if they’d known he was enjoying himself, Mrs Figg had told him, so that was how it had to be.

However, Harry now had more pressing issues to think about than the fact that his neighbour was a squib. He had used illegal magic, he was currently trying to support his almost unconscious cousin while he waited for someone to open the door, and he had no idea what was going to happen next. Would the Ministry of Magic try to expel him? His thoughts were cut short as the door was opened and he was deafened by the piercing scream his aunt let out.

“DIDDYKINS! What happened?” She screeched, looking in horror at Dudley’s face which had turned a pale shade of green. Dudley took a shaky step forwards, and then promptly vomited all over the doorstep.

“VERNON! VERNON, COME HERE!” Petunia yelled at the top of her lungs. As Vernon arrived at the doorstep and started to help Dudley into the house, Harry slipped in behind them and sneaked towards the stairs, hoping to avoid detection. Sadly, this did not happen, as Dudley chose this moment to regain the use of his voice.

“It was him…he did something to me…” Dudley whispered hoarsely, pointing a fat hand in Harry’s direction.

“GET IN HERE, BOY!” Uncle Vernon shouted, loud enough to rattle the ornaments on the mantelpiece. Harry reluctantly turned around and walked into the kitchen where Dudley had been ushered into a chair, and was now having a wet towel applied to his forehead by an anxious Petunia.

“What?” Said Harry rudely, not caring anymore. He just wanted to get upstairs and be by himself so he could wrap his brain around what on earth had happened this evening.

“You know what!” Shouted Vernon, moustache bristling in anger. “You did something to Dudley, didn’t you? Admit it!” His face was turning red, his little piggy eyes screwed up as he squinted at Harry.
“I didn’t do anything.” Harry said flatly, knowing full well that they wouldn’t believe him.

“LIAR!”

“I’m not lying!” Harry yelled back, getting angry now.

“TELL ME WHAT YOU DID TO HIM!” Vernon was apoplectic with rage now, his face quickly turning from red to a dark shade of purple. Harry stared at him, his own anger bubbling and starting to reach the surface. He watched with satisfaction as the lights started flickering, and objects starting smashing around the room. Vernon walked towards him, hands outstretched as if to strike him, and Harry let out another wave of anger. The light bulb above Vernon’s head smashed, glass showering down on his head, and an invisible shield appeared between the two of them so that Vernon couldn’t touch him. With one last glare at his uncle, Harry turned and walked upstairs to his room, trying to calm down. Doing any more magic was not going to help him at this stage.

As Harry entered his room, he saw two owls sitting on his windowsill and he quickly walked over to let them in. One of them pushed forwards in front of the other, and Harry relieved it of its letter. The owl immediately flew back out of the window, so it apparently wasn’t waiting for a reply. Feeling apprehensive, Harry opened it up and read the letter:

Dear Mr Potter,

We have received intelligence that you performed the Patronus Charm at twenty-three minutes past nine this evening in a Muggle-inhabited area and in the presence of a Muggle. The severity of this breach of the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery has resulted in your expulsion from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Ministry representatives will be calling at your place of residence shortly to destroy your wand.

As you have already received an official warning for a previous offense under section 13 of the International Confederation of Wizards’ Statute of Secrecy, we regret to inform you that your presence is required at a disciplinary hearing at the Ministry of Magic at 9 a.m. on August 12th.

Hoping you are well,

Yours sincerely,

Mafalda Hopkirk

Improper Use of Magic Office

Ministry of Magic

Harry stared blankly at the parchment. Expelled? He wasn’t going back to Hogwarts? His heart dropped into his stomach, he felt sick and numb. Everything around him seemed to have faded away, and the only thing he could think about was that one line of the letter. ‘...has resulted in your expulsion from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry’. Harry gulped, and looked back at the letter in an almost dreamlike state.
He read the next line, and came back to his senses slightly. ‘Ministry representatives will be calling at your place of residence shortly to destroy your wand’. Harry’s heart, which he felt had almost stopped, started pounding furiously in his chest. He couldn’t let anyone destroy his wand. Whether he was expelled from Hogwarts or not, he needed his wand. There was no way he could let anyone destroy it. That meant he had only one option – to run away from Privet Drive, to never come back, to hide from the Ministry for as long as it took. It was with these terrifying thoughts running through Harry’s mind that he suddenly cried out in pain and looked down at his hand. He had been nipped sharply by the remaining owl that he had completely forgotten about. Quickly, Harry took the letter from its beak and offered it some owl treats. It graciously accepted, then turned and flew out of the window.

Picking up the letter with a shaking hand, Harry reluctantly opened it up and began reading:

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

_Arthur Weasley_

Harry let out a long breath that he didn’t realise he had been holding. Dumbledore was trying to sort everything out. Did that mean there was a slim chance he could go back to Hogwarts again? Did Dumbledore actually have any influence over the Ministry of Magic? A tiny seed of hope bloomed in Harry’s chest, hardly daring to believe that this could still turn out ok. He supposed it would be best to stay put, like Mr. Weasley had mentioned. He would only get into more trouble if he attempted to run away, although he didn’t really want to stay here and wait for the Ministry to come knocking on his door either.

Sighing, Harry lay back on his bed to think, however he was interrupted a moment later by another owl tapping on his window. Harry got up slowly, wondering what it could possibly be this time. He gently took the letter from the owl, and watched it fly away into the night. Glancing down at the letter, Harry was pleased to see his godfather’s writing on it.

_Dear Harry,_

_Arthur just told me what happened, I hope you’re ok. Dumbledore will try to sort it all out, so try not to worry too much. Remember, DON’T LEAVE THE HOUSE! I don’t want the Ministry or anything else out there to get to you._

_Love Snuffles_

Harry smiled a little. At least Sirius was comforting, even if the letter was short and to the point. He flopped down on the bed again, closing his eyes and letting his thoughts wander. The happy feeling from Sirius’ letter immediately started to drain away as panic took over. What if he never got to go back to Hogwarts? He would have no education, he would be left behind while Ron and Hermione went off together and forgot about him. The upsetting thoughts spun round and round in Harry’s head as he lay back on his bed, and after a while he drifted into a restless sleep.

He was running again, always running, the dark corridor around him feeling claustrophobic and restricting. A door loomed at the end of the corridor and he raced towards it, feeling like the most important thing was behind that door and he would have important knowledge if he just managed to open it and get into that room…he reached the door and rattled the handle but it was locked, and he kicked at it furiously, fruitlessly, until his surrounding melted into something entirely
His frustration ebbing away immediately into a feeling of panic and fear, Harry saw the now familiar darkness with hints of gold and sparkling jewels flashing into his vision every now and then. Dread filled every fibre of Harry’s being, and he could only stand and watch as he saw a hideous vision of a giant black snake twisting and writhing out of a ghostly book. Blood dripped from the hole that gaped in the middle of the book, and glistened on the teeth of the monstrous serpent. It was with that horrifying image that Harry awoke suddenly in a cold sweat.

Rolling over, Harry caught his breath and sighed, wondering when these terrifying dreams would stop. To distract himself, Harry decided he had to write back to Sirius and try to find out when he was getting out of here. Everything had turned on its head, and he needed to know what was happening as soon as possible.

Sitting at his desk, Harry pulled paper and a quill towards him and started to scratch out a message.

_Dear Snuffles,_

_Ok so I’ve been attacked by dementors and I’m probably expelled from Hogwarts. What the hell is happening?! I need to know when I’m getting out of here, please tell me I can come and stay with you soon. Thanks for your letter, it’s nice to know at least someone out there cares how I feel about all of this._

_See you soon, I hope!_  

_Love Harry_

Harry beckoned Hedwig down from her roost on top of his wardrobe, and sent her off with the letter to Sirius. He hoped for the good of his sanity that Sirius would write back to him soon. Settling down on his bed, Harry resigned himself to a long wait, and drifted back off to sleep.
Harry lay on his bed, in an almost catatonic state. It had been three days, three long days since the incident with the dementors. No letter had arrived from Sirius, or from anyone else for that matter. The last three days had been spent in alternating moods. One minute it was extreme anger at himself, Dumbledore, Ron and Hermione, the Dursleys and just about anyone else he could think of. The rest of the time he would be lying on his bed, unresponsive for hours on end, gazing at the ceiling listlessly. He was thinking about what on earth was going on in the wizarding world to cause dementors to turn up at his home in Little Whinging, and what Voldemort was up to if he wasn’t out killing and torturing muggles.

Heaving a sigh, Harry wondered why Sirius still hadn’t written back to him. Had he given up on Harry, just like everyone else seemed to have? It didn’t seem much to ask, for even a small note telling him what was happening now. Was he still going to be expelled from Hogwarts? Had Dumbledore managed to sort anything out with the Ministry? A feeling of anxiety immediately settled over Harry as he thought about the idea of never going back to Hogwarts, but he was pulled away from his thoughts a moment later by Uncle Vernon rapping on his door.

“We’re going out.”

“What?”

“I said, we’re going out.”

“Fine.”

“I’m locking you in your room, so you can’t touch anything.”

“Whatever.”

Vernon squinted his eyes at Harry suspiciously, obviously wondering about his lack of response. The truth was, Harry honestly didn’t care about anything the Dursleys did at this point. What did it matter to him? He watched uninterestedly as Vernon walked back out of his room and a moment later he heard the click of the lock.

It could have been a minute later or an hour later, he had lost track of time, but Harry was suddenly aware of the sound of voices downstairs. The voices definitely didn’t belong to the Dursleys. His interest sparked, Harry jumped off his bed and grabbed his wand, cautiously creeping towards the door. Whoever was downstairs, it was apparent that they were getting closer. Harry crept closer to the door, heart racing, trying to hear what the voices were saying. Just as he got within a foot of the door his lock clicked open and he jumped back, cat like, as the door swung open towards him.

Harry stared out of his door in shock at the crowd of people that were standing in the Dursleys’ hallway. At the front was Mad Eye Moody, his (supposed) old professor. Next to him was Remus Lupin, and clamouring behind them were a few other people that Harry had never seen before. He looked in confusion at Remus, who took pity on him and stepped forwards.

“Harry, it’s good to see you again! We’re here to rescue you,” he smiled at Harry, extending a
hand for him to shake. Harry shook it and stared in wonder, lost for words.

“I…it’s great to see you too, professor! What’s happening, why are there so many people here?”

“You can call me Remus, Harry, I’m not your professor anymore after all. When we put forward
the idea to come and get you from the Dursleys, the idea seemed very popular…” Remus tailed
off, glancing in amusement at the assortment of bashful wizards and witches behind him. “Let me
introduce you to everyone. This is Nymphadora Tonks,” Remus said, pointing at a young witch
with bright purple hair standing next to him. She scowled at Remus.

“It’s Tonks!”

“Ok, Tonks. She prefers to be known by her last name.”

“So would you, if your parents had called you Nymphadora,” she said testily, “nice to meet you
Harry.” Harry smiled at her, then turned his attention back to Remus as he began to introduce
everyone else, pointing to everyone in turn.

“This is Elphias Doge, Kingsley Shacklebolt, Emeline Vance, Dedalus Diggle, Hestia Jones,
Sturgis Podmore and Mad Eye Moody.”

Harry smiled nervously at all of them in turn, overwhelmed by the large crowd that seemed to be
standing far too close to him.

“Alright everyone, we need to get going. Harry, get your suitcase packed and meet us downstairs
in 5 minutes,” Moody growled at Harry in his deep scratchy voice. With one last glance at the
group, Harry turned and grabbed his trunk, throwing everything into it hastily. Somehow
managing to cram the lid shut, Harry dragged his trunk down the stairs, wincing at the loud bang it
made on every step.

Entering the kitchen, Harry saw the group of people crowded around staring in awe and confusion
at the assortment of muggle appliances around the room. Tonks looked particularly puzzled by the
dishwasher, and Dedalus Diggle was poking the microwave with his wand, apparently fascinated.
Remus turned and saw Harry standing awkwardly in the doorway, and ushered him into the room.

“We’re just waiting for the signal, Harry, and then we’ll be off. Get your broom ready,” Remus
advised, and Harry pulled out his Firebolt.

“Wow, a Firebolt!” Tonks said in an awed voice, and Harry grinned at her.

“There’s the first signal!” Moody growled, pointing out the window at a shower of red sparks in
the sky. Everyone exited the room and stood in the back garden, mounted on their brooms and
waiting with bated breath. Harry saw his breath misting in front of him and felt the chill air around
him, wishing he had thought to put on a thicker coat. It was too late now, however, and with a
shower of green sparks in the sky Moody called out the signal for them all to take off.

If it had been cold on the ground, it was nothing to how it felt in the air. Harry felt as though he
was going to be frozen to his broom in a minute, and his hands had already become numb.
Adrenaline pumping through his veins, Harry followed the twists and turns of the group as they attempted to avoid detection by any muggles that happened to be looking up. Luckily it was a dark night with no moon, and they were fairly hidden against the black backdrop of the winter night sky.

After what felt like hours to Harry, with the freezing wind whipping at his frozen face, Moody called for them to start the descent. They flew downwards, the tiny lights of the city looming up towards them as they rushed towards the ground. Coming to a halt, they landed in a small square in what seemed to be the outskirts of London. Harry looked around, mildly confused at the location and wondering why they were here.

As he stood somewhat awkwardly, Moody shepherded them all across the square to stand in between two gloomy houses. Harry opened his mouth to ask where they were, but he was ushered into silence and simply handed a piece of paper by Mad Eye. Harry took it uncomprehendingly and read what was on the paper.

‘The headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix may be found at number twelve, Grimmauld Place, London’.

“What’s the Order of the—“ Harry began, but he was cut off quickly.

“Not here!” Moody snarled, “wait until we’re inside!”

Harry looked around, and saw that they were standing between houses eleven and thirteen. He looked at Remus in confusion.

“Where’s number twelve?”

“Remember what you just memorised,” Remus advised him, and Harry thought the sentence through in his head. When he reached the part about number twelve, Grimmauld place, a house suddenly began to appear between the other two houses. It pushed its way out, shoving the neighbouring houses to the side, although it appeared the muggles inside had no idea. Harry watched in amazement, to the amused look of Remus.

“Come on, hurry up”, Moody pushed Harry forwards, poking him in the back. He stumbled up the steps towards the old black door, and Remus tapped it once with his wand.

“Get inside, quick, but don’t go far and don’t touch anything,” Remus whispered to him. Harry apprehensively crept forwards, taking in his surroundings. The hallway was exceptionally dark and dingy, and covered with cobwebs. It looked like it hadn’t been used in years, there was a distinct feeling of neglect and abandonment in the air. It appeared that someone had beheaded and mounted several house elves on the wall, and Harry was starting to feel more and more foreboding. Why on earth had he been taken to this house that gave off an incredibly dark aura?

“Hang on, I’ll get some light in here,” Harry heard Remus’ quiet voice behind him, and with a muttered spell the gas lights down the hallway sputtered into life and cast a sickly light on them which wasn’t much better than the darkness. As Harry looked around, trying to get an idea of where he was, he heard footsteps coming from the other end of the hall. Harry looked up and saw the face of his godfather appearing out of the shadows.
“Sirius!” Harry whispered, rushing towards him. Sirius grinned and enveloped him in a bone
crushing bear hug. It was overwhelming to be here, after being at the Dursleys all this time. It
didn’t matter that he was in this dank, miserable house which virtually stank of the dark arts, he
was with Sirius now and it felt like home. Harry pulled back slightly and looked at his godfather.
Harry thought he looked healthier than the last time he had seen him, his dark hair was cropped
fairly short, accentuated by a floppy fringe that almost brushed the tops of his grey eyes. This,
coupled with the wide grin on his face, made him appear years younger.

Harry reluctantly pulled away and allowed himself to be ushered further into the house by Moody.
He was greeted by Molly Weasley who pulled him into another hug.

“Harry, dear, it’s good to see you! You look thin, have the Dursleys been feeding you properly?”
she tutted at him, taking in his thin frame. Harry snorted.

“Of course not! When do they ever?” he said wryly, earning him a roll of the eyes from Mrs
Weasley and a concerned look from Sirius.

“They haven’t been feeding you? Wait til I get my hands on them, they’ll regret it.” Sirius growled
angrily.

“Leave it, Sirius. Get back into the meeting, we’ve got to press on,” Moody snarled at him and
walked towards the room that Molly and Sirius had come from. Harry began to follow them, but
Molly stopped him before he could enter.

“The meeting is just for Order members Harry, you should go upstairs and see Ron and
Hermione. Straight up the stairs, first door on the left,” she whispered to him, and ushered him
towards the stairs. Harry thanked her and began to climb, suddenly feeling tiredness wash over
him as the adrenaline from the journey and seeing Sirius again began to wear off. He trudged up
the stairs and turned the corner, heading towards the room with a dim light coming from it.

Harry had barely opened the door before he was bombarded by a very enthusiastic Hermione
Granger.

“Harry!” she squealed, throwing her arms around him and screeching in his ear. “I’m so glad
you’re here at last!”

“Give him some space, Mione,” Ron laughed, clapping Harry on the shoulder as Hermione let
him go with a blush. Harry grinned at them, but for some reason it didn’t quite feel genuine. All of
the angry thoughts he’d had about them over the summer were flooding back, and he was
suddenly aware of the reason he had been so frustrated for all this time.

“So. Where are we?” Harry said flatly.

“Headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix,” Hermione said immediately. She looked disconcerted
at Harry’s tone.

“Yes ok, I know that, but will someone please tell me what that is?” said Harry heatedly, feeling
his anger building again. It didn’t seem to take much these days to get him frustrated. Hermione
looked at him nervously, but answered the question.
“The Order was set up by Dumbledore, it’s made up of all the people that fought You-Know-Who in the last war.”

“Right. And that was too dangerous to put in a letter, I guess,” Harry countered.

“Dumbledore seemed to think so. He really didn’t want us to tell you anything, Harry, or I swear we would have!” Hermione looked pleadingly at him, but he found that he didn’t care.

“What a surprise, Dumbledore didn’t want me to know anything. Seems to be doing that a lot recently. It was me that saw Voldemort return, me that saw Cedric killed right in front of me, but why should I be told anything? Let’s all just leave Harry at the Dursleys with no information, no idea about what’s going on in the wizarding world even though he just had his own blood taken from him, even though he had to watch as Voldemort used the blood to get a new body, even though he duelled with him—"

Harry’s voice was rising and he felt a grim sort of satisfaction when he saw Ron and Hermione’s expressions.

“Harry… we’re sorry, we really are! But Dumbledore thought you were safer there—“ Hermione began, but Harry was having none of it.

“OH, WELL IF DUMBLEDORE THINKS I WAS SAFE THERE, IT MUST BE TRUE! HAVE EITHER OF YOU BEEN ATTACKED BY DEMENTORS THIS SUMMER? NO, I DIDN’T THINK SO! I’M THE ONE THAT’S BEEN LEFT TO STARVE WITH THE DURSLEYS FOR A MONTH, AND YOU’VE BEEN HOLED UP HERE WITH EVERYONE ELSE, KNOWING WHAT’S GOING ON! WHAT DID YOU DO TO DESERVE THAT?” Harry yelled, feeling his voice grow hoarse. He felt almost pleased when he saw tears in Hermione’s eyes, then the fight suddenly went out of him and he sat down on the bed, feeling drained.

“Harry…mate, we really are sorry,” Ron muttered, averting his eyes. Harry huffed and looked at the floor, feeling slightly ashamed of himself although he was still frustrated.

“Whatever. What have you been doing here this whole time, anyway?” Harry asked, trying to keep his voice even.

“We’ve been cleaning up the house, trying to make it actually fit to live in,” Ron supplied eagerly, obviously very interested in steering the conversation in a different direction. “It hasn’t been lived in for years, and it’s infested with all sorts of weird creatures and dark objects.”

“Right,” Harry replied, still trying to wrap his mind around this situation. Ok, so he had been kept in the dark for weeks but he was here now, he had Sirius, and despite how angry he was at them he was still happy deep down that Ron and Hermione were here too. He sighed, and looked up at the two of them. They were gazing anxiously at him, and Harry felt regret wash over him.

“Look, I’m sorry—” he began, but Ron cut him off.

“No, it’s fine mate. You have every reason to be angry. Just try to remember that it’s not our fault,
yeah?" Ron spoke quietly, and Harry nodded at him, feeling rather ashamed. The atmosphere in the room felt much better now that the air had been somewhat cleared, and Harry laid back on his bed, feeling like he could almost fall asleep. A few minutes later he heard the hushed voices of his friends as they left the room to give him some space, and he drifted off into a fitful doze.
Chapter 4

The kitchen was dark, dingy and cold. Flickering at one end of the room, a large open fire was
endeavouring to warm the thick stone walls, casting shadows that danced eerily across the ceiling.
Harry shivered and rubbed his arms, trying to get some heat into them and dispel the goosebumps.
During the day they had been busy cleaning one of the bedrooms and Harry had worked up a
sweat, but now that he was sitting in the kitchen waiting for dinner he was really starting to feel
the chill of the house settling in.

“Alright there, Harry?” Sirius asked him, the amused expression on his face turning to one of
concern.

“I’m fine, just a bit cold,” Harry smiled at him, feeling another involuntary shiver go through him.
Sirius took one look at him shivering and got his wand out, whispering something under his
breath. All of a sudden Harry was filled with a warmth as if he’d just been soaking in a hot bath.
He grinned widely at Sirius, giving him a quick hug.

“Thanks, Snuffles!”

“No problem, Harry. Can’t watch you sitting there shivering. I blame this house, it always was
freezing in here, and my parents never did anything about it.” Sirius’ tone became flat and
reproachful.

“Your parents? You mean—“

“Yeah, this is where I grew up. I’m the last Black descendent left so it came to me. I don’t
particularly want to be here but I don’t have any choice at the moment, so I’m stuck.” He sounded
bored, almost petulant, and Harry couldn’t help but relate to what he was saying.

“I know what you mean. Being stuck at the Dursley’s was hell this summer.” Sirius gave him a
sympathetic look, but his face was still hardened in annoyance.

“At least you could go out, stretch your legs, get into a few fights,” Sirius began.

“A fight with two dementors, you mean. You say that like it’s a good thing!” Harry said
incredulously.

“It would have made it more interesting, having a terrifying fight for my soul. Would’ve broken
up the monotony. I’ve been inside for months now, it’s really doing my head in,” Sirius almost
growled.

“How come?”

“Voldemort knows that I can turn into a dog, Wormtail will have told him by now. Plus, the
Ministry are still looking for me, so it’s safer for me to stay inside. That’s what Dumbledore thinks, anyway. Harry detected a note of irritation in Sirius’ voice when he spoke of Dumbledore, and he felt a sudden rush of affection for his godfather.

“At least you know what’s going on. I’ve been left in the dark all summer,” Harry grumbled.

“Yeah, that would be great if I didn’t have to sit here listening to Snape give snide hints about him being out there risking his life while I’m sat at home all comfortable and lazy,” Sirius snarled.

“Since when does it matter what that greasy bat thinks anyway?” Harry grinned at Sirius, trying to comfort him, and his grin widened as he watched Sirius let out a loud bark-like laugh. Sirius’ smile really did make him look years younger, his handsome face lit up and there was a sparkle in his eyes as he swung an arm casually round Harry’s shoulders and gave him a quick hug.

“You never spoke a truer word, Harry,” he smirked.

Suddenly there was a loud crash from the hallway and the portrait of Mrs Black started shrieking. Remus and Bill rushed from the room to shut her up, while a blushing Tonks walked in followed by Mad Eye and Molly.

“I’m sorry everyone, it was that stupid troll’s leg umbrella stand, I always trip over it!” Tonks apologised, slipping into a seat opposite Harry. “How are you doing, Harry?” she added, seeing him sitting across from her.

“Not bad, thanks. I like your hair today,” he grinned, taking in the bright electric blue in a short spiky style that she’d chosen today.

“Thanks Harry! Do you think pink suits me more though?” she asked seriously.

“Er—” Harry began, but luckily Remus and Bill came back into the kitchen before he could attempt to formulate an answer.

“You look good with any hair colour, Tonks,” Remus smiled at her and she promptly blushed bright red.

“You’re just saying that, Remus,” she chastised, but she grinned back at him nevertheless. Harry noticed Molly staring at the two of them with ill-concealed interest. Glancing at Sirius, he saw his godfather catch Remus’ eye and give him an insinuating wink, which Remus promptly ignored and went to join Arthur Weasley in an in-depth conversation about how aeroplanes stay up.

After a few minutes of Sirius trying to tease Remus and being resolutely ignored by the werewolf, and Harry having an enthusiastic discussion with Tonks about the Quidditch world cup, Molly served the dinner and they all fell quiet for a while as they filled up with her delicious cooking.

A warm, content feeling had now fallen over the room, and the atmosphere was a relaxed one. Harry listened absent-mindedly to the other conversations around the table, feeling too sleepy to join in. Sirius was busy laughing with the twins about their latest prank, and giving them ideas that were fuelling the look of disapproval that Molly was sending their way. Arthur was telling anyone
who would listen about his theory of how computers work, and Remus was having a serious
discussion with Bill about werewolves and their rights. Molly stifled a yawn, and stretched.

“Time for bed soon, I think!” she announced to the room.

“Not just yet Molly,” Sirius spoke up, glancing in Harry’s direction. “I’m surprised you haven’t
asked anything about Voldemort yet, Harry. I would have thought that’s the first thing you’d have
wanted to know.”

“I did ask!” Harry said indignantly. “I was under the impression that I wasn’t allowed to know
anything!”

“And you’d be right, Harry! Sirius, you know we’re not supposed to say anything to him.
Dumbledore clearly told us—“

“He said that we shouldn’t tell him more than he needs to know. Harry was the one that saw
Voldemort come back, I don’t see why he shouldn’t at least know the basics,” Sirius spoke back
to Molly with a bite to his tone.

“Hang on a minute!” Fred angrily chimed in. “If Harry gets to hear information then why can’t
we? We’re of age!” he said angrily, and Molly sighed exasperatedly.

“I didn’t say anyone could hear any information, actually! Harry, you’re too young.” Molly said
adamantly.

“He’s not a child!” Sirius butted in heatedly. “And it’s not your decision anyway, he’s not your
son!”

“He’s as good as!” Molly said fiercely, glaring at Sirius.

Harry watched as the argument heated up, Sirius and Molly staring daggers at each other. It was
nice of Molly to say that he was as good as her son, but he was backing Sirius on this one. He was
definitely not a child, and considering he was the one that had his blood forcibly taken from him,
was made to watch as Voldemort come back to power, and even duelled with him, he figured that
he had the right to know what Voldemort was planning now. It didn’t look like Sirius and Molly
were going to let up any time soon so Harry decided to chime in.

“Look, I think I have a right to know what’s going on. I understand that you can’t tell me anything
but can’t I at least have the basic facts?” he pleaded, hoping he would be able to win Molly over
with reason. Seeing that she was being backed against a metaphorical wall, she looked desperately
at her husband to help her.

“Arthur, back me up here!” she said desperately. He looked at her awkwardly, hesitating.

“Look, Molly, I think Harry is right. He’s old enough to know the basic facts,” Arthur said
quietly. Molly huffed, knowing she was defeated.
“Fine, fine! You can tell him whatever you like, Sirius, within reason.” Ron, Hermione, Fred, George, Ginny, you can go to bed!”

A cacophony of noise and protest immediately erupted as they all started complaining at the tops of their voices.

“Hey! If Harry is old enough to hear about the Order, then so are we!” Fred said angrily to his mother.

“Yeah, we’re of age!” George agreed. Arthur put a hand on Molly’s shoulder and spoke gently to her.

“I really don’t think we can stop Fred and George listening, Molly. They are of age, after all.”

“FINE!” Molly shouted, she was fuming now. “Fine, but Ron Hermione and Ginny, you three are still going to bed.”

“Harry will just tell us everything later anyway, won’t you Harry?” Ron asked him, looking slightly worried when Harry hesitated. Why should he tell Ron and Hermione anything at all? They had kept him in the dark all summer, it would serve them right… Harry quickly suppressed the resentful thoughts that swam into his mind, reminding himself that it wasn’t their fault that they hadn’t told him anything.

“Of course I will!” Harry replied, and Ron looked relieved. Molly, recognising defeat, escorted Ginny up the stairs to make sure she went to bed, not trusting herself to talk. Ginny, on the contrary, made as much noise as she could as she stomped up the stairs, shouting and screaming about how it wasn’t fair. Walburga Black joined in as they went through the hall, and it took a moment of ensuing chaos before everyone but Molly was sitting around the table again, ready to talk. Harry felt adrenaline pumping through his veins, he was both nervous and excited.

“Well, Harry, what do you want to know?” Sirius asked, looking at him seriously.

“What’s Voldemort up to?” Harry replied at once. “I haven’t seen anything that looks like him yet, no funny deaths or disappearances—” Harry began, but he was interrupted by Remus.

“That’s because there haven’t been any yet. He’s laying low at the moment, biding his time.”

“But why? How come he isn’t going around killing and torturing muggles?” Harry asked, perplexed.

“Because he’s trying not to draw attention to himself at the moment,” Sirius said. “His great comeback didn’t go exactly the way he planned it to.”

“Why?”

“You messed it up for him, of course! The first thing you did after you saw it happen was to tell
Dumbledore, and he’s the last person Voldemort wanted to know about his return. Dumbledore is the only wizard Voldemort was ever afraid of, remember.”

“How do you know what Voldemort’s thinking?” Harry asked interestedly.

“Dumbledore has a shrewd idea, and his shrewd ideas usually turn out to be pretty accurate,” Bill supplied with a wry smile.

“So if Voldemort isn’t busy killing people, what is he doing?” Harry asked, fascinated.

“Well, a large part of his plan is trying to gather together followers to build up his army again. He had huge numbers at his command during the first war, including Death Eaters and Dark creatures. After the war a lot of them were killed, or deserted him when they believed him to be dead.”

“So the Order is trying to stop him getting followers?”

“We’re certainly trying,” said Remus.

“How?”

“The main idea is to convince as many people as possible that Voldemort is back. Fudge isn’t making that very easy, however,” Sirius muttered.

“How come?”

“It’s his attitude to this whole situation. He’s still flatly refusing to believe that Voldemort is back.”

“But why?” asked Harry desperately. “Why is he being so stupid? Dumbledore—“

“That’s exactly it, Harry. Dumbledore. Fudge is scared of him, he thinks he wants to overthrow him, to be Minister of Magic.” Sirius spoke with a twisted note of amusement in his voice.

“What?” asked Harry incredulously. “Dumbledore doesn’t want that—“

“Of course he doesn’t!” Remus said. “He never has. Dumbledore was a very popular candidate for the role when Millicent Bagnold retired, but he didn’t want it. Fudge got elected instead, and it seems the power has gone to his head. He finds it much more comfortable to convince himself that Dumbledore is making up rumours than to admit to himself and everyone else that Voldemort is actually back.”

“But how can he think that Dumbledore made it all up? That I made it all up?” Harry asked angrily.
“Because that would mean trouble like the Ministry hasn’t seen for nearly fourteen years,” Sirius said bitterly, “he just doesn’t want to accept it.”

“You see the problem, Harry. If the Ministry keep telling everyone that there’s nothing to fear from Voldemort then it’s very difficult to convince the public that there’s anything wrong, especially when they really don’t want to hear it in the first place.” Remus sounded defeated.

“So, that’s why the Daily Prophet keeps trying to discredit Dumbledore?” Harry asked, “Because he’s trying to put the news out about Voldemort coming back?”

“That’s right, Harry.” Sirius said with a tight smile. “But if he keeps defying the Ministry then he’ll have a lot worse than a bad reputation. They’ll put him in Azkaban, and we really can’t afford to have him locked up. With Dumbledore around trying to stir up the truth and ruin Voldemort’s plans, he’s held at bay. If Dumbledore gets sent to Azkaban then Voldemort will have a free reign.” Sirius said grimly.

Harry looked at the floor, fear and anxiety causing adrenaline to continue pumping through his veins. His brain was working overtime, and a thought occurred to him.

“Earlier you said that gathering followers was part of his plan at the moment. What else is he up to?” Harry asked suspiciously. He didn’t miss the meaningful look that Sirius and Remus shared.

“We think he’s after something…something he can only get by stealth.” Sirius said slowly, and it was obvious that he was choosing his words carefully.

“Like what?” Harry asked eagerly.

“Like a weapon. Something he didn’t have last time.”

“What kind of weapon? Something worse than the killing curse?” Harry asked.

“That’s enough.” Molly’s voice came from the shadows and Harry jumped. He hadn’t heard her come back into the room. She looked furious, and she glared at everyone. “I want you in bed, now. All of you,” she added, looking round at Fred, George, Ron and Hermione. “You’ve given Harry plenty of information. Tell him anything more and you might as well just induct him into the Order.”

“Why not? I want to join, I want to fight!” Harry said quickly.

“No.” It was Remus that spoke this time. “The Order is for overage wizards only Harry. Wizards who have left school,” he added, when he saw Fred about to argue. “I think we really have said enough, Sirius.”

Sirius shrugged, but didn’t argue. One by one they all got up and walked towards the stairs, and Harry followed, recognising defeat.
Harry followed the delicious smell of frying sausages into the kitchen. Walking over to the table, he saw Molly Weasley observing several frying pans on the large oven filled with piles of sausages, eggs and bacon and he took a seat, stomach rumbling in anticipation. As he waited impatiently, Tonks entered the kitchen along with Bill and Arthur Weasley, and Remus Lupin. They all plonked down on seats around the table, and a moment later Sirius strolled in too, tipping an irritated Crookshanks off of the chair and sitting down next to Harry.

“Morning, Harry. Sleep well?” Sirius asked him with a grin.

“Alright,” Harry said, stifling a yawn.

“You’re fooling no one, Harry,” Sirius laughed. Harry grinned back at him, punching him lightly on the arm.

“Fine! How did you sleep, Snuffles?” Harry questioned him back. The dark circles under Sirius’ eyes suggested that he wasn’t well rested.

“I slept perfectly well. Don’t look at me like that!” he said, at Harry’s amused look. “I’m just not a morning person, alright!”

He poked Harry in the ribs in retaliation and Harry wriggled away, realising in horror that Sirius had found his one ticklish spot. Harry gulped, hoping he hadn’t noticed. Looking sideways at him, Harry saw Sirius had a particularly evil look on his face and he panicked, jumping out of his seat, but he was too slow. Before he even reached the kitchen door Sirius had grabbed him, pinned him against a wall and was edging closer towards Harry’s ribs, laughing at the terrified expression on his face.

Leaning close, Sirius whispered in his ear, “I’ve got you now…” Harry attempted to wriggle away but Sirius laughed huskily and let loose, tickling Harry’s ribs and making him scream like a girl.

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Harry was laughing hysterically, in between screeching and shouting “HELP!” at the top of his voice. Sirius paused briefly and Harry panted, catching his breath, hoping that Sirius was about to give up. A moment later however, Sirius gave his most evil grin yet and put his hands under Harry’s t-shirt, tickling him even harder. Harry fell on the floor, laughing so hard he felt his lungs were going to explode, and tried to push away the heavy lump on top of him that was his supposedly grown up god father.

“Stop, stop! I admit defeat!” Harry gasped out between laughing, although for some strange reason he almost thought that he liked the feeling of Sirius laying on top of him, pinning him to the ground. He opened his eyes, and gasped as he saw Sirius’ handsome face just inches from his own, lit up with laughter. His eyes really were beautiful this close up, such a striking shade of silvery grey. His musings were cut short by Molly Weasley shouting at them in an exasperated but amused tone of voice.
“Boys, you’d better get over here if you want any breakfast before it’s all gone!”

They both quickly scrambled up and ran to the table, grabbing what food was left and shovelling it in their mouths as if they hadn’t eaten in weeks. Harry looked up and saw Remus’ amused expression across the table, and he grinned back.

“We’re going to need you in the drawing room today, everyone. There’re a lot more doxies than I thought in there, and I found a nest of dead puffskeins under the sofa,” Molly said to the room in general. They all ate up quickly, and after a little while of chatting they met in the old drawing room. It was a long, thin room, with olive green walls and a horrible musty smell. The walls were hung with dirty tapestries that looked centuries old, and the long curtains on the far wall were buzzing as if full of bees. Molly was standing near the curtains, looking rather odd with a cloth tied around her face covering her nose and mouth, and holding a spray bottle of black liquid.

“Everyone cover your faces and take a spray,” she said briskly, pointing towards a pile of cloths and spray bottles in the corner of the room. Harry quickly tied a cloth around his face and picked up a bottle, looking to Molly for further instructions. “This is Doxycide – I’ve never seen an infestation this bad,” Molly continued, looking in trepidation at the buzzing curtains.

Just then, Sirius walked in holding what appeared to be a bag of dead rats. Harry looked at him curiously and Sirius caught his eye.

“Just been feeding Buckbeak,” he explained, “I keep him upstairs in my mother’s old bedroom.”

“I’d forgotten about Buckbeak! Can I see him at some point?” Harry asked eagerly. He had a soft spot for the hippogriff after Sirius had escaped on him during his third year at Hogwarts.

“Course you can!” Sirius smiled at him. Their conversation was cut off by Molly Weasley’s business-like voice.

“Ok everyone, get ready! When I say the word, spray directly at the curtains. The doxies will come flying out at you, but one spray to the face should knock them out. Their fangs are poisonous, I have some antidote here but I’d rather we didn’t need it, so be careful.” She raised her spray in front of her, about a foot away from the curtains, and everyone else followed her lead.

“Alright, spray!” Molly shouted, and Harry began spraying along with everyone else. Almost immediately, doxies started flying out of the curtains at them. They looked like fairies with thick black hair, beetles wings and 4 tiny fists raised. One fully grown doxy flew directly at Harry’s face, teeth bared, and he caught it full in the face with a spray of Doxycide. It hit the ground with a thud, and Harry gingerly picked it up and put it in the bucket.

After a while, Harry noticed Fred picking up an unconscious doxy while his mother wasn’t looking, and putting it in his pocket. Harry looked at him inquiringly, and Fred muttered to him under his breath.

“We want to experiment with doxy venom for our Skiving Snackboxes,” he whispered.
“What are Skiving Snackboxes?” Harry asked, intrigued.

“Range of sweets that make you ill,” George whispered, keeping an eye on his mother. “Not really ill, just ill enough to get you out of class.”

“You swallow one end, and it makes you sick. Then when you swallow the other end, as soon as you’re out of class, it makes you all better!” Fred winked at Harry.

“We’ve been developing them this summer. We haven’t had the chance to get premises yet, but we’re running the joke shop as a mail order service at the moment.”

“All thanks to you, Harry,” George grinned, “luckily mum doesn’t look at the Daily Prophet anymore so she has no idea we’re advertising in there”.

“That’s great, guys,” Harry said in admiration. He had no idea the twins had got so far towards getting their business started, and he was very happy that he had been able to help them out with his Triwizard winnings.

“Cheers, Harry!” the twins said in unison. Molly looked over at them and they hurried back to work, spraying the doxies until only the odd one or two zoomed out at them. They collapsed down on the old sofa and various arm chairs, taking off the cloths from around their faces and mopping their brows. It had been hard work, and they were all looking forward to lunch.

“Alright, I’m going to make some sandwiches, you lot stay here,” Molly said sternly, and strode off down the stairs. Harry turned and saw Sirius standing at one end of the room, looking at one of the old tapestries on the wall with an almost resentful look on his face. He walked over, standing next to Sirius and reading the tapestry that hung before them. It seemed to be a family tree, going backwards to the Middle Ages. He scanned the bottom of the tapestry.

“Hey, your name isn’t on here!” Harry remarked. He could see that it was an ancient Black family tree, so surely Sirius’ name should be on there somewhere?

“It used to be there,” Sirius pointed grumpily to a black charred mark on the tapestry, almost like a cigarette burn, “but my mother blasted it off when I ran away from home.”

“You ran away from home?”

“Yeah, when I was sixteen. I’d had enough.”

“Why?”Harry asked, surprised. He knew Sirius had had a tough adulthood in prison, but he had no idea his childhood had been bad as well.

“Why did I leave? Because I hated the whole lot of them,” Sirius remarked, smiling bitterly. “I hated my parents with their pureblood mania, convinced that to be a Black made you practically royalty. I hated my soft brother who was stupid enough to believe them…that’s him there,” said Sirius, pointing towards the name Regulus Arcturus Black on the tapestry. There was a date of death next to it.
“He was younger than me, and a much better son as my parents constantly reminded me.”

“But…he died,” Harry said quietly.

“Yeah, stupid idiot. He joined the Death Eaters.”

“You’re kidding!”

“Come on Harry, you’ve seen what this house is like, you must have guessed the sort of people my family were.”

“Were your parents Death Eaters too?” Harry asked tentatively.

“No, no, but they thought Regulus had the right idea. They agreed completely with Voldemort’s views on purifying the Wizarding race, getting rid of Muggleborns and having Purebloods run everything. A lot of people got cold feet when Voldemort showed his true colours, and they saw what he was willing to do to get power. I bet my parents thought Regulus was a right little hero to start with though,” Sirius said bitterly.

“Was in an auror that killed him?” Harry asked hesitantly.

“Oh no,” Sirius said. “No, he was killed by Voldemort. Or on Voldemort’s orders, more likely, I doubt Regulus was ever important enough to be killed by Voldemort in person. From what I found out after he died, he got in so far, then panicked about what he was being asked to do and tried to back out. Well, you don’t just hand in your resignation to Voldemort. It’s a lifetime of service or death.”

Harry looked at him sadly. His godfather had had a terrible life, and it really wasn’t fair that he was stuck here now in this house full of bad memories. Harry glanced at the tapestry and noticed a name on it that stuck out.

“You’re related to the Malfoys!” He exclaimed.

“Yes, all the old Pureblood families are interrelated. If you’re only going to let your children marry other Purebloods then it’s bound to happen, there aren’t that many of us left. Two of my cousins made respectable Pureblood marriages, but Andromeda ignored the family’s beliefs and married Ted Tonks, a muggleborn. She was always my favourite cousin,” Sirius said.

“Tonks?”

“Yes, Tonks is related to me too.”

Harry looked at the tapestry but didn’t see her name.
“I expect my mother blasted her off the tree as well. Yes, see. Andromeda should have been there, with Tonks underneath,” he pointed to another set of blast marks next to where it said Narcissa Malfoy and next to it, Bellatrix Lestrange.

“Lestrange…” Harry said aloud. He was sure that name rang a bell.

“She’s in Azkaban.” Sirius said shortly. “Along with her scum of a husband.”

Harry remembered now. She had been arrested along with Barty Crouch Jr for the crimes committed against Neville’s parents.

“You never mentioned that you were related to—” Harry began, but Sirius cut him off.

“Do you think I’m proud to be related to people like that?” he said heatedly.

“Sorry,” Harry quickly said, “I didn’t mean—“

“No, it’s fine, don’t apologise. I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to snap. I just hate being back here,” he muttered, and he looked so dejected that Harry couldn’t help but put his arms around him and pull him into a hug. Sirius was tense at first, but he quickly relaxed into the hug and put his arms around Harry in return, pulling him closer.

“I’m glad I have you here, Harry,” Sirius whispered, “You’re keeping me sane.”

Harry pulled back slightly and smiled tentatively at his godfather, relieved when he smiled back.

“I understand how you feel about being stuck here,” Harry said quietly, forgetting briefly that they still had their arms around each other. “I’d hate to have to go back to the Dursleys after thinking I was rid of them for good.”

“You’ve never told me much about them, Harry. How bad was it?” Sirius asked him gently.

“Could’ve been worse, I guess. I mean they made me sleep in the cupboard under the stairs until I was eleven—” Harry started, but Sirius interrupted him loudly.

“They what?” He shouted, pulling out of their embrace and striding up and down angrily.

“Yeah,” Harry said bitterly. “They locked me in it whenever I did something wrong, or when I did what I later found out was accidental magic. I guess they were at the opposite end of the scale from your family, they thought everything to do with magic was horrible and unnatural, and they were under the impression to start with that they could ‘stamp it out of me’.”

Sirius was furious, Harry knew that if he had been allowed to leave Grimmauld Place he would
probably be half way to Privet Drive already to confront the Dursleys.

“Why do you still go back there every summer if they treat you like that?” Sirius asked.

“Well, Dumbledore seems to think it’s the safest place for me,” Harry said bitterly. “There’s some kind of protection on the house.”

“I see. Of course it would be Dumbledore’s idea,” Sirius said darkly.

“This place is practically impenetrable though…” Harry said thoughtfully. “Surely it would be just as safe for me to stay here?”

“I wish you could, Harry, I really do. But we both know Dumbledore won’t allow it,” Sirius said quietly.

“I would feel a lot better about the trial if I knew I could come back here, if I was expelled,” Harry whispered. He had a sinking feeling in his stomach as soon as he mentioned the trial. He had put it to the back of his mind until now, but suddenly all the feelings of fear and anxiety came flooding back to him and he panicked slightly.

“Hey, you’ll be alright,” Sirius smiled at him. “I thought I could maybe come with you to the trial, as Snuffles, for a bit of moral support.”

That certainly made Harry feel at least a little bit better about the whole thing.

“You would do that for me?” Harry asked, a tiny flicker of hope building.

“Yes, of course I will! But seriously Harry, you’ll be fine. I think I should have a word with Dumbledore about where you stay during the holidays though…it can’t be right, you staying with those muggles.”

Harry grinned at his godfather, feeling happier than he had a moment ago. He knew deep down that it would be pretty difficult, if not impossible, to change Dumbledore’s mind about where he lived, but it was worth a shot.

“Come on, you two, there won’t be any food left!” They heard Molly shout at them and they both jumped. Harry had forgotten they were even in a room with other people, he had been completely absorbed in his conversation with Sirius. They walked over and tucked in to a plate of ham sandwiches.

Harry tried not to think about the hearing that afternoon, which he managed quite well as clearing the cabinets was a job that required a lot of concentration. There were a lot of strange objects in there, and many of them seemed reluctant to be moved. There was a silver snuff box that bit Sirius on the hand, a pair of tweezers that scuttled around and attempted to pierce people’s skin. An old tinkling music box that started playing and made everyone feel curiously sleepy until Ginny had the sense to slam it shut. Also, they found a large heavy locket that no one could open, and Mundungus redeemed himself slightly in Molly’s eyes when he saved Ron from a pair of robes that tried to strangle him.
Mrs Weasley kept them all working hard over the next few days, and it felt to Harry that they were waging war on the house. It helped that Harry knew how miserable Sirius had been here, and he put every effort he could into destroying any bad memories that might be lurking around in the dark objects that littered the house.

Various Order members popped in from time to time, some only stayed briefly such as Professor McGonagall who came in briefly for a whispered chat with Kingsley Shacklebolt, and Snape whom Harry was very happy he hadn’t had to come face to face with so far. Other people, however, were more than happy to stay and help with the cleaning. This included Remus, who was actually living in Grimmauld Place but kept disappearing for long stretches of time to do mysterious work for the Order. Tonks was also keen to stay and help out, and even Harry had noticed how close she had been getting to Remus lately. Sirius was always on hand to laugh and wink at Remus whenever he was caught complimenting Tonks, and Remus always steadfastly ignored him.

Harry found that he was actually having fun for the first time this summer, now that he was at Grimmauld Place. As long as he ignored the looming Ministry hearing, anyway. When he was distracted by cleaning the house or hanging out with Sirius it was fine, but when he lay alone in bed at night, or had a moment to himself during the day, the fear crept back over him and left him feeling breathless and sometimes almost paralysed with fear. The thought of what it would be like if he was expelled was too horrible to think about, although sometimes he couldn’t help but imagine a Ministry official snapping his wand and ordering him to stay at the Dursleys forever. But he wouldn’t let that happen…he was adamant that he would come and live here with Sirius.

Harry felt like a brick had dropped into his stomach when Molly turned to him on Wednesday evening at dinner and said quietly, “I’ve ironed your best clothes for tomorrow, Harry, and you should wash your hair too. A good first impression can work wonders!”

Harry gulped, and noticed that everyone in the room had turned to look at him. He swallowed dryly, putting down his knife and fork. His appetite had suddenly disappeared.

“How am I getting there?” he asked hoarsely, trying to sound as normal as possible.

“Arthur’s taking you to work with him,” Molly said gently.

“You can stay in my office until it’s time for the hearing,” Arthur smiled kindly at him.

Harry turned to look at Sirius, but his question was answered for him before he could ask it.

“Professor Dumbledore doesn’t think it’s a very good idea for Sirius to come with you,” Molly said, “and I must say I agree.” Sirius looked at her darkly and she pursed her lips.

“When did Dumbledore say that?” Harry asked quickly.

“He was here last night, dear, when you were in bed. He came to see how the cleaning was going, seemed very interested in that locket we found. He took it away with him, not sure what he thought he could do with it though, it doesn’t even open,” Molly said, but Harry wasn’t really listening anymore. The fact that Dumbledore had been here the day before Harry’s hearing and hadn’t even bothered to talk to him made him feel even worse than before.
Harry went up to bed slowly, trying to shake off the overwhelming feeling of dread, and fell into a restless sleep. He was visited by the same old dreams as before, running down endless corridors towards unreachable locked doors. This time, his dream morphed into the now familiar scene of gold and jewels, and he saw that small gold cup that seemed the most important thing in the room. The feeling of fear was all around him, he could almost smell it, and he woke in a cold sweat again, wondering why he was dreaming about such an apparently harmless object that nevertheless filled him with terror.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you're enjoying the story! Please leave me a comment to let me know either way :) and thank you to everyone who has left a kudos so far!
Harry awoke suddenly at 5am the next morning, as abruptly as if someone had called his name. He lay in bed for a moment, feeling dread and fear completely take over every particle of his brain. When he felt like the fear would suffocate him, he decided that he should just get out of bed. He pulled on his freshly laundered clothes and padded down the stairs, heading towards the kitchen. Not expecting anyone to be in there, he was surprised when he saw Sirius sitting at the table alone, sipping a cup of tea.

“Morning Harry,” Sirius smiled gently at him and pulled out the seat next to him for Harry to sit at. He sat down next to his godfather and sighed. Sirius gave him a sympathetic look.

“How are you feeling? Or is that a stupid question?” Sirius asked him with a small smile.

“Er…,” Harry began, not sure what to say, but in the end he managed to sum it up with one word. “Terrified.”

Sirius looked at him with a troubled expression. Harry tried to tell him that he was fine, really, but he couldn’t seem to get the words out.

“I wish you could come with me, Snuffles,” he managed to say, feeling his voice break a little. Sirius looked conflicted.

“I wish I could too, Harry, but even I can see that it would be stupid of me to walk right into the Ministry of Magic,” Sirius replied softly.

Sirius shuffled his chair closer to Harry’s and gently pulled him into a hug. The simple act of comfort and affection was enough to overwhelm Harry, and for a horrifying moment he felt like he was going to start crying.

“You’re going to be fine, Harry, I promise,” Sirius murmured in his ear softly. “And even if they find some way to expel you, I’ll make it my personal mission to make sure you get to stay here with me. There’s no way I’m ever letting you go back to those muggles,” Sirius continued, running a hand soothingly through Harry’s hair as he hugged him closely. Harry felt safe, and for the first time since last night he didn’t feel quite so panicky about the hearing. He pulled away slightly so that he could look into Sirius’ face, and blinked away the wetness that had formed in his eyes.

Their moment was interrupted by the arrival in the kitchen of Molly, Arthur, Remus and Tonks. Harry pulled away from Sirius, giving him a sad smile as the fear immediately rushed back over him in waves. Sirius ruffled his hair affectionately, his worried gaze lingering on Harry as he turned back to his tea.

“Harry, dear, you should have some breakfast,” Molly said gently. “What do you want to eat?”

“Er, I’ll just have some toast, thanks Mrs Weasley,” Harry said quietly, his voice sounding hoarse.
in his ears. She hastened to make it for him and a minute later plonked down a plate of toast and marmalade in front of him. He tried to eat some, but it felt like chewing cardboard, and he had no appetite at all. After a minute or two of watching Harry attempt to chew the same bite of toast, Arthur took pity on him and stood up, stretching.

“We should get going, Harry. You’ll be early but I think it’ll be better than just hanging around here,” Mr Weasley said briskly. Harry dropped his toast at once, and felt as if his stomach had dropped too. He stood and watched absentmindedly as Arthur readied himself for work, not sure what to do with himself. He could feel his heart pounding in his chest, and his palms were sweating. Sirius stood abruptly and walked over to him, pulling him into a tight hug.

“Good luck, Harry,” he said gruffly, and before Harry could formulate a response he was following Arthur out of the door and down the road towards the tube station.

His breath misted in front of him as they walked through the early morning chill. Eventually they reached the underground, and Harry was at least slightly distracted from thoughts of the hearing as he amusedly watched Mr Weasley react to all the muggle contraptions around them. Arthur was enthralled by the ticket barrier that swallowed his ticket and allowed them access to the platform, and he was bouncing in his seat excitedly as they sat on the tube, surrounded by bored looking business men and women.

After too short a journey they reached the correct tube station and began walking again, their surroundings becoming more and more dilapidated and run-down as they went along. It seemed an odd place for the Ministry of Magic, but then he supposed it was the last place anyone would think to look. After a short walk they came across an old red telephone box, and Arthur opened the door, gesturing for Harry to go inside. He entered the telephone box apprehensively and was followed in by Arthur, who picked up the receiver and typed in the number 62442.

A pleasant voice welcomed them to the Ministry of Magic and asked for their details, and a moment later they were headed down underground into the mysterious visitor’s entrance to the Ministry. A minute or two later the telephone box lift arrived in a massive open area and Harry looked around in awe.

They were standing at one end of a very long and spectacular hall with a polished, dark wood floor. The peacock-blue ceiling was inlaid with gleaming golden symbols that were continually moving and changing like some enormous heavenly notice board. The walls on each side were panelled in shiny dark wood and had many gilded fireplaces set into them, with wizards and witches frequently appearing and disappearing into them.

Halfway down the hall was a fountain. A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin, and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and wizard. Glittering jets of water were flying from the ends of the two wands, the point of the centaur’s arrow, the tip of the goblin’s hat, and each of the house-elf’s ears.

Harry presented his wand to be checked by the bored looking security wizard, and then proceeded to the large golden lift that would take them to Arthur’s office. They stepped in and waited, Harry looking sideways at a man holding what appeared to be a fire-breathing chicken. Paper aeroplanes zoomed around the top of the lift, and Arthur explained to him that they were interdepartmental memos. Harry was only half listening, he was mostly trying and failing to stamp down the nerves that were threatening to overtake him.

The lift arrived at floor two and they departed, heading to Mr Weasley’s office on the other side of the floor. They arrived in the office, and Harry had hardly been sitting down for more than a
“Arthur, thank goodness I found you! The boy’s hearing, the time has been changed. It’s at 8am now, in courtroom ten!” The old man wheezed out, looking curiously at Harry. Mr Weasley stood up quickly, a look of outrage and panic on his face.

“What? They can’t do that, can they? Good lord, look at the time, we should have been there five minutes ago!” He yelped, looking at his watch. “Come on Harry, we’ll have to run!”

Harry followed him at a sprint, feeling the panic suddenly rise up and take over him. They rushed into the lift, Arthur pushing the button agitatedly until the doors closed and it took them down to the deepest level of the Ministry. They rushed down the final flight of stairs, then ran down the dark, gloomy corridor. Arthur took him to the door that said ‘Courtroom Ten’ in official letters on the door.

“Here you go Harry, get inside. No, I can’t come with you,” he said apologetically, and Harry put a trembling hand on the doorknob. With a deep feeling of trepidation, he pushed open the door and walked inside.

His first emotion when he walked into the room was horrified shock. Recognition washed over him and he realised it was this room that he had seen in Dumbledore’s Pensieve, he had seen Barty Crouch Jr and Bellatrix Lestrange tried in this room. Gulping, he walked slowly forwards and sat down on the large foreboding chair with chains down the arms. They clanked threateningly but didn’t chain him down.

“You’re late.” Harry looked up and saw the disapproving gaze of Cornelius Fudge, the Minister for Magic, looking down his nose at Harry. There was a strict looking woman wearing a monocle sitting to his left, and on his right was a short stout woman whom he could only describe as looking like an overweight toad. Feeling that his supposed good first impression was currently flying out of the window, Harry felt extremely apprehensive and cleared his throat which was suddenly very dry.

“Er…I didn’t know the time had been changed, sorry,” Harry managed weakly. The look Fudge gave him told him that he wasn’t helping matters.

“That was not the Wizengamot’s fault, you were notified in plenty of time. Now that the accused is finally present, we may begin.”

Harry didn’t like his tone, and he felt that his chances of getting through this with a positive outcome were getting slimmer by the minute. The tall thin room with its dark stone walls and gloomy lighting was making Harry feel rather claustrophobic, and he wished they would just get on with it.

“Disciplinary hearing of the twelfth of August,” said Fudge in a ringing voice, and Harry noticed Percy Weasley beginning to take notes in the corner, “into offenses committed under the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery and the International Statute of Secrecy by Harry James Potter, resident at number four, Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey.

“Interrogators: Cornelius Oswald Fudge, Minister of Magic; Amelia Susan Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement; Dolores Jane Umbridge, Senior Undersecretary to the Minister. Court Scribe, Percy Ignatius Weasley. Witness for the defence…well, that would appear
to be no one,” said Fudge nastily. “It seems your good pal Dumbledore couldn’t even be bothered to turn up to the hearing.”

Harry’s insides turned numb. Dumbledore was supposed to be his defence, but he wasn’t here? If he’d thought that he couldn’t feel any worse about this, he was very wrong. It was one thing to ignore Harry all summer, even on the eve of his hearing, but to not turn up at all and practically ensure that Harry was expelled? His stomach twisted painfully and he felt sick. Fudge looked down at him smugly, as if he knew exactly what inner turmoil he had just caused Harry.

Fudge extricated a piece of paper, unfurled it and read, “The charges against the accused are as follows: That he did knowingly, deliberately, and in full awareness of the illegality of his actions, having received a previous written warning from the Ministry of Magic on a similar charge, produce a Patronus Charm in a Muggle-inhabited area, in the presence of a Muggle, on August the second at twenty-three minutes past nine, which constitutes an offense under paragraph C of the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery, 1873, and also under section thirteen of the International Confederation of Wizards’ Statute of Secrecy.

“You are Harry James Potter, of number four, Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey?” Fudge said, glaring at Harry over the top of his parchment.

“Yes,” Harry said.

“And you conjured a Patronus on the second of August?”

“Yes, but—“

“In full view of a muggle?”

“Yes, but—“

“Knowing that you are not to use magic outside of school until you are seventeen?”

“Yes. But it was—“

“Knowing that you were in the presence of a muggle, in a muggle inhabited area?”

“Yes,” Harry said angrily, “but I only did it because of the dementors!” He hadn’t meant to just shout it out like that, but they were infuriating him by not letting him get a word in edgeways. How was he expected to defend himself if he couldn’t talk?

“The dementors? What on earth do you mean, boy?” asked Madam Bones in shock. She raised her eyebrows so high that her monocle fell out.

“Ah, I knew he’d try something like this,” Fudge laughed nastily. “Yes, he always does like to use ridiculous excuses that couldn’t possibly be true to get himself out of all the tight spots he’s found himself in. It’s really quite astounding, the amount of trouble he gets into at school. Not the
“Golden Boy everyone seems to think you are, eh?” Fudge shot at him, and Harry wanted to sink through the cold stone floor of this room. Surely this wasn’t fair?

“There was that time he came up with some cock and bull story about Time Turners and Peter Pettigrew being alive, now that was astounding to hear. Sirius Black, innocent? You’d think the boy was confused or something but I’m starting to think he’s just a really horrible, ill-disciplined boy.” Fudge was staring at him directly now, his face a mask of cruel excitement.

Harry’s heart had stopped racing now, his nerves were being taken over by pure anger. Fudge had no right to treat him this way, and bringing Sirius into it had just tipped him over the edge. He sat and fumed silently, wishing he could just stride up there and punch Fudge in his stupid pompous face.

“Well, seeing as he doesn’t have any witnesses to his defence, and there’s clearly no reason to believe a word he says…” Fudge trailed off, looking to either side of him to see if Madam Bones or Umbridge had anything to say. Umbridge smiled in what she probably imagined was a sweet, girly way, but which actually made her look even more grotesque.

“I think you’d covered it all impeccably well, Minister,” she said in a high pitched girly voice that made Harry want to retch. “I really can’t see any reason to believe what this boy has said.”

“Amelia?” Fudge asked the woman on his left. She scrutinised Harry briefly, and almost looked as though she wanted to ask more questions, but it was obvious that Fudge had asked it in a rhetorical way and she merely shook her head.

“Very well. Wizengamot, you may deliberate.” Fudge spoke to the group of fifty or so witches and wizards that were seated in the stands, and they all started whispering to each other in hushed voices. Harry looked at his feet, not wanting to know what was happening and yet wanting to know so badly that it hurt.

“Those in favour of clearing the accused of all charges?” Madam Bones called in her loud, authoritative voice. Harry looked up quickly, and wished he hadn’t. Not a single hand was raised in the air, and the look on Fudge’s face was maliciously victorious.

“Those in favour of expelling the accused from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry?” She called, and every hand in the room was raised towards the sky. Harry felt numb, his insides churning so much that he was scared he was going to be sick. A cold sweat had broken out on his forehead, he felt clammy and cold and his heart began to race again. This was it. Fudge banged his gavel down on the desk and shouted out Harry’s verdict with a sick grin on his face.

“The accused, Mr Harry James Potter, is hereby expelled from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, effective immediately!”
Harry got to his feet and walked towards the door in a daze. His legs moved forwards automatically but his brain felt disengaged, he was still trying to process what had just happened. He was expelled…he was never going back to Hogwarts. It seemed like some sort of nightmare, but he knew he wasn’t going to wake up from it. Stepping out of the door, Harry almost collided with Arthur who was standing right outside looking anxious.

“Harry! What happened?” He asked fretfully. Harry tried to answer but he couldn’t seem to talk. The look on his face seemed to say it all, however.

“Oh no…they didn’t…” Arthur breathed, a pained expression on his face. Just then, the courtroom door banged open and the Wizengamot filed past them, followed by Umbridge, Bones, Percy, and finally the Minister himself with a smug smile on his face. That confirmed Arthur’s theory for him and he hesitantly put an arm around Harry’s shoulders.

“Look, let’s get you back to Grimmauld Place shall we. It…it’s going to be okay,” he said awkwardly. Harry nodded numbly and followed him towards the stairs. He was on autopilot all the way home, occasionally nodding or shaking his head in response to Arthur’s worried questions, but mostly just staring out of the window. He finally started to wake up a bit when he saw Number Twelve up ahead, and he steeled himself for the fact that everyone’s pity was going to make him feel a hell of a lot worse.

They walked through the door and into the kitchen where they knew everyone would be waiting for the verdict. Harry clenched his fists reflexively, feeling tense. Walking into the room he saw every face suddenly turn and look questioningly at him. Arthur opened his mouth to tell them the news but Harry beat him to it, suddenly finding his voice again.

“Expelled.” He said bluntly, his voice sounding hoarse from how dry his throat had become. He sat down in a chair and looked at the floor, not wanting to see everyone’s shocked faces staring back at him. He couldn’t block out the sound of everyone’s gasps of surprise, however.

He heard mutters of astonishment and anger rippling around the table, and he thought he could hear the muffled sobs of Hermione. His heart sank even further as the realisation set in that he was going to be apart from his friends for the rest of the year, that they’d be learning new magic, playing Quidditch, and having fun without him. Maybe they’d grow closer without him there, forget about him altogether. These unwanted thoughts ran around his brain, despite how ridiculous they sounded. Deep in his thoughts as he was, it surprised him when he felt an arm around his shoulders and heard a whispered voice in his ear.

“Come on Harry, let’s get you away from everyone for a moment,” he heard the comforting voice of Sirius in his ear and a firm hand pulling him out of the kitchen. Harry didn’t resist, he looked up at Sirius and saw that he was looking at him with a concerned expression. If only to stop Sirius looking so sad, Harry summoned up a small smile. He looked around and realised that Sirius had brought him upstairs to Harry’s bedroom, no doubt because he wanted him to feel comfortable and at least somewhat at home.

The two of them sat down on the bed and Sirius put his arm around Harry’s shoulders. Feeling comforted by the familiar presence of his godfather, Harry cuddled closer to him, putting his own arm around Sirius’ waist and resting his head on his chest. For a while they just stayed there, Harry listening to the soothing rhythm of Sirius’ heart, and Sirius gently stroking his hand through
“Do you want to talk about it, Harry?” Sirius whispered after a while. Harry started, he had almost starting dozing off in Sirius’ arms. He stayed silent for a moment, trying to work out how to put his feelings into words, but after a while he gave up and just starting talking.

“I just feel so…shocked. I mean, I pretty much knew this was going to happen but it’s taking a while to get used to it. I’m never going back to Hogwarts…” his voice broke during that sentence and he took a moment to compose himself. “It’s a strange feeling, knowing that I’m never going to be back in that castle again,” he said wistfully.

Sirius looked down at him and their eyes met, emerald green meeting silvery grey. The intensity of Sirius’ stare dazed him, and he blushed as his stomach have a little flip that he felt was not an entirely appropriate feeling to have when gazing into his godfather’s eyes. He was suddenly aware of their close proximity and the fact that he was essentially snuggling with Sirius, and he blushed even more. He pulled himself out of the hug, answering Sirius’s questioning look with a hasty excuse.

“Er, I need to talk to Ron and Hermione about…you know, everything. Thanks for staying with me,” He said awkwardly, not meeting his godfather’s eyes. Sirius’ expression cleared and he gave Harry a quick smile.

“Hey, no worries Harry, I understand.” He loped out of the door past Harry and headed upstairs, presumably to his own bedroom or to visit Buckbeak in his mother’s old room.

Harry walked slowly down the stairs towards the kitchen where he knew Ron and Hermione must still be sitting with everyone else. He sighed as he realised he now had yet another confusing aspect of his life to work out. What on earth was he doing, having these feelings for his godfather? It seemed that literally everything in his life that had the potential to be complicated was taking the opportunity to be complicated. Harry decided that for now he’d have to put this confusing new revelation to the back of his mind because he had more important things to worry about.

Harry poked his head into the kitchen and saw everyone sitting around the table having an uneasy and stilted conversation. They all looked anxious and upset, and Hermione had clearly been crying. He cleared his throat quietly and when everyone turned to look at him, he beckoned his two best friends from the room and walked back upstairs to his bedroom. They followed without a second thought.

Harry plonked onto his bed and looked at Ron and Hermione, silently inviting them to talk. Hermione took one look at him and flung her arms around him, beginning to sob into his shoulder. Harry sighed and awkwardly hugged her back, gently prising her off when she didn’t show any sign of letting go. She looked at him, distraught, and then hid her face behind a handkerchief. Assuming that she wouldn’t be capable of speech for a while, Harry turned to Ron instead, who gave Harry a bemused and thoroughly disgruntled look.

“Mate…who’d have thought they’d actually do it…” Ron said quietly, sitting down on Harry’s bed and absentmindedly patting Hermione on the shoulder. She emerged from the handkerchief and wiped her streaming eyes on it, sniffing and hiccupping as she tried to compose herself.

“Tell me about it,” Harry muttered.
“H-Harry,” Hermione whispered. “They can’t do this, they can’t. Hogwarts won’t feel right without you there!”

It pained Harry to see how upset Hermione was about him not coming back. He knew Ron was probably upset too, but he understood that it was a lot more difficult for him to show his emotions on the outside. Nevertheless, Ron did look distinctly more subdued than normal.

“I guess we’ll just have to get used to it,” Harry said speculatively. “Although I don’t know who you’re going to find to play seeker now,” he managed a faint grin at Ron who laughed lightly and then looked genuinely depressed.

“Oh god, we’re going to lose the Quidditch Cup aren’t we?” Ron moaned, hiding his head in his hands. At this point, Hermione finally managed to speak properly, due to her extreme indignation.

“Ron! How can you talk about Quidditch at a time like this?” She asked, scandalised. Harry met Ron’s eyes and grinned, they had an unspoken agreement that Hermione just didn’t understand how important Quidditch really was.

Thinking about it, Harry suddenly realised that no matter where he stayed this year he wasn’t going to be allowed to go outside and fly anywhere, and he immediately sobered up again. It seemed that Fudge had just managed to take away everything he cared about. Hogwarts, his friends, flying. Okay, almost everything. He still had Sirius. This thought made him smile, then blush, and he cursed his stupid hormones.

Luckily at that moment two official looking owls appeared at the window to distract them all. Harry let them in, and they landed next to Ron and Hermione. Immediately recognising the Hogwarts crest on them, Harry realised they must be the usual book lists for the year. Harry sighed, realising that he would never be getting another letter from Hogwarts himself. He looked to Ron and Hermione, only half interested in what books they were going to need this year, but he was jolted out of his self-pity when he noticed that they both had identical looks of shock on their faces.

“What?” He asked.

Wordlessly, Ron held up something small in his hand for Harry to see. He craned closer, and gasped as he saw the small red and gold badge in Ron’s hand. Quickly glancing at Hermione he saw that she was holding something reverently in her hand too.

“Prefect…” Ron whispered, astounded. “Prefect? Me?” He looked dumbfounded, and gave Harry the badge to inspect. Harry turned it over in his hand, looking at the tiny lion that was engraved onto the red and gold background.

“Looks legit to me! Well done, mate,” Harry grinned at him. With all the drama of the Ministry hearing he’d forgotten that Prefects were going to be chosen this year. If he was going to pick anyone to be Prefect, he knew perfectly well that it would be Hermione. He couldn’t help a small traitorous part of his brain wondering whether he would have got Ron’s badge if he hadn’t been expelled, but he quashed that thought as soon as it surfaced. It was bad enough that he wasn’t going to see Ron all summer, he didn’t want to taint their friendship further by being bitter.

“Why don’t we go downstairs and show everyone? I bet your mum will be over the moon,” Harry grinned at Ron. They agreed and followed Harry downstairs to the kitchen. Harry suddenly felt
much better about everything now that he had something occupying his mind, even though he was still subconsciously thinking about the fact that Ron and Hermione were soon going to be leaving him to be Prefects together at Hogwarts.

As predicted, Molly was thrilled with the news. She shrieked loudly when Ron told her, and threw her arms around him, bursting into tears. He awkwardly patted her on the back and tried to ignore Fred and George’s scornful taunting. It didn’t help matters when Molly called him ‘Ronnickins’ and went into raptures about how proud she was. Ron went bright red and desperately tried to run away to the amusement of his brothers. The atmosphere in the house had livened up since the news, and everyone was chatting happily to each other when the sound of the door slamming shut suddenly made everyone hush. Footsteps came towards the kitchen, and Dumbledore walked warily down the steps into the room. For a moment, no one spoke.

“Harry,” Dumbledore said in a tired voice. “I’m so sorry. Cornelius Fudge changed the time of your hearing and deliberately didn’t inform me so that they could proceed with the trial without any doubt over the outcome…” He watched Harry closely, scrutinising him with those piercing blue eyes from behind his half-moon spectacles. Harry wasn’t sure what to say, wasn’t sure he could trust himself to say anything without shouting abuse at the old man.

“Right.” Harry said stiffly, looking at the ground, the walls, anywhere but Dumbledore because he couldn’t stand the pitying look that was on his face right now. Dumbledore walked towards him and took a seat at the kitchen table, waving away the offer of tea from a dithering Molly Weasley.

“Now, Harry, as I’m sure you’ve guessed by now, I need to speak to you about where you’ll be living from now on. I of course believe that you will be safest at Privet Drive due to the blood wards, so if you don’t mind packing your trunk this evening then we can be off as soon as possible.”

Dumbledore looked at him expectantly, as if waiting for Harry to bound upstairs and just pack his belongings as if it was the simplest thing in the world. He looked around and saw that he wasn’t the only one that was unaffected by Dumbledore’s attempted charm. Sirius’ eyes were narrowed, Arthur and Remus both looked disconcerted and Molly was hovering worriedly in the background.

“Professor, I’d really rather I stayed here.” Harry spoke clearly and looked directly at the headmaster, knowing that it was immeasurably important that he managed to win this argument and he wasn’t going to do it by looking weak. Dumbledore looked appraisingly at him.

“Harry, be sensible now. I know you want to stay with Sirius but I’m just thinking of what’s best for you,” Dumbledore said gently. He was obviously trying his best to manipulate him but it wasn’t going to work.

“If it’s so dangerous here that I have to go back to the Dursleys to be properly safe, then how come I’ve been living here?” Harry asked defiantly.

“I don’t deny that it’s safe here, Harry, but I still think you’d be better off—“

“I disagree, professor,” Harry spoke bluntly now, feeling his temper beginning to rise. “This house has had copious amounts of protective charms put on it by Sirius’ family, not to mention the protections cast by the rest of the Order, and the fact that it’s under the Fidelius charm so that no one but you can tell anyone where it is. Please tell me how it can be unsafe to live here? If I’m perfectly honest I’d feel much more exposed having to take the journey back to Privet Drive.”
Harry was fighting to keep his voice from rising. He glanced at Sirius who smirked at him, clearly thinking that Harry was gaining ground in the argument. Dumbledore looked distinctly put out, but he recovered quickly enough, although the twinkle in his eye was now absent.

“Speaking as someone who has your best interests at heart—” Dumbledore began, but he was cut off mid-sentence by an irate Sirius.

“No offense, Dumbledore, but I think I have slightly more say in this situation than you do. I’m Harry’s godfather, and I would very much prefer if it he were to live with me rather than with a pack of abusive muggles!” Sirius almost growled at Dumbledore, and Harry was glad that someone was sticking up for him. Dumbledore at least had the decency to look slightly guilty.

“I know Harry hasn’t had the best of times living with the Dursleys, but the enchantments placed upon that house are very strong and it’s the best place for him to be.” Dumbledore spoke quietly.

“Professor, if I might say something,” Harry chimed in. He didn’t appreciate being spoken about in the third person when he was sitting right there.

“Go ahead, dear boy,” Dumbledore spoke kindly enough but the smile didn’t reach his eyes.

“Surely, now that I’ve been expelled, Voldemort will already know that I’m not going back to Hogwarts. He’ll assume that I’ve been sent back to Privet Drive to stay with the Dursleys, and as far as I know he doesn’t even know this place exists. So if it’s my safety that’s the most important factor here then I think it would make a lot more sense to let Voldemort assume I’m with the Dursleys while I really stay here.”

This sounded perfectly logical to Harry, he was secretly very thrilled that he’d managed to think of such an argument to put forward, and he didn’t see how Dumbledore could possibly argue his way out of this one. An appreciative murmur ran around the table as other people weighed up what he had said and realised that it made a lot of sense.

“Harry has a very valid point, Albus,” Remus said quietly. Until now he had been watching the discussion unfold with a pensive expression on his face, but now it seemed he was siding firmly with Harry and Sirius. “It would be the last thing Voldemort would expect.”

Sirius chose this moment to get up and come round to Harry’s side of the table so he could stand next to Harry and put a hand on his shoulder. It showed a united front against Dumbledore, and Harry felt a surge of affection for his godfather. Everyone looked at Dumbledore expectantly, and eventually he sighed and spoke.

“Well, it appears that I’m outnumbered. Very well Harry, you may stay here with Sirius for the time being. I daresay you’re right about Voldemort, at any rate. On that note, I suppose I should take my leave. Good evening to you all.” With a nod of the head, Dumbledore turned on his heel and strode from the room, and they all heard the door slam behind him a moment later. They looked at each other, surprised that for once Dumbledore hadn’t got his own way. Harry secretly thought that it served the old man right.

Sirius grinned and picked Harry up bodily, swinging him round in a massive bear hug before setting him back on the ground with a bark-like laugh. Harry playfully shoved him backwards,
letting out a laugh of his own. He may be expelled from Hogwarts, but he had finally got what he had always wanted – he was actually, officially going to be living with Sirius. This filled him with a feeling of immense joy and satisfaction, and he was completely caught off guard when a sharp pain suddenly shot through his scar and his stomach churned.

“Ouch!” Harry yelled involuntarily, grabbing his head in pain. He hadn’t felt a pain like that in his scar in a long time, not one this intense anyway. He looked up to see Sirius looking at him in panic.

“What is it Harry, what hurts? Is it your scar?” He asked quickly, gently running a hand over the scar on Harry’s forehead. His touch soothed Harry’s pain, and sent a tingle running through him that made his stomach flip excitedly again. This was getting out of hand, he thought desperately.

“It’s fine, it was nothing,” Harry reassured him. “It happens all the time now.” Sirius didn’t look very convinced, but he let it go for now. Harry had other things to worry about anyway, like the fact that despite how hard he tried he couldn’t stop thinking about the particular shade of his godfather’s eyes and the way his dark fringe flopped over his forehead, nearly brushing the tips of his eyelashes. *I am totally screwed*, Harry thought desperately to himself.
Dread and fear surrounded Harry. Everything was black, so black, he couldn't even see his hand in front of his face. Out of the darkness came a shape, rushing towards him, bringing the feeling of terror with it. Something was badly wrong here, unnatural, twisted and sick. The shape became clearer and Harry saw that it was a ring with a black stone in it, spinning in hypnotising circles, magnified to a hundred times its normal size. As Harry watched it, mesmerised, giant snake leaped through the middle of the ring towards him, fangs bared, screaming in parseltongue about wanting to kill.

Harry woke up with a start to the sound of chaos all around him. Footsteps were stomping up and down the stairs deafeningly, and he could hear Molly shouting at someone about running late. With a sinking feeling he remembered the fact that today was September 1st, and everyone must be getting ready to leave for Hogwarts. With a sigh, he opened his eyes and saw Ron hastily throwing all his last minute belongings into his trunk and attempting to cram the lid shut, before running from the room shouting something about forgetting his socks.

Stretching and yawning widely, Harry climbed out of bed and padded down the stairs, skirting around Crookshanks who seemed to be dodging Hermione's attempts to put him in his cage. He reached the kitchen and flopped down into a chair, observing the chaos grumpily and wishing he could be a part of it all. A moment later, the building was ringing with the sound of Molly yelling at the top of her voice at Fred and George, who had accidentally knocked Ginny down two flights of stairs with their trunks.

Harry sighed and looked around the kitchen, catching the eye of Sirius who was watching him thoughtfully from the doorway.

“Harry, come over here,” Sirius called to him and walked out of the kitchen towards the library which was thankfully empty. Harry followed him curiously, wondering what Sirius wanted.

“Here, I have something to give to you,” Sirius smiled at him and pulled a hastily wrapped package out of his pocket. Harry took it and opened it quickly, to find a set of two identical hand held mirrors. He look at Sirius, confused.

“Er…thanks.”

“They’re two way mirrors, Harry. You can have one, and give the other one to Ron and Hermione. When you say one of their names into your mirror, you’ll appear in theirs, and they’ll be able to talk to you in yours. Me and James used to use them when we were in separate detentions,” Sirius grinned at him. Harry didn’t know what to say, he was amazed. A way to speak to Ron and Hermione without any information getting hijacked? He grinned and gave Sirius a quick hug.

“Wow! Thanks Sirius! I’d better go find Ron and Hermione before they leave,” he said quickly and rushed off to find them. He found Ron attempting to catch Pigwidgeon and get him into his cage, and Hermione was sitting on her trunk having a last minute read of Hogwarts: A History. Harry beckoned them into the dark pantry which was one of the few rooms left with no one else in it.
“Look what Sirius just gave me! They’re two way mirrors. If I give you one of them and keep the other, we can talk to each other while you’re at Hogwarts and we won’t have to worry about owls being intercepted or anything,” Harry said enthusiastically. He pushed one mirror into Ron’s hands, who turned it over and inspected it with his mouth hanging open.

“Wow, that’s really interesting magic!” Hermione said, fascinated, as she stared at the mirror in Ron’s hands. “It was really thoughtful of Sirius to give you them,” she added quietly with a smile.

“Yeah, it was,” Harry smiled happily. He was glad he was going to be able to keep in touch with his best friends, and he hoped this would stop them growing too far apart over the course of the year. They still had Christmas and Easter holidays, Harry reminded himself cheerfully. With a much more optimistic attitude than he’d had earlier, Harry walked to the door and waved off the Weasleys and Hermione, along with Remus, Moody and Tonks who were accompanying them to the train station. Despite Harry not being with them Mad Eye still seemed to think they’d need a guard in case of ambush.

The door swung shut, and the noise of people, owls and cats was cut off immediately as they left the protection of the enchanted house. The silence was almost deafening. Harry turned and saw Sirius standing at the end of the hall, and he was struck by just how handsome he really was. Tall and slim, but well built, defined cheekbones and pale skin complimented by his dark hair which seemed to effortlessly look perfectly styled. His silvery grey eyes were striking, and they were currently looking into Harry’s with a roguish glint in them.

Harry suddenly realised that number one, he was checking out his godfather, and number two, he was now completely alone in the house with said godfather. He blushed furiously at that thought and wiped his sweaty palms on his pyjama bottoms that he had never bothered to change out of. Sirius looked curiously at him, then turned and headed towards the kitchen.

“D’you want any breakfast, Harry?” Sirius called, and Harry came to his senses, following him into the kitchen. He suddenly realised just how hungry he was.

“Yeah, sure,” he grinned at his godfather.

“Full English coming up!” Sirius said enthusiastically, and started gathering together pots and pans. It was the happiest Harry had seen him in a while, and he sat watching him cook their breakfast with ill-disguised interest. Sirius was completely absorbed in his work, single-handedly managing to cook sausages, bacon, eggs, tomatoes and mushrooms, and Harry couldn’t stop staring. He sighed, trying to pull himself together. Was he going mad? It couldn’t possibly be normal for him to be feeling these things, but then when had any aspect of his life been normal, he asked himself wryly.

Harry tried to distract himself by thinking about something different. He pondered what it was going to be like living here all the time, with no chance of going outside and flying, or just being able to enjoy the fresh air. Well, as fresh as the air got in London anyway.

He felt guilty thinking about himself, when Sirius had been cooped up in this place for months before Harry had even got here. Maybe they should sneak out…this idea filled Harry with a feeling of nervous excitement. It was one thing sneaking out of his dormitory at Hogwarts, but would it be pushing it too far to actually sneak out of Grimmauld place? It wouldn’t be for long, an hour at most…he vaguely remembered passing a muggle park when he walked to the Underground station on the way to his hearing. With Sirius’ animagus form, surely they’d be safe? It wasn’t as if any wizards actually lived in this area. Harry was so deep in this thoughts that he didn’t notice Sirius putting a full plate of food in front of him until he was poked in the ribs.
“Oi, Harry, wake up! Breakfast time!” Sirius said cheekily, laughing as Harry jumped and then started shovelling food into his mouth. “What were you thinking about?”

“Well…just an idea…I mean, we shouldn’t…but it would be so…” Harry struggled to formulate a sentence, and then laughed at the perplexed expression on Sirius’ face.

“What on earth are you talking about?” Sirius said with a grin. Harry composed himself and tried again.

“I was just thinking about the fact that you haven’t been outside in months. I mean, everyone’s gone for now and they won’t be back from Kings Cross for a little while…no one would know if we disappeared for a bit…” he tailed off, trying to judge Sirius’ reaction. Sirius looked dumbfounded for a moment, then a mischievous grin appeared slowly on his face.

“We’ll make a Marauder of you yet, Harry! That’s a brilliant idea! But where would we go?”

“I remember seeing a muggle park just round the corner. It’s fairly big, plenty of sticks for Snuffles to fetch,” Harry said amusedly, “and I doubt any muggles would recognise me. I’d bring my invisibility cloak just in case, anyway.” Harry was properly excited now and he pushed away his half eaten breakfast, too worked up to finish it. The prospect of being able to go outside with Sirius, and the fact that they were breaking the rules to do it, was unexpectedly exhilarating. Sirius was up and walking towards the door in seconds.

“Come on then, Harry, what are you waiting for?” Sirius asked eagerly, and Harry couldn’t help but smile at how happy he was. He quickly sprinted up the stairs and grabbed his invisibility cloak, arriving back in the hall to find a large, bear like dog waiting for him.

“Walkies!” Harry shouted, and Sirius gave him a look of distain before bounding towards the door and barking loudly, clearly signalling Harry to hurry up. He opened the door and watched Sirius run past him, immediately spotting a pigeon and chasing it unrestrainedly down the road. It felt great to see him so free, and Harry’s stomach did it’s now familiar little flip.

Harry quickly ran down the steps and followed Sirius down the road at a jog. It was amazing feeling the sun on his face, and he looked around happily at the run-down area of London that would probably have looked really gloomy if he hadn’t been cooped up inside for so long. He drew level with Sirius who was busy sniffing the air and investigating everything as if he’d never seen it before, and he scratched his ears absentmindedly. Sirius barked in appreciation and then ran away again, headed into the park that Harry had remembered.

They passed a happy half an hour or so running around and playing with an abandoned Frisbee that Snuffles had found – Harry throwing it as far into the air as he could, and Sirius sprinting and jumping to catch it. After a while Sirius got distracted by something and ran to the far side of the park, disappearing behind some trees. When he didn’t immediately reappear, Harry followed him curiously.

“Snuffles! Snuffles? What are you doing?” he called out, following the sound of Sirius’ excited barks.

Harry pushed through the trees, noting how pretty they looked with all their blossom falling down in the gentle breeze, and found Sirius back in his human body, standing and taking in the view of
a small trickling stream that was running through the park. You wouldn't know it was there unless
you walked behind these blossoming trees, as they hid it from view. It was a beautiful little
secluded spot, but Harry thought it paled in comparison to the sight of Sirius standing there, a
look of pure contentment and delight on his face making him appear years younger and even more
handsome than usual. Harry’s heart raced and he blushed slightly but this time he didn’t mind. It
felt right, somehow, and he was too distracted by this beautiful park and the gorgeous man in front
of him to care whether it was normal or not.

They sat on the grass next to the river, leaning against a tree, and watched the blossom gently fall
to the ground. Harry subconsciously moved closer to Sirius, and his godfather put his arm around
Harry, pulling them flush against each other. Harry blushed and rested his head on Sirius’
shoulder. Being this close to him, this relaxed with him, felt so wonderful. Turning to Sirius, he
giggled slightly and leaned forwards to brush a piece of blossom from his hair. He gently
smoothed the hair down where he’d touched it, and trailed his hand down to rest on Sirius’ waist.
They were so close now, their faces nearly touching. Harry could feel Sirius’ breath tickling his
cheek, he was being drawn closer and closer by his mesmerizing eyes. He felt as if he could lose
himself in them, Sirius’ gaze was so intense, he could feel himself blushing but it didn’t matter
now. If he just moved forwards an inch or two…

A loud screech came from behind the screen of trees they were hidden behind, and Harry jumped
violently, pulling away from Sirius and feeling his cheeks blush a darker red. He was suddenly
aware of the fact that there were children playing in the park, the screeching and shouting he could
hear was a game of football by the sound of it. He awkwardly looked at Sirius’ feet, too nervous
to see what expression was on his face, and tried to act normal.

“Er, I guess we should be getting back…” he managed to whisper, “the others are probably home
by now.” He had no idea how much time had passed, he’d forgotten to keep track, but they were
almost definitely going to be in a lot of trouble when they got back. Harry was almost thankful for
that, because it was giving him something else to focus on. At least, he focused on it for a minute
or two before reverting back to his previous panicked thoughts.

Oh God, oh God, what have I done, I nearly kissed him! I was acting like we were on a date or
something, Harry thought to himself frantically. He felt so ashamed of himself. What on earth
would Sirius think of him now? It would be awkward, and strained, Sirius wouldn’t want to be
near him. It was only the first day of them living together properly and he did something like this?

These depressing thoughts ran round his brain over and over, until one small voice piped up at the
back of his mind. Sirius didn’t pull away…he was moving towards you too, maybe he wanted to
kiss you…he was the one cuddling you in the first place…Harry thought about it carefully. It was
true, Sirius hadn’t exactly pulled away when Harry had moved closer to him. They had been
gravitating towards each other, both feeling extremely comfortable with the closeness…but what if
he was imagining this?

Harry sighed, frustrated, and turned to see Sirius transforming back into Snuffles for the journey
home. They walked back to Grimmauld place, Harry not enjoying the sunshine as much as he had
on the way there. After a minute or two they reached the front door and Harry tapped it with his
wand, walking in cautiously and quietly in case the others were home already. Sirius followed him
in and turned back into himself again, and with the sound of the front door clicking shut came an
almighty roar from the kitchen.

“WHERE ON EARTH HAVE YOU TWO BEEN?” Came the furious shout of Molly Weasley
as she strode into the hall, “WE WERE OUT OF OUR MINDS WITH WORRY! HARRY,
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY VOLDEMORT FOR ALL WE KNEW! AND
SIRIUS,” she paused for breath here, glaring at Sirius with what appeared to be pure hate, “YOU
CALL YOURSELF A RESPONSIBLE ADULT? WHAT WERE YOU THINKING??”
Harry looked up at Sirius, and saw that his face was chalk white. They both stood there, feeling immensely guilty, but at a loss for words. Mrs Weasley continued, slightly quieter this time but her words were full of venom.

“I’ve a right mind to call Albus in a minute and get him to take you straight to the Dursleys, Harry. This is obviously not a safe place for you to live, Sirius is a bad influence on you,” she said coldly. The bottom dropped out of Harry’s stomach and he felt petrified with fear.

“No!” he shouted, panicking now, “No, you can’t send me back there! Look, it was my idea. I told Sirius we should sneak out,” Harry admitted.

“You?” Molly said, surprised, “Oh Harry, I thought you had more sense than that,” she continued, the disappointment clear in her voice. “I still think you should go back to the Dursleys. It’s obvious that Sirius isn’t actually grown-up enough to take care of you.” She glared at Sirius again, and Sirius glared back, fists clenched by his side, clearly trying hard not to lash out at her.

“Molly, Harry is my godson and he will live here if I damn well want him to. Dumbledore isn’t his guardian, he doesn’t have a say in this and neither do you. It was stupid of us to go out, I admit that, and it won’t happen again. But if you or Dumbledore or anyone else tries to take Harry away from me, you will live to regret it.” Sirius’ tone was dark and threatening, and it was clear that he meant every word. Despite the situation they were in at the moment, Sirius’ possessiveness of him sent a pleasant jolt of happiness into his stomach and his heart sped up slightly.

“I’m not leaving Sirius here alone. I don’t care what anyone says, I refuse to leave and that’s all there is to it.” Harry bravely said what was on his mind, looking a surprised Molly right in the eyes and trying to put across exactly how stubborn he was going to be on this. Sirius beamed at him and threw an arm round his shoulder, squeezing it slightly as he stared down Molly. After a moment she gave up and sighed exasperatedly.

“Fine, fine, I can see that it’s going to be more trouble than it’s worth trying to separate the two of you. I’m going to make sure you’re not left alone here again, though,” she added nastily, looking at them both suspiciously before turning on her heel and stalking back into the kitchen. They looked at each other, relieved that they’d made it out of that tight spot.

“Probably best if we don’t try something like that again for a while,” Sirius grinned at him. Harry laughed and nodded his agreement, heading upstairs to his bedroom. He needed time to think about things, very important things that involved a particularly gorgeous man that wouldn’t get out of his mind. He ran upstairs, slamming his door behind him and flopping down on the bed. Letting out a huge sigh, he closed his eyes and allowed himself to think freely.

The main thing he was feeling was disbelief. This was his godfather he was thinking about. Okay, so they weren’t related or anything but still. He was confused about how on earth his feelings for Sirius had changed so dramatically. When had he started seeing him as being attractive? In fact, since when was he attracted to guys anyway? Ugh, he was so confused right now. And what about that very nearly almost kiss? Was he imagining the fact that Sirius had been moving towards him too, was it just wishful thinking? He supposed that if Sirius had noticed anything and been put off by it, he probably wouldn’t have argued so forcefully about wanting Harry to stay here with him.

These thoughts continued to plague him throughout the day, and he was unusually quiet at lunch and dinner. Sirius looked concerned, but Harry just told everyone that he was missing Ron and Hermione. They all looked understanding, and left him to these thoughts. Harry trudged back up the stairs after a late dinner, and lay down on his bed again to think.
There was no going back now, Harry realised. He wanted to be close to Sirius, wanted to cuddle him, to kiss him. Thinking it that plainly made him blush, and he couldn’t help but imagine it happening…how Sirius’ lips would feel on his…Harry’s stomach flipped, his heart raced and he almost felt light headed. As he was desperately trying not to think about Sirius, and failing miserably, he suddenly heard what sounded like Ron’s voice calling his name. He sat up, confused, and saw his two way mirror on the bedside cabinet with Ron’s face peering into it, a reflection of his friend who wasn’t in the room with him. Harry quickly grabbed his mirror and looked into it.

“Ron!”

“There you are Harry! Wow, this thing actually works,” Ron said in amazement.

“Apparently so, yeah,” Harry grinned back at him.

“Hey, Hermione, come over here! The mirror works!” Ron called over his shoulder, and a second later Harry could see both of his friends looking at him in the mirror.

“How’s it going at Hogwarts so far, then? Anything interesting happened?” Harry asked them eagerly. He saw them exchange a dark look, and felt his stomach sink. Surely something bad couldn’t have happened already?

“Well, to start with Hagrid isn’t here,” Hermione began, and Harry could detect the worry in her voice.

“What? But he’s always there!” Harry said, confused. “You mean he wasn’t at the feast?”

“Not just the feast, Harry. That Grubbly-Plank woman is here instead, she’s come back to teach Care of Magical Creatures.” Ron sounded worried, and Harry couldn’t help but feel the same.

“I hope he’s not hurt,” Harry said quietly, and the looks on the faces of his best friends reflected his thoughts.

“I hope so too, Harry, I really do. That’s not the only thing that’s happened, anyway,” Hermione said.

“Yeah, we saw our new Defence teacher at the feast and she’s horrible. Wore a load of pink, and looked like a toad. Spoke to us like we were all five year olds. She made some speech about…progress being prohibited…or something like that…” Ron tailed off and Hermione took over.

“She said ‘progress for progress’s sake must be discouraged,’ and ‘pruning wherever we find practices that ought to be prohibited!’” Hermione said indignantly. Harry was thinking about Ron’s description of the teacher.

“What was her name?”
“Professor Umbridge,” Ron said with a disgruntled look on his face, and Harry gasped.

“What?” Ron and Hermione said together.

“Umbridge was the name of the woman at my Ministry hearing! She was short and fat, and definitely looked like a toad…” Harry said, fuming. How on earth was a Ministry official working at the school? Hermione looked grave at this news.

“Well, it looks like the Ministry is going to be interfering at Hogwarts,” she said quietly, and they all looked at each other worriedly. “Oh by the way, Harry, Cho Chang was asking about where you were… I think she definitely likes you,” she added with a grin, obviously trying to lighten the mood. Harry had completely forgotten about his feelings for Cho. He thought about her, pictured her face in his mind, but now he felt nothing. He sighed, resigning himself to the fact that it was only Sirius in his thoughts now.

“I don’t really like Cho anymore Hermione,” Harry said awkwardly.

“You don’t? Oh. Is there someone else you like then?” Hermione said eagerly, and Ron looked on with a smug grin on his face, obviously amused at how embarrassed this conversation was making Harry.

“No!” Harry replied, too quickly. He couldn’t fight the blush that appeared on his face, and he saw Hermione’s eyes widen.

“There is someone, isn’t there! Who is it?” Ron asked, laughing at the expression on Harry’s face.

“No, there isn’t!” Harry said, getting redder by the minute. “Look, I have to go. I said I’d… help Sirius clean the… kitchen…” Harry said lamely, saying the first thing that came into his head. “I’ll talk to you later!”

“Fine, Harry, whatever you say,” Ron laughed at him, and Harry scowled back.

“Bye, Hermione,” he said, trying to preserve what dignity he had left, and he tapped his wand on the mirror to end the call. Harry laid back on his bed, his mind racing with all the information he’d just received. Even though he wasn’t there any more he hated the idea of that Umbridge woman interfering at Hogwarts, and he wished he could be there so he could curse her right in her stupid toad-like face. With that satisfying thought, Harry closed his eyes and slowly drifted off to sleep.
Harry sat at the kitchen table, yawning widely and sipping on a glass of pumpkin juice. He was trying to read the Daily Prophet, but kept staring at the same sentence over and over while he retreated into his thoughts. It was quite early in the morning, Sirius wasn’t even out of bed yet. Harry had been woken early by his usual nightmares and he had given up on trying to get back to sleep, so here he was in the kitchen instead.

Drifting off into his thoughts again, Harry mused over the conversation he’d had with Ron and Hermione in the mirror a few days ago. Ron had angrily ranted to Harry about how twisted Umbridge was, and how she wasn’t even going to let them use any defensive magic in their lessons. It was ridiculous, and Harry could see how it all tied in to Fudge’s ridiculous notion about Dumbledore wanting to overthrow the Ministry of Magic. Maybe he was too scared to even let the students of Hogwarts learn offensive magic in case they used it on him? Whatever was going through his thick mind, it was wrong. Harry worried for Ron and Hermione, and all the other students, especially the ones taking OWLS this year. How would they pass if they weren’t allowed to practise the spells that they were learning about?

As if that wasn’t bad enough, it seemed that there was a large amount of distrust spreading through the school about whether Voldemort was actually back. Hermione had gently told Harry that Seamus Finnigan’s mother had nearly pulled him out of Hogwarts because she didn’t believe the so called ‘lies’ that Harry and Dumbledore were spreading. Seamus, it appeared, agreed with her. He had been arguing with Ron about whether Harry was ‘messed up in the head’. Harry got extremely angry at this point and flung the mirror across the room, luckily not breaking it. He apologised to Ron and Hermione and ended the call, spending that night lying awake restlessly and thinking about how unfair this whole situation was. Why on earth would he lie about how Cedric had died? Did they really think he was that desperate for attention that he would pretend to have duelled Voldemort? Harry was infinitely grateful for Ron and Hermione standing up for him, and staying loyal to him.

As Harry sat at the kitchen table, absentmindedly staring into space and not noticing the fact that he was dunking his newspaper into his pumpkin juice, his thoughts drifted off into the now familiar direction of Sirius. His mind went back to a few days ago when they had been relaxing in the living room in the evening. Sirius had been stretched out on the sofa, engrossed in a book, and Harry couldn’t keep his eyes off him. He had been wearing tight trousers, a button up shirt with the sleeves rolled up and the top few buttons undone to reveal a tantalising amount of smooth chest. His face was a picture of concentration, a tiny furrow between his brows as he focused on the words he was reading. His eyes looked so deep and intense that Harry badly wished they were focussed on him.

Harry groaned, realising that he had been thinking about it again. This had to stop! Sirius had caught him staring once or twice, and winked at him so suggestively that Harry had nearly died of embarrassment. Why did Sirius have to be so damn gorgeous? Harry asked himself this question several times a day and still had no answer. It wasn’t just his looks that Harry was admiring, he had realised. He was noticing little things about Sirius that endeared him to Harry, and made him smile.

There was the fact that he was an incredibly brave man. He had stood up to his parents about their beliefs when he was just a teenager, run away from home and had to fend for himself. Not to mention the bravery and strength of mind he had shown by lasting twelve years in Azkaban without losing his sanity. He may be reckless, but Harry loved his mischievous streak. He had a great sense of humour, and still loved to pull pranks when he got the chance. Exceptionally bright and intelligent, Sirius had got top grades at school and Harry had seen him do some incredible magic. He had been only fifteen when he had managed to turn into his Animagus form which was no mean feat.
All of this blended together into one amazing, attractive man, and Harry was getting worried about just how strong his feelings for Sirius were becoming. He tried to think back to when he had begun to think about Sirius in this way, but it seemed like it had been a slow transition from admiring him as a godfather figure to...whatever this was now. It was bloody confusing, if Harry was perfectly honest, but it just felt so right. He sighed, thinking about how Sirius must feel being in this house. It wasn’t just the fact that he wasn’t allowed outside, it was the memories that must be tormenting him all the time. His childhood had been an unhappy one, and now he was forced to recall this every day that he was stuck in this place. Harry wished there was something he could do to help.

As Harry was pondering this, the man himself walked into the room and sat down opposite him.

“Morning Harry. Why are you putting your newspaper in your pumpkin juice?” Sirius asked him with an amused voice. Harry looked down and hastily removed it, feeling his cheeks turn red in embarrassment.

“Oh, sorry.” he laughed it off and stretched, yawning again. “What are we doing today, Snuffles?”

“Actually, I have some news that you might like,” Sirius said thoughtfully.

“Oh yeah? What is it?” Harry asked eagerly.

“Well, Dumbledore came by last night when you were in bed and had some interesting things to tell me. To start off, he mentioned that you actually got off very lightly at the Ministry hearing. Turns out Fudge was so enthusiastic about expelling you and proving you wrong, that he forgot the most important part about it.”

“Which is what?” Harry asked impatiently.

“Your wand. He was supposed to snap it when you were expelled, because only trained overage wizards are allowed to use magic unless they’re in school.”

Harry gasped, his face turning white. He suddenly remembered what Hagrid had told him about his own expulsion. The Ministry had snapped his wand in half, stopping him from doing magic.

“So you’re saying the Ministry are going to make me give up my wand?” Harry said, terrified.

“No, no, wait! There’s more. Dumbledore pointed out the fact that you’re living in a house which is protected by the Fidelius charm. It’s a pretty powerful piece of magic, and this is where it gets interesting. The Trace, which is the method the Ministry use to detect any underage magic, is a type of tracking spell. And because the basic foundations of the spell are built on tracing a person’s whereabouts, the spell doesn’t work on someone that is being hidden by the Fidelius charm!” Sirius said triumphantly. Harry gaped at him, his mouth hanging open.

“You mean I can do magic in here and the Ministry won’t know about it?” Harry asked excitedly.

“Exactly!”
“Wait, wait. You said Fudge forgot to snap my wand at my hearing, so surely that means he’s going to try to find me so that he can do it. I know he can’t find me here, but surely I’m going to be in more trouble by evading him? He’s not going to just stop searching for me because I’m not at Privet Drive.”

“That is an issue…Dumbledore is doing his best to sort it out, but as you know he isn’t exactly in favour with the Ministry at the moment. It’s looking quite likely that Fudge is going to work out that Dumbledore knows exactly where you are, and they’ll try to get it out of him.”

“So the only thing standing between the Ministry and me is Dumbledore…that’s just great,” Harry said moodily. His confidence in the headmaster had reached an all-time low recently, and this didn’t seem like great news. However, he figured it was best to focus on the good thing that had come from this. “But still, I can do magic here for the time being!” Harry said excitedly.

“Yeah, which brings me to my second point,” Sirius said, smiling at him. “I’ve been thinking about the fact that you won’t be learning any magic if you’re not at school. I discussed it with Remus, and he thinks it would be a good idea for the both of us to use our collective knowledge to teach you some stuff that might come in handy.”

This sounded amazing to Harry. Learning new magic with Sirius as his teacher? He grinned widely, filling with an excited agitation.

“Wow, that sounds awesome! When can we start? He asked Sirius quickly, earning an amused smile in return.

“Well, I have a list of spells here that we brainstormed earlier. Remus is busy at the moment but we could start after breakfast if you don’t mind it being just you and me.” Sirius said lightly.

“Of course I don’t mind!” Harry said without a second thought. The idea of being taught one on one by Sirius was a very good thought indeed. He blushed, his traitorous thoughts showing him ideas of something else he could do one on one with Sirius…this thought distracted him for the next few minutes and before he knew it they had finished breakfast and Sirius was beckoning him into the drawing room where he thought it would be best to practice spells.

They headed into the room, and Sirius pushed the furniture to the side of the room with a flick of his wand so they’d have space to work with.

“Ok, I have something special for us to work on today…” Sirius said, with a mischievous glint in his eye. Harry listened carefully, intrigued to see what was in store for him. “It’s not something that will ever be on the curriculum at Hogwarts, that’s for sure…and we’ll have to work on boring stuff eventually because Moony will find out and tell us off otherwise, but I was thinking, if you’re interested, maybe you could start working on becoming an Animagus!”

Sirius said all of this very quickly, obviously enthusiastic but worried that Harry would say no. On the contrary, Harry was extremely excited. It sounded like complex magic that would take a lot of time and effort to perfect, but he was fascinated by the idea of being able to turn into an animal. He wondered what animal he would be…an image appeared in his mind of him perfecting his Animagus form only to find that he was a slug.
“That sounds great to me, Sirius…” Harry said, smiling at him. “But what if I turn into something ridiculous like a slug or a stick insect or something.”

Sirius laughed, and reassured him. “You won’t turn into something ridiculous, Harry. The animal you turn into usually reflects your physical appearance, and elements of your personality and characteristics. Why do you think I turn into a dog?”

“You’re incredibly loyal,” Harry began, smiling hesitantly at Sirius, “and can be playful and excitable. Not to mention your disregard for rules. You’re just a disobedient puppy, aren’t you?” Harry said teasingly and Sirius gave a bark-like laugh.

“You summed me up pretty well there, Harry,” he said affectionately. “Now it’s my turn to describe you…” He looked into Harry’s eyes searchingly, and Harry blushed at the attention. “Well, to start off you’re probably the bravest man I know…” Sirius looked at him intently, sending shivers down his spine, “you’re loyal, kind, caring…and not to mention, you’ve grown up to be an attractive young man…” Sirius finished in a rough whisper.

Harry’s heart started racing at twice its normal speed, and goosebumps rose up all over his body. Had he really just heard Sirius say that? He looked up and saw Sirius’ eyes staring into his own. Their proximity was so close that he could almost feel electricity shooting between them…Harry felt Sirius’ hand reach up and gently stroke the side of his face, almost tenderly, and he closed his eyes, enjoying the sensation. Every sense was heightened, he could hear Sirius’ breath drawing almost imperceptibly closer to him. Harry opened his eyes slightly, looking up at Sirius through his lashes, and saw the hungry look in his eyes.

Before he knew what was happening, Sirius’ lips were pressing gently on his own. Harry gasped slightly before kissing him back, hesitantly wrapping his arms around his waist and pulling them closer together. It felt incredible, exhilarating…Sirius’ lips were soft and dominant, and Harry moaned as he felt his tongue slide sensually along his bottom lip. He opened his mouth and allowed Sirius to dart his tongue in, feeling waves of pleasure radiate through him. Harry responded with equal intensity and revelled in the taste of Sirius’ tongue. After a while they pulled away from each other to catch their breath, and Sirius looked at Harry with wide, lust-filled eyes. Seconds later, however, Sirius shook his head and blinked, a look of horror suddenly taking over his face. Staggering backwards slightly, he pulled his arms away from Harry as if burned.

“Oh Merlin, what have I done?” he said in a tortured voice, and he turned and strode from the room, slamming the door behind him.

Harry could only stand there, looking blankly at the space where Sirius had been a minute ago, waiting for his brain to catch up. He had just gone from deliriously happy to confused and hurt within seconds. Sirius had kissed him…but he regretted it. The look on his face had been so angry, as he left the room, Harry collapsed onto the floor weakly and put his head in his hands. He tried to stop it, but he couldn’t help the tears that started falling. Hours later, that was how a concerned Remus found him, curled up on the floor of the Drawing room with tears still falling steadily down his face.
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter 10

“Harry?”

A hesitant voice came from the doorway, and Harry recognised it as the voice of Remus. He sat up slowly, wiping the tears from his blotchy face.

“Oh Merlin, Harry, what happened? Why are you crying?” Remus ran over to him, a look of deep concern on his tired face. He gently pulled Harry up to stand, and guided him over to the sofa where they both sat. Remus put an arm around Harry’s shoulders and pulled him into a hug, at which point Harry had to try very hard not to start crying again.

“I…I can’t talk about it,” Harry said quietly, his voice breaking half way through the sentence.

“Is it something to do with Sirius? Did you have an argument or something?” Remus said tentatively. Harry had to fight down a new wave of humiliation and hurt, and the look on his face seemed to say enough. “You can tell me, Harry. I know I’ve been away a lot since you’ve been staying here but you have to know that I’m here for you.”

Harry gave a watery smile, but he couldn’t keep it up and before long he was frowning at the ground again. “I wish I could tell you, Moony, but I really can’t. I’m just…upset, and confused, and hurt, and humiliated beyond belief. I just want everything to go back to normal again!” he moaned, hiding his head in his hands. His next words were muffled. “And now Sirius hates me and he probably wants me to just go back to the Dursleys and leave him alone.” Saying these thoughts out loud made it seem all the more real, and he looked away before he embarrassed himself by crying again.

“What? Of course he doesn’t think that, Harry. No matter what happened between the two of you, there’s no way he’d want you to leave,” Remus said gently but firmly. He squeezed Harry’s shoulder briefly, trying to comfort him as best he could. For this Harry was immensely grateful.

“Why don’t you try talking to Sirius about this? Maybe you both just misunderstood each other. I can’t imagine any reason why Sirius would be angry at you, Harry,” Remus said softly. He sounded curious, and Harry couldn’t blame him. This was something he really didn’t want to have to explain to him, however. Oh by the way, I just kissed my godfather, the best friend of my dead dad, this is totally normal right? Yeah, that would go down well…not.

“This isn’t going to get sorted out unless you talk to each other.” Remus was starting to sound slightly sterner now. “Either you talk to him, or I’m going to go and ask him to tell me what happened.”

“What? No, you can’t!” Harry said quickly, blushing. Merlin, he really didn’t need anyone else finding out about this, it was embarrassing enough as it was. Remus looked at him curiously, and stood up.
“I’m sorry, Harry, but this has to be sorted out. You can’t avoid each other forever, you live in the same house. And before you say anything, no one is going to make you go back to the Dursleys. I’m going to talk to Sirius.” He looked sympathetically at Harry, as a last thought conjured him a handkerchief out of thin air with his wand, and strode out of the room. Harry closed his eyes, willing this to just be a horrible dream.

Sighing, Harry trudged up the stairs and went into his bedroom, flopping down on the bed face first. Why did everything have to be so damn complicated? He sat up, getting angry now. It felt more productive to be angry than to be upset. With everything that had happened to him in his life, why couldn’t he have just one thing that was good and normal and wholesome? He’d had the chance at having proper family, a godfather that cared about him, and he’d ruined it all by falling for him. Harry punched the wall, hard. Screaming in pain, he looked down and saw it swelling in front of his eyes. Probably broken. The pain gave him something else to focus on, and sent adrenalin rushing through his veins, but it wasn’t enough to push out the memories of Sirius. Thankfully he was dragged away from his thoughts a moment later by the voice of one of his best friends coming from his two way mirror.

“Hey Hermione,” he said half-heartedly, picking up the mirror and looking into it. Hermione’s face turned to shock and worry as she took in Harry’s appearance.

“Oh my-! What happened, Harry? Have you been crying? Are you hurt? Ron, get over here! Something’s happened to Harry!” She said all of this very quickly, her voice rising in pitch as she panicked. Harry heard Ron running over, and then he joined Hermione in the mirror, looking concerned.

“Calm down, I’m fine,” Harry said grumpily, but he wasn’t fooling anyone.

“Don’t you dare give us that crap!” Hermione said testily. “I can tell when you’re upset, Harry, it’s painfully obvious!”

“Whatever. Look, I really don’t want to talk about it. What’s been going on at Hogwarts?” Harry asked, needing something to distract him now. Hermione scowled at him, but she answered his question anyway.

“Much the same, really. Umbridge won’t let us do magic in her classes.”

“And the evil cow is spreading rumours about you and Dumbledore…” Ron added darkly.


“Well, mostly she’s telling everyone that you’re lying about Voldemort coming back, and Diggory’s death was a tragic accident…” Ron said hesitantly.

“Well that’s just great.” Harry said irritably. “Any other fantastic news I need to hear?” He knew
he was being unreasonably moody but he couldn’t really care less at the moment.

“We’ve noticed that Dumbledore is in school a lot less. Most of the time when we have meals now he’s not there, and I never see him walking around the school anymore. It’s driving Umbridge crazy, because she wants to know where he’s going and she has no authority to stop him doing anything.” Hermione said, sounding amused.

“That’s strange…” Harry said, his interest piqued, “Dumbledore never usually leaves the school. I wonder what he’s up to.”

“It could be something to do with the Order. Why don’t you ask Sirius about it, Harry?” Ron said thoughtfully. Harry’s face dropped, which wasn’t missed by Hermione.

“Oh dear, something’s happened between you and Sirius hasn’t it?” she asked him gently. Harry sighed, wondering why she had to be so astute all the time.

“Kinda, yeah…” he said vaguely.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“Not really.”

Hermione sighed. “Well, I can’t make you say anything, but please remember that we’re here for you if you change your mind,” she said softly. Harry smiled at her and absent-mindedly went to push his hair backwards with his right hand before remembering it was broken. He winced and swiftly moved it out of the way but not before Hermione noticed.

“Harry! What did you do to your hand? Why didn’t you say you were hurt?” She asked sternly.


“No, of course not! You should go and get someone to fix it. Is anyone home apart from Sirius?”

“I think Moony is around somewhere…” Harry said unenthusiastically. He knew that Remus would be disappointed in him for taking his anger out on himself, and he didn’t really want to see him right now after having a massive breakdown in front of him. Sadly, however, he realised it was for the best that he get his hand seen to.

“I guess I should go see if I can find him,” Harry sighed, “I’ll talk to you guys later. Thanks for…you know…tolerating me,” he added awkwardly.

“Remember to call us whenever you need to talk to someone! Goodbye, Harry.” Hermione replied.
“Yeah, see you mate. Hope your hand gets better,” Ron added. Harry smiled at them and tapped his wand to end the call.

Feeling annoyed at himself for getting so angry, Harry padded down the stairs and went to look for Remus, hoping that he wasn’t talking to Sirius still. He was relieved to find him sitting at the kitchen table, although he looked frustrated and tired. Harry approached him tentatively, and sat down on the chair next to him.

Remus looked round at him and gave a strained smile. “Hey, Harry. Are you okay?” He asked, looking as though he already knew the answer.

“I’ve been better. Actually, I had a bit of an…accident…are you any good at fixing broken bones?” Harry asked timidly. He showed his hand to Remus who looked shocked, and then deeply worried.

“Oh Merlin Harry, what did you do?”

“Erm…I may have kind of punched the wall. I was angry,” he added by way of an excuse.

Remus tutted and examined Harry’s hand carefully, trying not to move it. “Well, it definitely looks broken. I know a spell that should fix it, you should pay attention because healing spells are useful knowledge to have.” He got out his wand and pointed it at Harry’s hand, and said “Episkey!”

Harry’s hand felt very hot, and then very cold. He watched with interest as the swelling went down and the pain receded, although the bruises still remained. He wiggled his fingers experimentally and they felt a little stiff but otherwise as good as new.

“That’s about the best I can do, you’ll have to live with the bruises until they go down by themselves.” Remus told him with a stern look in his eye. “Look, I don’t know what happened between you and Sirius, he won’t tell me either, but if I found anything out from talking to him it’s that he’s angry at himself, not at you. Just keep that in mind. I still think that the only way this will be sorted is by the two of you talking to each other, but that’s up to the both of you.” Remus looked worried by this fact, he clearly realised that both of them were stubborn people and it was going to take a while to sort out.

“Thanks, Moony. For fixing my hand, and for trying to work things out…I don’t think it’s going to work though.”

“Not if you don’t try, Harry,” Remus said quietly. Harry didn’t know what to say to that, so he stayed quiet. “I have to go out now, I have Order business to do. Will you be okay here?” Harry caught the unasked question ‘will you be okay alone with Sirius?’

“Yeah, I’ll be fine.”

“Alright, I’ll see you soon Harry, take care.” Remus smiled at him and stood up stiffly, striding down the hall. A second later Harry heard the click of the door, and he slumped in his seat. What was he going to do now? He couldn’t talk to Sirius yet, that was out of the question. He decided to just find a nice interesting book to read and try to distract himself.
The days went by, and things were just as awkward between Harry and Sirius. Harry was avoiding him at all costs, which was difficult considering neither of them had anywhere else to go. Whenever he accidentally found himself in the same room as his godfather, Harry determinedly looked at the floor so he wouldn’t have to see the loathing and anger in Sirius’ eyes that he imagined was there.

Other Order members had started to notice that something had happened. Molly cornered him one day and asked him bluntly what Sirius had done to make him so upset. Knowing that she had some sort of grudge against Sirius, Harry was quick to point out that it was his own fault. She didn’t look convinced, and a while later Harry could hear a blazing argument happening between Molly and Sirius. Their words were too muffled for Harry to hear, and he wasn’t sure he wanted to know what they were saying about him, anyway.

It was clear that Remus was getting more and more frustrated with the two of them. Every day he would patiently ask Harry if he was going to talk to Sirius today, and he would stubbornly say no. It was starting to take its toll on him; Harry couldn’t remember the last time he’d been able to eat more than a couple of mouthfuls of food without feeling sick to the stomach. He often just sat in his room for hours, lost in his thoughts, trying not to think about Snuffles but inevitably doing it anyway. Ron and Hermione had tried to call him a few times but he’d just ignored them.

After about a week of stubborn silence, Harry was starting to realise that he really did need to just talk to Sirius about this. He was much thinner than he had been before, having lost a lot of weight after just ceasing to eat for a week. He was tired all the time, and he felt completely emotionally drained. He couldn’t stop thinking about Sirius, about the kiss. Oh, the kiss…it had felt so perfect, and he was so sure that Sirius had enjoyed it too. If he could just convince him to focus on that…

gritting his teeth, Harry stood up and walked towards the door. It was best to just do it, before he chickened out of it.

Harry walked up the stairs to the next floor where Sirius’ bedroom was. The door was open, and Harry glanced in but saw no one in there. That meant he must be in his mother’s old room with Buckbeak. Harry turned to that door and saw that it was closed, so he gently knocked on it.

“Who is it?” Came Sirius’ gruff voice, sounding miserable. Harry felt a pang in his heart, and vowed to get this sorted out.

“It’s…it’s me,” Harry said, trying to keep his voice steady. There was no reply, but Harry decided to just throw caution to the wind and go in there anyway. He walked in and saw his godfather sitting on the floor, leaning against the wall. Harry allowed himself to look at him properly for the first time in a week, and he almost lost all his courage. Sirius looked defeated. He was pale, thin, and almost regaining the look he’d had when he’d escaped from Azkaban. Despite all of this, Harry couldn’t help but note how attractive he looked…as Harry was observing him, he looked up and their eyes met. Sirius’ eyes were perhaps even more beautiful than Harry had remembered, and Harry flinched at the anger in them.

“Snuffles…” he said tentatively, inching towards him. Sirius didn’t answer. Now that he was here, Harry was unsure of what to say. He closed his eyes and tried to bring his feelings to the surface. It wasn’t easy, talking about how he felt, but if it was going to help make this right then he was going to have to do it.

“We really need to talk about what happened. We can’t go on avoiding each other forever,” he
said bluntly. Sirius raised an eyebrow at him but still didn’t speak. Harry’s nerves almost got the better of him, but he took a deep breath and soldiered on.

“The fact of the matter is, we…we kissed,” Harry’s nearly gave out but he carried on, “we clearly both enjoyed it,” Harry blushed, “and I really wish you didn’t hate me for it…” he trailed off, and looked up from the floor to see Sirius looking conflicted.

“I don’t hate you, Harry,” he said roughly. “I hate myself for kissing you in the first place. It was a stupid thing to do.” Harry flinched.

“It wasn’t stupid. I liked it, and you can’t pretend that you didn’t too.”

“It’s not about whether we enjoyed it, Harry. You’re 15 years old, you’re my godson for Merlin’s sake.” Sirius closed his eyes in frustration.

“I don’t care!” Harry replied stubbornly.

“Well I do!”

“Well excuse me for wanting something good to actually happen in my life for once!” Harry raised his voice unintentionally, he hadn’t wanted this to become an argument. Sirius looked slightly guilty for a moment, but Harry ignored him and carried on, “age is just a number, Sirius! Is this about what everyone else would think? I thought you didn’t care about what anyone thought of you?”

“It’s not that easy…” Sirius said quietly.

“You’re a reckless man, Sirius. You usually listen to what your heart says and follow it. You’re loyal, and you’re kind. Why can’t you follow your feelings?” Harry leaned forwards and hesitantly put his hand on Sirius’ arm, but he tensed and pulled away.

“I’m sorry Harry, but it just won’t work between us,” he said stiffly, not meeting Harry’s eyes. “I’d appreciate it if you left me alone.”

Harry felt as if Sirius had slapped him. He stepped backwards, willing himself not to cry, trying to find even a shred of regret in Sirius’ face but he had closed his eyes and shut himself off from the world. Harry turned and left the room, slamming the door behind him. He felt numb. Running down the stairs, he went to his room and sat on the bed, staring into space, thoughts spreading through his mind like wildfire. What felt like hours later, he stood up stiffly and opened his trunk, throwing everything into it that he could find. If Sirius didn’t want him here, didn’t want to accept the fact that their relationship had changed, then he couldn’t stay here.

Harry walked resolutely down the stairs, dragging his trunk behind him. It banged on every step, and he heard footsteps coming down the stairs but he ignored them and carried on. Eventually he got to the front door, and he heard a gasp and the footsteps gathering speed as his godfather ran towards him.

“Harry, what are you doing?” he asked quickly, a look of confusion on his handsome face.
“I’m leaving. If you don’t want me then I can’t stay, it’ll drive both of us mad.”

“You can’t just leave, where exactly do you think you can go?”

Harry paused for a moment, wishing there was somewhere else, anywhere else but he knew there wasn’t. “I’m going back to the Dursleys. They may hate me but it’ll be less painful than this…”

Sirius looked pained. “Don’t leave,” he said in a voice so quiet it was almost a whisper. Harry felt a flutter in his stomach.

“Don’t make this any more difficult than it already is.”

“Please Harry… I don’t want you to leave.”

Harry closed his eyes and prayed to Merlin to give him strength. “Sirius, either you want me or you don’t. I’ll stay on one condition…”

“What?” Sirius asked impatiently.

Harry took a deep breath. “Kiss me, and I’ll stay…”

Sirius looked conflicted. He looked at the floor and clenched his fists, breathing heavily. When he looked up at Harry there was something in his eyes that he couldn’t place. Carefully and deliberately, Sirius walked towards him, the expression on his face hard and unreadable. Harry gulped.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you’re enjoying so far! Thank you for all the kudos and comments, feel free to let me know what you think, good or bad!
Harry stared at Sirius, holding his breath, adrenalin pumping through his veins. His heart raced as Sirius walked closer to him, a hard blazing look in his eyes. He was very close now, they were almost touching. Up close the fire in his eyes lit them up and they took Harry’s breath away.

Sirius quickly closed the gap between them and pushed Harry roughly against the wall, pressing their lips together eagerly. This was nothing like their first tender kiss, this was passionate, rough, full of pent up feelings. Sirius pressed his body close to Harry’s, and Harry threw his arms around Sirius’ neck, burying a hand in his thick hair. He felt Sirius lightly bite his lip and he gasped, allowing him to dart his tongue out at lick it better, before gently teasing Harry’s tongue with quick and sensual licks.

They pulled apart after a while, and Sirius gently pressed their foreheads together as he breathed heavily, pulling Harry into a tight hug. He pulled back and looked into Harry’s eyes, a soft smile appearing on his face. Harry smiled back, a single happy tear falling from his eye as he processed the importance of what had just happened. It was like there had been a massive shift in his life, everything was changing now. He wasn’t at Hogwarts anymore, Voldemort was back in power and now his relationship with Sirius had changed.

“We need to talk about this,” Sirius whispered softly in Harry’s ear. Seeing the look of trepidation on Harry’s face, he quickly continued, “Don’t worry. I’m not going to get angry or anything. Even I can see that there’s no going back now.”

Harry nodded and Sirius pulled away from him, walking towards the kitchen. Harry suddenly realised that they were in the headquarters where anyone could have just walked in on then. He gulped, vowing to be more careful from now on. He was lucky that Remus was out at the moment, and that Molly hadn’t followed up on her threat to make sure they weren’t left home alone together anymore. Molly herself had been spending a lot of time at the Burrow recently, for which Harry was very grateful.

They sat down at the table, the atmosphere feeling almost awkward for a moment. How do you have a conversation about being in a relationship with your godfather? Harry hesitantly placed a hand on top of Sirius’, and they smiled at each other tentatively.

“So…” Sirius said, smirking at Harry.

“Well. This is…different…” Harry replied, laughing.

“Harry,” Sirius said gently, being serious now, “I’m not going to pretend that this isn’t strange for me…it probably is for you too. But you threatening to leave gave me the kick that I needed to make me realise that I need you.” Harry smiled at this. “And I guess I can’t deny that I find you incredibly attractive…” Sirius tailed off, giving Harry a stare so intense that he felt like he was melting. He felt butterflies in his stomach and he blushed, looking at the floor.

“I really want to make this work, Sirius…I’m just relieved that you came to your senses,” he teased. “If we feel this strongly for each other, then who are we to deny our feelings?”
Sirius nodded his agreement, putting an arm around Harry and pulling him into an affectionate hug. Harry grinned, feeling the happiest he could remember being for a long time. He sighed contentedly, relaxing into the comfort of Sirius’ embrace.

Turning to look at him properly, Harry asked the important question. “Do you want to tell anyone about this?” He bit his lip anxiously. It was highly unlikely that anyone else would understand the relationship between them, and he blanched at the thought of what Molly’s reaction would be if she found out.

“That’s a difficult one, Harry. You understand that it won’t exactly get the best reaction from anyone else?”

“Yeah, I understand. I just don’t want to have to lie about it,” Harry said.

“Well how about we just don’t tell anyone? It’s our business, not theirs. If someone asks outright then we’ll tell them but otherwise we’ll keep it to ourselves.”

Harry nodded, agreeing that it sounded like a reasonable idea. “What about Ron and Hermione? I don’t think I’m ready yet, but would you be okay with me telling them eventually?” He really didn’t want to keep things from them.

“Of course you can, Harry, they’re your best friends. If anyone’s going to trust in your decision then it’s them. And can I tell Remus?” Sirius asked.

“Okay,” Harry said hesitantly, “although he’s a lot more likely to overact to it. He was friends with my dad, after all,” he pointed out. He immediately regretted saying it, as he knew it would probably touch a nerve with Sirius.

Sirius closed his eyes briefly and looked troubled, but he shook it off and smiled at Harry. “If I can get over that, then Remus can damn well get over it.”

Harry grinned widely, feeling a new wave of fondness for Sirius. He ruffled the older man’s hair affectionately, earning himself a gorgeous trademark smile from him. Sirius leaned in to give Harry an unexpected kiss on the lips.

“I’m going to have a hard time keeping my hands off of you, Harry,” he said gruffly. Harry’s breath hitched in his throat and he looked shyly up at Sirius, both excited and nervous at this. Sirius clearly noticed this, and looked at him curiously. “You don’t have much experience in this, do you?” he said gently.

“Er…no experience at all, actually,” Harry admitted awkwardly.

“None?” Sirius looked shocked. “Not even with a girl?”

“Nope. I had other things to think about at school generally. Y’know, Voldemort being on the back of my teacher’s head, a Basilisk being loose in the school and attacking students, my long lost godfather breaking out of prison to commit the murder he was imprisoned for, not to mention
being entered into the Triwizard Tournament at the age of fourteen…” Harry tailed off and looked at
the unreadable expression on Sirius’ face.

“You make a good point. Dating opportunities weren’t exactly your main priority…” Sirius smiled
at him but it didn’t quite reach his eyes. He sighed, looking worried again. “You’re so young,
Harry…”

Harry scowled at him. “It doesn’t matter how old I am. I’ve been through more shit than half the
members of the Order combined. You were arguing with Molly the other day about how I’m not a
child anymore, well maybe you should listen to yourself more often.” Harry tried to keep his voice
even but the subject of age was a tender one for him.

“Look, I’m sorry Harry. This is going to take some getting used to, and I’m almost definitely
going to make mistakes. I didn’t mean to make you feel bad,” he said gently, pulling Harry closer
into a hug.

“It’s ok. I’m sure I’ll mess up as well, we’re both only human after all. Well, one of us is also a bit
of a dog,” he laughed, and Sirius snorted, an evil glint appearing in his eye.

“Oi! You’ll live to regret that…” he moved one of his hands from Harry’s back to his ribs, and
Harry tried to run away as he knew what was coming. He was too slow however, and he
screamed in laughter and Sirius started tickling him. Sirius picked him up and dropped him to the
ground, straddling him and panning his hands above his head so he couldn’t push him off. That
was the last thing on his mind now, however, as he was rather enjoying the feeling of the older
man’s body pressing into his own. Sirius seemed to come to the same conclusion, and the laughter
in his eyes turned to a look of desire.

Harry bit his lip, wishing he could touch Sirius, but he still had his hands pinned above his head.
He squirmed slightly, trying to pull his arms away and Sirius let go. Harry moved his hands down
Sirius’ body, enjoying the feeling of his defined muscles. Sirius moaned and captured Harry’s
mouth in a searing kiss. They didn’t move from their position on the floor for some time, pausing
for breath every now and then but neither of them wanting to stop kissing each other. Suddenly,
however, they heard the front door slam shut and they shot away from each other quicker than
Harry could have believed possible. About a second later they were sitting at the kitchen table,
trying to look as normal as possible, when Remus walked into the room. He looked at them
suspiciously, taking in their flustered appearance.

“Are you alright, guys?” he asked curiously.

“Yeah,” they both replied breathlessly, laughing at each other nervously. Remus looked surprised
but happy.

“You’re talking to each other again, then?”

“We worked out our differences,” Harry smiled, speaking to Remus but not looking away from
Sirius. Sirius winked at him, and Harry couldn’t help but blush and look away. Remus looked at
them suspiciously again, but decided not to ask them anything in case he upset the balance that
had finally been restored.
Harry was filled with a bubble of happiness that day that he couldn’t shake off, and didn’t want to. With a permanent smile on his face, he decided it would be a good idea to call Ron and Hermione and apologise for ignoring them for the last week, and for being so moody the last time they’d spoken. He picked up the two way mirror and called Ron’s name. After a few seconds his friend’s face appeared in the mirror, looking concerned.

“Harry, finally! We’ve been trying to contact you for the last week, what the hell happened?” Ron sounded relieved, but also slightly annoyed. Harry felt that he deserved it.

“I’m really sorry about that, mate. I had an…argument of sorts with Sirius, and we weren’t speaking to each other and I was pretty depressed. But it’s all sorted now!” Harry had tried to look guilty as he was talking to Ron but he couldn’t help the smile coming back onto his face. Ron looked at him strangely.

“Fair enough…I’m just gonna get Hermione. Oi, Hermione, get over here!” He yelled over his shoulder, and he was joined a second later by a disgruntled Hermione.

“Ron, don’t speak to me like that! What do you want, anyway? Oh!” She exclaimed, noticing the mirror that Ron was holding. “Harry! Are you okay? What happened?”

Harry smiled at her. “I’m fine Hermione! How are you on this fine day?” She looked shocked, and exchanged a look with Ron, who shrugged at her.

“He said he’s talking to Sirius again,” Ron said to her.

“Well, that’s good news!” Hermione said, recovering from the surprise. “I don’t suppose you’re going to tell us what happened in the first place to make you punch a wall and ignore your best friends for a week?” A stern look had appeared on her face.

“No, I’m not going to tell you. Not yet anyway…I’m just not ready,” He blushed slightly and looked away from the mirror. The idea of telling his friends made him extremely nervous, and there was no way he was doing that yet. He saw Ron looking mildly irritated and Hermione looking highly suspicious. He felt it was time for a quick subject change.

“Anyway! What’s been happening at Hogwarts?”

“Well, seeing it’s OWLs year we’ve been getting ridiculous amounts of homework,” Ron grumbled.

“We’ve been through this, Ron, it’s necessary if we want to pass our exams!” Hermione said testily, “anyway, the only reason you’re so behind is because you keep flying every evening.”

“You’ve been flying?” Harry asked eagerly. “Are you trying out for the team? Are they picking someone to be Seeker too? I hope it’s someone good!” Harry enthused, he had forgotten about the fact that they’d need two new players this year. Oliver Wood had now left, and Harry of course had also left the team so they were in need of a Keeper and Seeker. Hermione huffed, she obviously wasn’t interested in discussing Quidditch.
“Yeah, I thought I might try out for Keeper,” Ron said awkwardly. “I mean, I’m not that good but it’s worth a try right?”

“You’re a good flier, you’ll be fine!” Harry assured him, “have faith in yourself! They’d be mad not to pick you.”

“Thanks mate,” Ron said with a grin.

“Do you know who’s going to try out for Seeker?” Harry asked curiously. It would be interesting to see who replaced him.

“I dunno yet, although Ginny’s been flying a lot recently too. It wouldn’t surprise me if she tried out for Seeker.”

Harry was about to reply when he was interrupted by Hermione. “Look, I think we should be discussing more important things!” She looked exasperatedly at Ron who didn’t seem to understand. “You know, things Harry could actually help us with, things that people in the Order will know about!”

“Oh right, yeah!” Ron said.

“Hagrid still isn’t back,” Hermione told Harry grimly. It was obvious they were becoming quite worried about him. “We thought maybe you could ask Sirius about it, see if he’ll tell you what he was supposed to be off doing this summer.”

“Hmm, it’s definitely odd that he’s not back yet. I’ll ask Sirius, hopefully he’ll tell me.” Harry was concerned for their half-giant friend. He had a knack for thinking dangerous creatures were cute and cuddly, and it had got him into trouble a few times. “I really hope he’s not hurt…”

“We hope so too Harry, we really do. There was something else we were going to mention actually,” Hermione said.

“Yeah, Dumbledore is still away from the school most of the time. He looks tired whenever we do see him.” Ron looked thoughtful.

“We were thinking maybe Sirius might know something about that too? Of course it might not be anything to do with the Order but it seems the most likely option,” Hermione continued.

“Okay, I’ll ask Snuffles about that too. I wonder what Dumbledore’s up to? Maybe it’s something to do with that weapon Sirius was talking about when I first came to Grimmauld Place,” Harry speculated.

“Yeah, maybe! What if You-Know-Who has it now and Dumbledore’s trying to steal it back?” Ron said wildly.
“I really don’t think that’s likely, Ronald. Harry would probably have noticed if something that
major had happened, even if no one mentioned it.” Hermione sounded unconvinced.

“Fine, whatever,” Ron said grumpily, not happy at having his idea discounted.

“Look, I should go guys, it’s nearly dinner time,” Harry grinned at them.

“Alright Harry! Well, I hope everything keeps going okay with Sirius,” Hermione said, watching
him carefully.

“Thanks, Mione. See you!” Harry ended the call and wandered down to the kitchen. The smell of
cooking food hit his nose, and he sniffed appreciatively. Sirius was standing in front of the oven
with his back to Harry, so he crept into the kitchen and put his arms around Sirius’ waist from
behind, hugging him tightly.

“Hey, Padfoot,” Harry said brightly. Sirius turned and looked at him over his shoulder, giving him
a wide smile.

“Hey Harry! Want some dinner?”

“Course I do,” Harry grinned at him, reluctantly letting him go and sitting at the table. A few
minutes later Remus had joined them and they sat down to eat generous portions of steak and
homemade fries. As they ate, Harry’s mind drifted to its usual subject; Sirius. He remembered
what he’d been thinking the other day about this place being full of bad memories for his
godfather. He had an idea in his mind…he waited patiently for everyone to finish their dinner,
then hinted that he wanted to talk to Sirius alone. Remus gave them a suspicious look, but left
them anyway.

“What did you want to talk about, Harry?” Sirius asked him curiously.

“I had an idea…I mean, feel free to tell me if it sounds stupid…” Harry said self-consciously,
already starting to doubt himself.

“I’m sure it’s not stupid! Tell me,” Sirius badgered him, an eager grin on his face.

“Okay, well. I know you hate living in this place, because it brings back horrible memories of
your childhood…” Harry began, trying to judge Sirius’ expression. His face visibly darkened, but
he didn’t speak. “I thought it might be a cool idea for the two of us to redecorate the house
together…if we get rid of all the dark gloomy furniture and painted the walls and stuff, it would
feel like a completely different house! And then we could build our own memories here
instead…” Harry trailed off, hoping that Sirius didn’t think it was a stupid idea.

“Harry…” Sirius said hoarsely, his voice almost breaking, “that’s… I mean…Merlin, that’s the
sweetest thing anyone’s ever said to me,” he said softly with a smile appearing on his face. Harry
threw his arms around Sirius and hugged him tightly, his throat feeling suddenly tight with
emotion. “But don’t tell anyone I said that, okay?” he added with a grin, “Moony wouldn’t let me
hear the end of it if he knew I was talking about my actual feelings, out loud.”
Harry laughed and squeezed him tighter, then pulled back so he could see his face. He loved seeing Sirius laugh, knowing that it was him that made him happy.

“Maybe we should start on that tomorrow. I have a plan for us this evening, if you’re interested.”

“What is it?” Harry asked eagerly.

“Well, seeing as we got kind of distracted last time I started telling you about Animagi, I thought maybe we could start on it properly tonight. What do you think?”

Harry felt his excitement rise; he’d forgotten in all the drama that he’d had that discussion with Sirius. “That sounds great! Can we start right now?” Harry asked him enthusiastically.

Sirius laughed and stood up, offering Harry a hand. He pulled Harry up and starting walking towards the Drawing Room, still holding Harry’s hand. “No time like the present!” he announced, strolling into the room and taking out his wand. As before, he banished all the furniture to the side of the room, except the sofa, which they sat on so Sirius could talk him through the basics.

“I doubt we’ll actually need this space tonight, because you’re only just beginning, but when you start trying to access your other form, we’re going to need it. You could turn into something small, like a cat, or you could end up being something huge like a horse. It’s always good to be sure,” Sirius began. Harry was nervous, it sounded like it was going to be a very long and difficult process and he really didn’t want Sirius to get frustrated at him if he was too slow. Sirius, as always, seemed to know what he was thinking.

“Don’t worry, you won’t be slow at it. You’ve already shown incredible strength of mind by being able to cast a Patronus at your age, plus being able to throw off the Imperius curse! You’ll be fine,” he smiled. Harry felt a warmth in his chest when Sirius complimented him.

“Okay, I believe you. So what’s the first step? Do I have to read up on stuff first?”

“That can wait, you can do it during the week. Maybe we should have these lessons once a week? Then the rest of the time Moony can teach you all the boring things, and I’ll help too.”

“Sounds good to me!” Harry said.

“The first thing you need to do is to empty your mind. It’s a basic principle of Animagus transformations, and it’s necessary when you’re trying to find your other form for the first time.”

“Okay…so how do I empty my mind?”

“It’s harder than it sounds. Lay back, and close your eyes.” Harry did as he was told, getting comfortable on the sofa and closing his eyes. “Now, try not to think about anything at all.”

Harry tried to banish everything from his mind. His brain was teeming with thoughts, however, thoughts about Sirius, nerves about trying to find his Animagus form, and random phrases like
‘am I doing this right?’ and ‘damn it, stop thinking things’ kept popping up in his mind. He heard Sirius’ amused voice coming from next to him.

“It’s sometimes easier if you try to just think about darkness. Imagine you’re in a completely black room, there’s nothing around you, let it take over your mind. Feel the emptiness,” Sirius whispered.

After he’d gotten over how sexy Sirius sounded when he whispered in that deep voice, Harry tried out this technique. He felt the blackness encompass his mind, and strangely enough it actually started to work. Concentrating on the darkness made his other thoughts take a back seat and after a while he almost thought he was going to fall asleep. He was jolted back into reality by Sirius’ voice coming at him through the fog of darkness surrounding his mind.

“That’s really good Harry, I think you’re getting the hang of it! You need to practice emptying your mind as much as possible, so that you can do it quicker and easier each time you try. When you have that sorted, you can start trying to connect with your magic and feeling the animal inside you trying to break out.”

Harry listened excitedly, already eager to find out what his form would be. He knew however that it would probably be a long time before he reached that point.

“How soon do you think I’ll be able to start that step?” Harry asked.

“Well, it depends how quickly you manage to read up on the theory, and how much you manage to practice. When I see how you’re progressing next week, it’ll be easier to put a time frame on it.”

Harry was engrossed in what Sirius was saying. This all sounded fascinating to him. Not to mention, Sirius was very sexy when he was in teacher mode. Harry stifled a yawn. It was much later in the evening than he’d realised. How long had he been sitting there with an empty mind? Maybe he really had fallen asleep. Sirius didn’t miss the yawn, and he stretched and yawned himself.

“Well, I don’t know about you but it’s been a bloody long day and I’m tired,” Sirius said, standing up stiffly.

“Yeah, I’m knackered,” Harry agreed, and they strode up the stairs together. When they reached Harry’s floor, they stopped outside his bedroom.

“Well, goodnight Harry. I’ll see you in the morning,” Sirius smiled at him. He leaned forwards and captured Harry’s lips in a breath-taking kiss goodnight. Harry gasped and smiled.

“Night, Sirius.” He watched his godfather climb the stairs to the next floor, definitely not checking out his arse, then retired into his room for the night.
Harry sat at the kitchen table with Remus and Sirius, clearing away the remains of his dinner and pulling out his books. It had been a few days since his first proper kiss with Sirius, the pivotal moment in their relationship. Neither of them had tried to define what their relationship was now, but they were both happy to ignore that fact for the moment. It was nice just to enjoy each other’s company and be physically close to each other, as this was something that both Harry and Sirius desperately needed in their lives. Harry couldn’t word exactly how he felt, but he knew he was comfortable and contented, and the happiest he had ever felt in his life.

Besides his changing relationship with Sirius, Harry had also been thinking a lot about his Animagus training. He was fascinated by it already, and after his first lesson with Sirius he had begun reading up on the theory of the transfiguration. It seemed complex, but he was determined to wrap his mind around it so he could prove himself to Sirius, and show that he was strong and powerful. He knew perfectly well that Sirius didn’t expect him to master it overnight, but he couldn’t help the thirst he felt to prove his abilities.

Alongside his Animagus training, Harry had got round to ordering the school books he would have needed for Hogwarts. Today they had arrived, and he was now obligated to start learning some of the spells that he should have been learning at school. He really hoped that he would manage to find History of Magic a hell of a lot more interesting than Professor Binns had made it seem. Defence was the subject Harry was most looking forward to, especially considering he wouldn’t have been learning any Defensive magic if he was at Hogwarts at the moment. With the return of Voldemort looming over them and the Order frequently holding serious meetings at the Headquarters, it seemed more and more important to learn to defend himself properly.

“Okay, Harry, are you ready to start?” Remus asked him seriously. Harry could tell that he meant business with this tutoring.

“Well, Minerva informed me that she’s beginning to teach the fifth years the Vanishing spell, so I thought we might try that today.” Remus pulled out a small white mouse from his pocket and placed it on the table, where it immediately tried to run away. Harry quickly grabbed it and held it in his hand, secretly thinking it was quite cute. He heard a small noise of dissent from the doorway and smiled as he saw Sirius walking in.

“Vanishing? You couldn’t have picked something more interesting, Moony?” Sirius said as he sat down at the table next to Harry.

“You know perfectly well that Harry has to learn everything that he would have learnt at Hogwarts. Just because you’re lazy, it doesn’t mean you should let it rub off on Harry.” Remus gave Sirius an amused look, which Sirius ignored in favour of nudging Harry and winking at him. Harry blushed and looked determinedly at the table so that he wouldn’t give anything away.

“Anyway,” Remus went on, “the Vanishing spell is a difficult one which gets more complicated on bigger animals. Professor McGonagall is planning on starting with snails, but I think you’ll be fine starting with a mouse. It’s a lot easier when you have one on one tutoring to get the hang of the spell.”
Harry listened carefully, absent-mindedly stroking the mouse that he was holding in his hand.

“The incantation is Evanesco. Make sure you concentrate extremely hard on the vanishing of the object, this is not a spell you can accomplish if you’re thinking about your dinner.” Harry saw Sirius roll his eyes at the tone Remus was using, and he grinned but looked away. He couldn’t afford to get distracted by him at the moment. Pulling out his wand, Harry pointed it at the mouse and cleared his throat nervously.

“Evanesco!” Harry looked hopefully at the mouse but of course nothing had happened. He frowned and tried again, concentrating as much as possible on the spell. “Evanesco!” The mouse looked back at him, determinedly still there in his hand. He glanced at Remus and Sirius, embarrassed at his lack of skill.

“Hey, don’t expect to do it first time,” Sirius smiled at him. “Try waving your wand a little more, and tap the mouse gently as you say the incantation.” Sirius placed his hand on top of Harry’s and showed him the wand movement. Harry smiled at him gratefully and tried again, determined to master the spell.

“Evanesco!” He said forcefully, concentrating as hard as he could and waving his wand like Sirius had shown him. The mouse squeaked loudly as its tail suddenly disappeared. “Ooh, look at that!” Harry said excitedly, looking proudly up at Sirius, who grinned at him in return.

“Nice one Harry! You’re getting the hang of it already!” Sirius complimented him and Harry positively glowed. After about an hour of trying, with varying results, Harry finally managed to completely Vanish the mouse. It was almost a shame, as he was starting to like the cute little rodent, but he was immensely proud of himself for mastering the spell properly. As Harry was relaxing for a moment, a thought crossed his mind.

“Remus, how often do you think you’ll be able to teach me? I’ve noticed you’re away doing things for the Order quite often…” Harry said, trying subtly to find out where Remus was going, because he was extremely curious.

“Well, I can’t say for sure Harry. I’m sure Sirius will be more than happy to help you out when I’m not here,” Remus replied vaguely, although he looked slightly unconvinced. Sirius narrowed his eyes at him.

“Where is it that you go?” Harry asked bluntly, giving up on the subtle approach.

“I can’t tell you that,” Remus said stiffly. “You said you wanted to teach him something more interesting, Sirius? Go right ahead,” he continued, obviously trying to deflect attention from himself. Harry let it go for now, but he really wanted to know what was going on. It was frustrating, living here and seeing all the Order members coming in and out, and not having any idea of what they were discussing. He felt like he had no input or information on what Voldemort was up to, and it seemed unfair.

“Yeah, I have a great idea of something to show you!” Sirius said enthusiastically, and Harry couldn’t help but smile at him and get drawn in. It was impossible not to be enthused when Sirius was excited about something. “It’s a type of shield, but it’s more powerful and more useful in battle that the normal Protego.”
“That sounds fascinating!” Harry said, his mouth hanging open. He had really been looking forward to Defence, and now he was going to learn something that could be really useful!

“It’s a great spell to have in your arsenal, especially in a duel. You can cast it non-verbally, and it forms an invisible shield around you which stays in place and allows you to use your wand to perform other spells at the same time. The most important thing is to keep practising until you can make a very powerful shield, because you won’t be able to concentrate on keeping it up while you’re in the middle of a battle.”

Sirius had gone into teacher mode now, and Harry loved the way his eyes had a serious and passionate look to them. He listened to everything Sirius told him extremely carefully, this was his favourite subject and he was determined to do well in it.

“You said its non-verbal, is there still an incantation I have to say in my mind?” Harry asked attentively.

“The incantation is Visarma. You just need to think it really clearly in your mind, concentrate on it fully.”

“Okay,” Harry said nervously. He’d never tried any non-verbal spells before.

“You’ll be fine! I know you wouldn’t usually do non-verbal spells in fifth year, but you’ve shown that you’re extremely capable at Defence so I have complete faith in you.” Sirius playfully ruffled Harry’s hair, and he felt more confident with Sirius’ words.

“Thanks Padfoot,” Harry smiled warmly at him and Sirius’ smile widened at the use of his nickname. An evil glint appeared in his eye a moment later, however, and Harry narrowed his eyes at him, immediately on edge.

“Okay, to be able to cast the shield properly, I’m afraid we’re going to have to recreate a battle situation…” Sirius said to him, a smirk appearing on his face. Harry gulped.

“You mean you’re going to try to curse me?” He asked, panicked.

“You know I wouldn’t hurt you! I’ll just try to disarm you, and you try your best to cast the shield and keep it around you while you try to disarm me in return. It’s the sort of spell that’s best practiced in the situation it would be used in.” Sirius reassured him somewhat, and Harry tried his best to ready himself. Sirius suggested that it would be best to have more space, so they moved into the Drawing room and banished the furniture to the side of the room. Remus stood at the side of the room, watching them amusedly but leaving them to it.

“Alright, you stand there Harry, and I’ll try to disarm you. Ready?” Sirius stood a few metres away from him and raised his wand. Harry nervously took out his own wand, repeating the incantation over and over in his mind. Visarma, Visarma, Visarma…As Harry thought the word over and over again, he felt a sort of warmth form around him, and he could swear he almost felt a force of some kind surrounding him. He relaxed slightly, more confident that he was going to be able to do it. He thought the incantation again, stronger this time, and he felt the shield around him strengthen.
“I’m ready,” he called to Sirius, trying not to give away his confidence. Sirius wouldn’t know what was coming to him…

“On three! One…two…three! Expelliarmus!” Sirius shouted the spell, and Harry concentrated on the feeling of the shield around him. Sirius’ spell bounced off it harmlessly and Harry quickly shouted “Expelliarmus!” in return, Sirius’ wand spinning out of his hand before he had gotten over the shock of Harry’s shield working first time.

Harry smirked at the look on Sirius’ face. He bent down and picked up the older man’s wand, striding over and handing it back to him. Sirius frowned at him and took his wand back, getting over his surprise now.

“Wow. You weren’t kidding when you said you were good at Defence!” Sirius said with a grin, patting Harry on the back. “I’m not letting you get away that easily though. Let’s try again!” Sirius moved back to his place and Harry tried to ready himself, worried about how competitive his godfather was. He was confident that he could beat him, however, and he grit his teeth, holding out his wand and preparing himself for whatever Sirius was about to throw at him.

“On three!” Sirius said again, and Harry tried to use what he’d learnt so far in his Animagus lesson to help him. He cleared his mind, and tried to focus only on his shield, repeating the incantation in his mind. “One…two…three!”

Before Sirius had a chance to hit him, Harry yelled “Expelliarmus!” The spell bounced off Sirius’ shield, and Harry ducked quickly to avoid it. They shot a few spells at each other, neither of them managing to break the other’s shield, until Harry eventually managed to get Sirius with an unexpected Impedimenta. Sirius staggered backwards, his shield taking the brunt of the spell but collapsing and letting it through. It gave Harry enough time to disarm his godfather, and he grinned at the disgruntled look on Sirius’ face.

“Better luck next time, old man,” he teased. Sirius growled and pounced at him, tackling him to the ground. Harry laughed, trying to push the older man off but he was pretty strong when he tried to be.

“Say that again!” Sirius growled at him, his warm breath tickling Harry’s ear, and Harry suddenly didn’t want to push him off any more.

“I said…” he whispered seductively, “that you’re an old man…good thing I like older men,” he whispered even quieter. Sirius smiled and nuzzled Harry’s neck, kissing him softly. He kissed a trail up to his jaw, then kissed him passionately on the mouth. Harry was getting very into it, when they were suddenly brought back to reality by the sound of an enraged Remus Lupin striding towards them.

“What the hell is going on here?” He shouted at them, he looked furious. “Sirius, he’s your godson! What…I don’t even know what to say?” Remus sat down heavily on a chair, pointing at the ones next to him and wordlessly commanding them to take a seat too. Harry walked guiltily forwards. How had he forgotten that Remus was in the room? Sirius looked worried too, and they sat down at the table cautiously.

“Sirius. Spill.” Remus spoke bluntly, and Harry had never seen him look so disappointed.
“Look, Remus, I don’t expect you to understand. I don’t even understand myself why this happened between us…” Sirius began, sounding uncertain. Harry looked at him, hurt. Sirius’ eyes widened and he hastened to correct himself. “I don’t mean that I regret it, not at all! I just didn’t expect to fall for my godson, that’s all.” Harry smiled at him, understanding what he meant. He had no idea how this had happened either, to be fair, but he wouldn’t change it for the world.

“I don’t know how or why this happened, Remus. I can’t even pinpoint when I started feeling differently about Sirius. All I know is that we both have extremely strong feelings for each other, and for one wouldn’t change a thing.” Harry spoke up nervously, speaking to the floor. He couldn’t bring himself to look at Remus’ face. He heard a sigh, and looked up tentatively. Remus looked troubled.

“I just don’t get it. Harry, you had a chance at having a proper family. I thought you saw Sirius as a father figure!” He looked distressed, and Harry understood that it must have been very confusing to see Sirius kissing the son of their dead best friend. He sighed. This had been the exact problem Sirius had had to start with, and he really didn’t want him having any more doubts. He glanced around to see Sirius’ reaction to this, and he was relieved to see that there was no sign of regret on his face.

“Remus, listen to me. I know our relationship doesn’t make sense, it isn’t remotely normal, but since when have Harry or me ever been normal? If I can get over the issues between us, and you know how stubborn I am, then surely you can get over it too.” He looked defiantly at Remus, and put an arm around Harry’s shoulders. Harry melted into the embrace automatically, immediately feeling more at ease. Remus watched their interaction carefully, and his expression softened minutely.

“I can’t promise that I’ll ever agree with you two, but I’ll at least give it some time. Is that a fair deal?” Remus asked, sounding strained.

“Okay, sure,” Harry said eagerly, “I understand. It took Sirius a while to come around, so I can’t expect you to understand this straight away when it’s been shoved in your face like this.” He looked away, ashamed at the knowledge that he’d been making out with Sirius right in front of Remus. He blushed, wishing he could just Obliviate him, but he sadly knew that it wasn’t the answer. It was important to him, and even more important to Sirius that Remus was okay with their relationship. They watched silently as Remus gave them one last troubled look, and wandered from the room. Harry looked at Sirius, biting his lip anxiously.

“I really hope Moony comes to terms with this. I couldn’t stand it if he left because of me,” Harry said desperately.

“He won’t leave, Harry, and it definitely wouldn’t be because of you.” Sirius hugged him tighter and Harry felt some of his concerns slip away. “He’ll get used to the idea, or I’ll just have to make him…” Harry smiled at this, happy that Sirius was determined to keep their relationship, despite Remus reacting exactly how they’d expected him to. Even though he’d known Remus would react like this, it hadn’t made it any easier. He’d imagined them at least sitting down and telling him gently, not accidentally starting a make-out session right in front of him…Harry groaned and cringed at the memory.

Pulling back from Sirius, Harry yawned widely. It had been a long evening, and he really needed to get some sleep. Practicing those spells had really drained him, and now he was worried about Remus. A good night’s sleep was what he needed at the moment. Sirius saw him yawning and smiled softly at him.

“Tired?”
“Yeah, really tired actually.”

“Let’s head to bed then, and I’ll see you in the morning. I’m sure Remus will be fine after sleeping on it…” Sirius said gently, standing up stiffly and walking upstairs. Harry followed him, kissing Sirius goodnight and fondly watching him walk up the stairs to his own bedroom as had become their routine. He climbed into bed, his limbs feeling heavy and his mind foggy with fatigue. It only took a few minutes for him to drift off into a deep sleep.

Harry tossed and turned, his body drenched in sweat. He was plagued by the same nightmares as always, visions of running down endless corridors that ended in locked doors, and frustratingly vague images of random objects which exuded dark magic. He recognised the book with the fang-hole in it as the diary he had destroyed in his first year, but whenever he woke up he forgot the details of this dreams and only remembered the feeling of dread that always filled his mind. This feeling was all over him at the moment, surrounding him, and he felt as if he would never break out of this nightmare.

Suddenly, he felt a reassuringly cool hand pressed against his forehead, someone was shaking him gently as he slowly surfaced from the nightmares holding him under. He slowly realised that he could hear a familiar voice talking to him urgently.

“Harry? Harry, wake up!” As Harry returned to consciousness he recognised the voice of Sirius and he opened his eyes blearily.

“Sirius?” he whispered hoarsely, the horrible feeling of fear still clinging onto him as it always did for a while after he woke up from one of those dreams.

“It’s me, Harry. Are you okay?” Sirius sounded concerned.

“I’ll be fine. I have these dreams all the time…” Harry whispered. Sirius stood up as if to leave and Harry was suddenly, inexplicably, on the verge of tears. “No! Don’t leave, please don’t leave Sirius. I don’t want to be by myself, I hate how weak I feel after these nightmares…” Harry confessed, unsure why he was saying this now. He preferred to keep these dreams to himself usually, because he hated showing a sign of weakness. Perhaps it was because Sirius was here, now, while he was still feeling the after effects of the nightmare.

“Of course I won’t leave, Harry, not if you don’t want me to.” Sirius stroked his hair gently, calming him, and then climbed into the bed next to him. Harry instinctively cuddled closer to him and smiled at how warm Sirius felt. Sirius kissed him softly on the cheek, and put his arms around him protectively.

“Don’t worry, I’m here now.” Sirius whispered soothingly in Harry’s ear, and slowly they both drifted off to sleep again.
Harry felt extremely comfortable, and snuggled into the warmth that was next to him. He felt amazingly well rested, and for once was waking up naturally instead of jolting awake from his usual nightmares. Blearily he became more aware of his surroundings and felt the soft warmth next to him slowly rising and falling, felt a heartbeat under his hand. Harry opened his eyes and saw that he was cuddled up next to Sirius in his bed. He gasped, and a smile appeared on his face. Now he remembered waking up last night, Sirius comforting him and promising not to leave. Slightly embarrassed at how he’d acted last night, Harry was still very happy that Sirius had indeed not left. It filled him with a warm fuzzy feeling to be curled up in bed next to him, and he vowed to make sure Sirius slept next to him more often.

After a while, Harry felt Sirius stir next to him and he held his breath, hoping Sirius wouldn’t leave now that he was awake. Sirius didn’t leave, however. He moved his arms slightly as if only just registering the fact that they were wrapped protectively around Harry’s waist still, then he tightened his hold and smiled into Harry’s messy hair and kissed him gently on the forehead.

“Good morning, Harry,” Sirius whispered softly.

Harry smiled into Sirius’ chest, and looked up to meet his eyes. He was suddenly struck by how lucky he was when he took in how handsome Sirius looked right now, with his mussed up bed hair and cheeky grin. Sighing softly, Harry tried to regain composure.

“Morning Sirius,” he managed to say in an almost whisper. He wriggled upwards in the bed until his face was level with Sirius’, and he looked into the older man’s silvery grey eyes with a soft smile on his face. “Thank you…” he said gently, “you know…for staying last night…” he tailed off awkwardly. Sirius smiled back at him and shook his head slightly.

“You don’t have to thank me, Harry. You know I’ll never leave you as long as you need me.” His words seemed to hold more meaning than what was on the surface, and his eyes were serious as he looked into Harry’s. Harry almost forgot to breathe for a moment, then took a deep shaky breath and smirked. A mischievous glint appeared in his eye, and he slowly sat up in bed, swinging a leg over Sirius so he was straddling him. Sirius looked surprised for a second, then he smirked back at Harry and raised an eyebrow.

Harry gathered all of his courage, and leant down to capture Sirius’ lips in a quick kiss. He pulled back slightly, amused at the frustration in Sirius’ eyes. Kissing him again, longer this time, he felt Sirius’ tongue dart out and pulled back again, laughing breathily at the scowl he had produced on his godfather’s face. His amusement was short lived however, as Sirius suddenly grabbed him by the waist and flung him onto his back, reversing their positions so that he was straddling him. Sirius looked surprised for a second, then he smirked back at Harry and raised an eyebrow.

“‘I’ll teach you to tease me, Harry…’” His voice was barely audible, and yet Harry heard every word as loudly as if Sirius had shouted it. His breath hitched, his heart raced, and he looked desperately into Sirius’ eyes as if trying to wordlessly tell him to hurry the hell up and kiss him already. Sirius chuckled, reading the impatience in Harry’s eyes, and he suddenly swooped down to capture Harry’s lips in a searing, passionate kiss. His tongue probed Harry’s, warm and wet, with a subtle taste of something that was undeniably Sirius. Harry moaned, the feeling of Sirius’ mouth on his, mixed with the warm pressure of their bodies pressed together was exceptionally overwhelming.
If this is Sirius’ idea of punishing me, I think I’ll annoy him more often…Harry thought to himself idly, as Sirius pressed soft kisses along his jawline and down his neck, sucking gently on his collarbone. Harry couldn’t help but moan out loud again, and he saw Sirius smirk at him. He moved upwards, apparently unable to resist kissing Harry on the lips again, and Harry gasped as he felt Sirius’ hand slide under his shirt and stroke the soft skin of his stomach.

Harry was just beginning to consider never leaving this bed again when he was startled back into reality by his door opening loudly. Sirius’ eyes widened and he pulled back, turning round to stare at the door. Remus was standing in the doorway, looking at them with shock, which quickly turned to anger.

“Sirius! What the hell? It was bad enough seeing you all over him the other day, and now you’re in his bed?” He sounded incredulous, and Harry averted his eyes, not wanting to see the disappointment in Remus’ face. “I really thought that after I talked to you before, you might just let my words sink in and be an adult for once. I guess I was wrong…” With one last disgusted look at them, and without speaking a word to Harry at all, Remus turned and stalked out of the room, slamming the door behind him. Harry leaned back against the pillow, trying not to let it get to him and failing miserably.

“Harry, look at me,” Sirius said gently, turning Harry’s face with his warm hand. Harry looked at him, pouting slightly. “Just ignore him, Harry. He needs more time to get used to the idea of our… relationship.”

“What if he never gets used to the idea?” Harry asked worriedly.

“Then that’s his problem! If we spent our lives not doing anything unless everyone around us agreed with us, then we’d lead pretty boring lives. After all, this relationship is between us, therefore the only people it should concern are you and me. Remus can choose to agree with us or not, as long as we’re happy with each other then it shouldn’t affect us.”

He put an arm around Harry and pulled him close, and Harry felt much better about everything. Sirius was right, Remus’ opinion shouldn’t keep them apart. He smiled slightly, relaxing into Sirius’ warm embrace. There was no way he was giving up something that felt as good and as right as this, just for the opinion of one Remus Lupin. He would still rather Remus was happy with their relationship though…he sighed, wishing it could all just be simple for once. Sirius seemed to know just what he was thinking, as usual.

“Why don’t we do something to take your mind off of this?” Sirius suggested quietly. Harry smirked at him and licked his lips. “I didn’t mean that!” Sirius laughed, looking tempted, but he continued with his original train of thought. “What I meant was, perhaps we could start decorating the house today. I’m seriously fed up of this place now, I need to get rid of all these memories…” He trailed off, and Harry looked at him sympathetically.

“That’s a great idea, Padfoot. Why don’t we start with your bedroom?”

“Alright!” Sirius jumped out of bed eagerly and walked towards the bathroom, giving Harry a chance to check him out. “I know you’re staring, Harry,” he whispered seductively over his shoulder as he exited the room. Harry blushed, and buried his head under the covers as he listened to Sirius’ laughter disappearing down the hallway.
After a much needed cold shower and a hurried breakfast, Harry climbed the stairs to the second floor and entered Sirius’ bedroom. It was a dark, dingy room, much like the rest of the house. He apparently hadn’t changed it since he had been living here as a teenager, as there were faded Gryffindor banners hung around the room and posters of Muggle girls in bikinis posing on motorcycles. Also, there was a photo next to the bed of Sirius and his three best friends; James, Remus and Peter. They were all waving happily at the camera, all unaware that the mousy boy on the end, Peter Pettigrew, would one day betray them all to Voldemort. Harry narrowed his eyes, wondering if the teenaged Peter in the photo knew yet how much of a traitor he would one day become.

In the midst of all this was Sirius himself, sitting on his old bed with a morose expression on his face. Harry understood how he felt, and he was determined to do something about it. He sat down on the bed next to Sirius and put an arm around his waist, squeezing him gently, letting him know that he was there for him. Sirius turned to him and smiled softly, lighting up his handsome face.

“We should start by getting rid of all this old furniture.” Harry suggested enthusiastically. There wasn’t that much in the room, other than Sirius’ old bed, a wooden dresser, and a desk and chair in the corner.

“Okay, that sounds good to me,” Sirius replied, obviously trying his best to get rid of the memories that were pulling him down. He grinned at Harry and pulled out his wand. “Ready to try some more Vanishing? It’s much easier on inanimate objects.”

“Er, okay!” Harry said apprehensively. The mouse he had Vanished the other day may have been alive, but it was much smaller than a piece of heavy furniture.

“You’ll be fine! I’ll get rid of this bed, and you try it out on that desk and chair. Just focus on the spell, concentrate on the idea of it not existing anymore.” Sirius turned to the bed, and with a flourish of his wand it disappeared, leaving a large dusty area free in the middle of the room. Harry turned nervously to the chair, and closed his eyes.

Concentrating as hard as he could, Harry flourished his wand and cried “Evanesco!” He opened his eyes tentatively, and was surprised to see that the chair was no longer there.

“I did it!” He said eagerly to Sirius, who laughed at him.

“I told you it was easy. Now, do the rest!” Sirius gestured to the desk and the dresser. Harry screwed up his face and pointed his wand at them both in turn, shouting the incantation and watching with undisguised excitement as he Vanished the tired old furniture from the room. They were now left with an empty room, the dull carpet covered with dust and what looked suspiciously like mouse droppings in one corner. Sirius looked at him proudly.

“Nicely done, Harry, nicely done. The next bit’s up to me though, I’m afraid. I put permanent sticking charms on these posters and banners when I was in school, which means no one but me can get rid of them.”

“How come you put permanent sticking charms on them?” Harry asked curiously. “And why, may I ask, are there photos of Muggle girls in bikinis all over the room?” he added with a disgruntled frown on his face. Sirius laughed, unashamed.
“Why do you think? I wanted to piss off my parents as much as possible. If I hadn’t ensured that no one else could take the posters down, my mother would have snuck in here while I was at Hogwarts and taken them down herself. I always was a disappointment, ending up in Gryffindor.” Sirius looked annoyed, and Harry felt bad for bringing it up.

“Hey, it’s fine. We’re getting rid of these memories now! Soon your room will be unrecognisable,” he smiled at Sirius, trying to lighten the mood. Sirius grinned back, and went to work on the Gryffindor banners first. It seemed to take a fair amount of work, and he could hear Sirius muttering what sounded like complex incantations as he ran his wand around the edges of the banners, so he decided to sit on the floor and think about how they were going to decorate the room when it was empty. It was up to Sirius, of course, but at the moment Harry was imagining it with a simple colour scheme of blues and greens, with a large comfortable bed and perhaps some new furniture such as a wardrobe or a bookcase or something. He also had an idea for something special to reflect Sirius, but he was still unsure about bringing it up.

As he waited, Harry absentmindedly began daydreaming about the two of them breaking in Sirius’ bed. He flushed furiously when he realised what he was thinking about, and quickly distracted himself by looking around to see how far Sirius had got with clearing the walls. They were all bare now, and Sirius was working on the final thing – the photograph of himself and his friends at Hogwarts. With one final grim look at Peter Pettigrew, Sirius managed to remove the photo from the wall and he Vanished it with a flick of his wand. He turned to Harry with a pleased expression on his face.

“Well, there we have it! My room is now a blank canvas…” He looked around, clearly satisfied with what they had achieved so far. “Now what?”

“I was thinking…don’t hate me for this, Padfoot, but perhaps we could paint the walls the Muggle way?” He saw Sirius’ expression and hastened on, “don’t look at me like that! Painting is fun, and putting the effort in makes it feel like you actually accomplished something at the end of it.” He looked earnestly at Sirius, hoping he could convince him. “I’ve always wanted to paint a room,” he added quietly, looking at the floor instead of Sirius, “the Dursley’s never let me paint mine, so it stayed a boring white colour the whole time I lived there.” He glanced upwards tentatively, and saw Sirius looking at him with an unreadable expression. He held his breath, fingers crossed behind his back.

“Okay, you convinced me. We’ll do it your way,” Sirius grinned at him. “Now where can we buy some Muggle paint around here?” He asked, walking towards the door as if he was going to leave.

“Sirius!” Harry shouted after him, panicking. Sirius turned just outside the bedroom door and laughed at him.

“What’s up, Sirius?”

“You’re kidding, Harry, c’mon now! I’m not stupid enough to go outside after the bollocking we got last time. I’ll conjure us some paint.” Sirius smirked at him, and Harry breathed a sigh of relief, feeling stupid for falling for his godfather’s joke. Sirius stood in his room looking pensive for a moment, and Harry watched him worriedly as he began to look concerned about something.

“We’ve hit a very important problem,” he said with a deadly serious expression on his face.
“What?” Harry asked him, bemused.

“What colour should I paint my room?” Sirius asked loudly, almost shouting. Harry scowled.

“That was your big problem?”

“It’s important, Harry! I have no idea how to even approach this!”

Harry sighed, looked at Sirius in amusement. The older man looked genuinely concerned about what colour his bedroom should be. “Well, what colours do you like?” He asked patiently, as if talking to a child.

“Blue. And green. And bluey green, oh and greeny blue. And…silver.” Harry looked at his godfather in an entirely new light. Getting rid of his bad memories and replacing them with new ones seemed to be making him so happy that he was acting like an excitable child, and it was quite frankly adorable to watch.

“Green and silver? Are you sure you’re not a Slytherin?” he teased, watching the outrage form on Sirius’ face.

“I didn’t say green and silver! I said blue and green and bluey green-“

“Alright, I know. I was kidding!” Harry laughed at him. “How about we paint the walls a kind of sea green, and the ceiling midnight blue, and add silver highlights to lighten it up?” Sirius thought about it, a look of concentration on his face.

“So…it would be kind of green and silver but not in a Slytherin way?”

“Slytherin is emerald green and silver. Sea green is a bluey green, and it with the blue ceiling it wouldn’t look anything like Slytherin colours,” Harry patiently explained to him.

“Since when do you know so much about colour combinations, Harry?” Sirius asked him mockingly, smirking at him.

“I liked art a lot at school,” Harry said defensively. It had been his favourite subject, in fact, and was one of the main reasons he was so enthusiastic about Sirius agreeing to paint his room the Muggle way. Sirius looked surprised at this bit of information, and let the matter drop, getting to work on conjuring them some paint. After a brief interlude of Sirius trying to get the paint to be exactly the right shade, he conjured them some rollers and brushes and they got to work.

They passed a couple of hours happily painting the walls of Sirius’ room, and it already looked like a completely new room. Sirius had begrudgingly admitted that Muggle painting was actually much more fun than just charming the walls into a different colour, although he had won the battle to charm the ceiling blue instead of attempting to paint it themselves. The two of them, a ladder and a tin of paint would never have been a good mix.
When the walls were done and Sirius was admiring their efforts, Harry spontaneously decided that it would be a brilliant and hilarious idea to spray a little paint at Sirius. He grabbed a brush that was still sitting in the tin of silver paint, and innocently wandered towards Sirius. When the older man turned around and smiled at him, Harry quickly flung the brush at Sirius and flicked paint onto him. Sirius’ face was a picture of surprise, and Harry laughed hysterically at the sight. It wasn’t helped by the fact that there was paint sprayed on his face and in his hair, which completely took away from the angry expression Sirius was trying to uphold. With a growl, he picked up the brush from the tin of green paint and stalked towards Harry, who backed away from him nervously.

Before he knew what was happening, Sirius was throwing paint at him and he was throwing it back, both of them giving up on looking angry and laughing at each other, trying to dodge around the room and cursing the lack of furniture to hide behind. After a while they both collapsed to the floor, out of breath and covered in paint. The smooth sea green walls were sprayed with silver all over, and Harry thought it actually looked quite nice. Sirius agreed with a laugh, and they decided to keep it that way. After all, it would create a nice memory of the fun they had decorating the room.

They lay back on the floor, and Harry gently entwined their hands. He smiled at the comforting feeling of Sirius’ fingers wound around his own, and turned to look at him.

“Sirius?” he spoke quietly, not wanting to disturb this peaceful moment.

“Harry?”

“I have an idea for a finishing touch to the room…feel free to tell me if it’s a stupid idea…” Harry began hesitantly, unsure of what Sirius would think.

“I have complete confidence in you,” Sirius grinned at him, and Harry felt his mouth twitch into a responding smile.

“Alright. Well, I thought that a cool way to make the room reflect you as a person would be to paint the night sky on the ceiling, including the constellation of Canis Major of course…” Harry held his breath, looking expectantly at Sirius’ face to judge his reaction. Canis Major was of course the constellation also known as the Great Dog, which included Sirius, the brightest star in the sky. Sirius simply rolled over on the carpet and put an arm around Harry, pulling him into a hug.

“You know what, Harry, just when I think you’ve surpassed my expectations you go and think up something even more awesome,” Sirius whispered in his ear. Harry could hear the smile in his voice, “that’s a brilliant idea, I love it!”

With a sudden rush of energy and enthusiasm, Sirius jumped up and grabbed his wand, pacing up and down and looking at the ceiling every now and then, clearly deep in thought. Harry sat up and watched him silently, giving him a chance to think. He was so glad Sirius had liked his idea, it was one he was particularly proud of. This room would now reflect Sirius, and bring memories of the time they spent together decorating it, instead of memories of Sirius rebelling against his parents and his troubled childhood in general.

After a little while Sirius stopped pacing and looked triumphant. “I’ve got it! I think I know how we can recreate the actual night sky on the ceiling, so that it changes with the movement of the earth. It’s a bit like the spell on the Great Hall at Hogwarts, but much smaller and less complex obviously.”
Harry watched in awe as Sirius pointed his wand at the ceiling, muttering different incantations and waving his wand about in what appeared to be completely random motions. A sort of haze appeared on the ceiling, almost like looking at the horizon on a hot summer’s day, and Harry could almost feel the tangible magic surrounding them. Finally, when he was becoming increasingly intrigued as to whether the spell was actually working, Harry saw the haze clear and the ceiling was left with the soft, cool light of millions of stars. The one that shone the brightest, which was true to fact, was Sirius.

Harry stared up at the ceiling in awe, along with Sirius himself. He suddenly came to the realisation that they were embracing, although he didn’t recall it happening. This room was now spectacular to behold, and Harry was confident that their decorating skills had completely wiped out all of the old memories of Sirius’ childhood. It might even be a place that he enjoyed being in now, and that was something spectacular in itself.

Harry and Sirius both decided to head downstairs for some lunch, both of them feeling light hearted and happy after the successful morning they’d had. They settled down for some good old fashioned grilled cheese sandwiches, laughing and joking together. Harry couldn’t help but notice that Remus was nowhere to be seen, however, and that dampened his mood slightly. He really hoped Remus would see sense and realise that this relationship was good for the two of them, and that neither of them could change how they felt even if they’d wanted to.

As Harry munched on his sandwiches, his mind wandered and he found himself thinking about Ron and Hermione. He felt guilty for neglecting them again, and vowed to call them on his two way mirror soon. As he thought about their last conversation, he suddenly realised that he’d told Ron and Hermione that he’d ask Sirius about Hagrid. Now he felt even guiltier for forgetting about everything they’d spoken about. He’d been so wrapped up in himself, and his changing relationship with Sirius, that he’d forgotten about everyone and everything else important to him. Now seemed as good a time as ever to bring it up, so he decided to just go for it.

“Sirius, there’s something I’ve been thinking about. Worrying about, actually. I was wondering if I could ask you something…” Harry began, feeling awkward and worried as to whether Sirius would actually tell him anything or not. Sirius looked at him, slightly concerned.

“Ask away, Harry,” he said curiously.

“I was talking to Ron and Hermione the other day and they told me that Hagrid still isn’t back at school. I was just wondering if he was doing something for the Order, you know. We’re worried that he’s injured or something,” Harry said quickly, his concern clear in his voice. Sirius looked at him with a frown on his face, and he didn’t answer straight away.

“The thing is, Harry, Hagrid was doing something important for the Order. I can’t tell you what,” he said quickly before Harry could interrupt, “he was supposed to be back by now, and we aren’t quite sure what happened to him.” Harry’s mouth dropped open at this, and Sirius shifted guiltily.

“What do you mean, you don’t know what happened to him?” Harry asked loudly.

“He was with Madame Maxime, you remember her? She got back a month or so ago, and she told us that they’d got separated on the way home. Dumbledore isn’t worried, and there isn’t anything to suggest he’s hurt…” Sirius trailed off, knowing his explanation wasn’t good enough.
If he was supposed to be back a month ago, and no one’s heard from him…” Harry said quietly, filled with worry and doubt. His good mood from the morning had been wiped out completely.

“He’ll be fine, Harry, you’ll see. He’s tough, I’m sure he can handle himself,” Sirius tried his best to comfort Harry.

“What was he doing for the Order?” Harry asked bluntly.

“I can’t tell you Harry, I’m sorry. You have to be an Order member to have that kind of information—“

“Well, why can’t I be an Order member?” Harry asked crossly, “I still don’t see why I’m not allowed. It’s not like I’m even at Hogwarts anymore.”

“It’s not just about whether you’re at school or not, Harry,” Sirius said intently, “you’re still only fifteen and it’s too dangerous.”

“Who are you to speak to me about danger?” Harry asked indigently.

Sirius smiled humourlessly at him. “I know, we’ve both seen our fair share of danger, but that’s not the point. I don’t want you getting hurt, I couldn’t bear it—“ he stopped talking for a moment as his voice almost broke, and Harry felt some of his resolve disappearing. “You’ve been through enough already, and I really don’t want to see you get hurt.” Sirius spoke softly, avoiding Harry’s eyes, and Harry decided to stop arguing for now. As he finished his lunch in silence, they were interrupted by someone stomping angrily into the kitchen.

“Tonks?” Harry said tentatively, taking in her obviously angry and upset appearance. She was muttering furiously under her breath, there were tear tracks down her face and her hair was short and bright red streaked with black, sticking up all over the place.

“Oh, hello Harry. Sirius.” She spoke roughly, clearing her throat and sitting down heavily at the table.

“Oh…are you okay?” Harry asked awkwardly. This was the sort of conversation he was terrible at.

“No, not really. Thanks to Remus…” she muttered angrily, shooting a mutinous look in the direction of where Harry assumed she had just spoken to Remus.

“What’s he done now?” Sirius asked loudly, a scowl on his face.

“Well…” Tonks began, looking slightly awkward, “I just wish he would make his stupid mind up, and not lead me on if he’s just going to get angry at me when I try to…” she tailed off, her cheeks red. Harry got the gist of what she was saying, and he immediately felt sorry for her. He had noticed the growing attraction between the two of them, and he was surprised that Remus would get angry at her. He supposed the werewolf had been in a bad mood today after finding Sirius in Harry’s bed this morning…
“He got angry at you?” Sirius asked incredulously, “I’m going to give that man a piece of my mind,” he said angrily, standing up abruptly and striding from the room. Tonks watched him leave, not trying to stop him, but looking mildly apprehensive none the less. Harry sat in an awkward silence, not sure what to say in this situation. He twiddled his thumbs and looked at the table until Tonks broke the awkward silence.

“I guess it just wasn’t meant to be,” Tonks said morosely, mostly speaking to herself, Harry thought. “I must have been stupid to even fall for him in the first place.”

This stirred up something in Harry, as he thought back to how he’d felt when Sirius had initially rejected him. It hadn’t been because they were wrong for each other, but because Sirius was worried about starting a relationship with him.

“Don’t talk like that, Tonks, it’s not your fault,” Harry began, trying his best to word this right, “it’s probably more complicated than that. Did Remus give you a reason why he didn’t…you know…reciprocate?”

Tonks looked at the table, and Harry was glad she didn’t try to initiate eye contact. “He just shouted at me about how it could never work between us, we were too different to each other.”

“Well maybe it’s him that has self-esteem issues, and it’s not your fault at all. He’s in a crappy mood today anyway, after he saw-” Harry cut off that sentence quickly. “The point is, me and Sirius had an argument with him and he was pretty angry already.”

Tonks looked curiously at him, but didn’t press the issue, for which Harry was immensely grateful. “Remus, self-esteem issues? Are you sure?” She asked him pensively.

“Well, he is a werewolf. Maybe he feels that he’s too dangerous, he’s scared of hurting you?”

“That…well, that does sound like something he’d say,” Tonks said thoughtfully, looking more hopeful than when she’d walked in. Harry was immensely glad, because he was running out of insightful things to say.

“I think if you just give him some time, and come up with an argument that he can’t say no to, then you’ll be fine. You have to convince him that you don’t care that he’s a werewolf, that you love him anyway,” Harry said passionately, thinking about how he’d had to convince Sirius that being his godfather wasn’t as big an issue as Sirius had first thought. He suddenly realised what he had said to Tonks, and blushed. Since when did he have in depth conversations with women about love? Tonks looked pleased, however, and she thanked Harry before rushing off upstairs. Harry let out a sigh of relief, glad that he’d somehow handled that situation without making it worse.

Finding himself now sitting alone in the kitchen, with lunch finished, Harry decided to go up to his room and carry on reading the book he’d been given by Sirius about Animagus transformations. The theory was essential to successfully mastering the transformation, and Harry found that the book was fascinating. Some of the sections did get a bit complex and took slightly more concentration to understand, but it was totally worth it. Harry opened up the book to the place that he’d marked, and continued reading about how getting to know your magical core was imperative for the initial discovery of your soul animal.
The magical core is an important part of a wizard or witch. It is the essential part of a wizard that sets him apart from a Muggle – the origin of the magic. It is a part of your soul, buried deep within yourself, and it is only by connecting to your magical core and learning to feel it when you use your magic, that you can reach within yourself and discover the animal that is closely linked with your soul.

This book really was fascinating, and Harry was completely engrossed in it for the next couple of hours. Eventually, his concentration began to waver and his mind wandered off to think about other things. He found himself thinking back to his conversation with Sirius earlier that had been cut off by Tonks entering the kitchen. He was still frustrated that Sirius wouldn’t let him join the Order, even if he understood that it was because he was worried for Harry’s safety.

It wasn’t as if he was planning on running off to find Voldemort and duel with him, Harry thought to himself angrily. He wasn’t stupid. It would just be nice to be given information, to be trusted with it. He had, after all, witnessed the regeneration of Lord Voldemort. It was him that had been targeted by the Dark wizard since he was a baby. Surely Harry might actually have some useful information himself that no one had bothered to ask him yet, about the night that he had returned. It seemed reasonable enough to him, and Harry decided that he should try asking Sirius about it again soon.

It was a few days before Harry actually got round to asking Sirius again. They had been a busy few days, and Harry had been understandably distracted in his opinion. Sirius had come to Harry on the evening of the day that they’d decorated his room, and reminded him that they hadn’t actually put any new furniture in his room. This conversation had resulted in them both working together to conjure Sirius a bed, and Sirius ultimately asking Harry if he would stay and sleep next to him that night. Harry had of course agreed, after much blushing, and since then they’d come to an unspoken agreement that this was now their bedroom, instead of just Sirius’.

Remus and Tonks had since had some sort of discussion in the privacy of the kitchen (they’d shut the door and cast an Impervius charm on it so that Sirius’ attempts to eavesdrop with Fred and George’s extendable ears were unsuccessful). Since that day they’d looked a lot happier around each other, and Harry had even seen Remus give Tonks a quick kiss on the lips when he didn’t think anyone was looking.

Harry finally got the courage to ask Sirius about the Order again when they had just finished dinner. They were both feeling satisfied and content, and full of food, and it seemed a good a time as any to try to discuss it.

“Sirius, I’ve been thinking…” Harry began, looking thoughtfully at his godfather. Sirius narrowed his eyes suspiciously.

“This sounds worrying,” he replied.

“Oh shut up, you old dog.” Harry grinned at him. “Will you let me finish?”

Sirius grinned back at him. “I suppose so. Carry on.”

“I was thinking about the Order. Now, hear me out,” he said quickly, noticing Sirius’ guarded
“I think I have a right to join. Voldemort has targeted me since I was a baby, he’s tried to kill me multiple times. It was me that saw him return to his full strength, and I think that if someone actually bothered to ask me about that night I could give them some useful information. Not only that, but I’ve faced a lot and despite my age, I think I really am mature enough and intelligent enough to be given a chance.” He finished his rant and looked at Sirius, trying to judge his reaction. Sirius looked pensive, and didn’t speak for a while. Harry was just starting to get irritable and impatient when Sirius finally replied.

“You do have some good points there, Harry,” he admitted slowly, “but you have to understand that if you did join the Order, I wouldn’t let you go out there and do anything dangerous. You’d be sitting in meetings and giving your opinion only.”

“That sounds reasonable enough to me!” Harry said eagerly, happy that Sirius was even considering his argument.

“It’s not only my opinion that counts, however,” Sirius warned him, “I’ll have to call a meeting and speak about this to everyone else, and I can’t guarantee that they’ll agree with me.”

“Okay,” Harry said seriously. “But you’ll argue for me?”

Sirius sighed, and nodded. “Yes, I’ll try to convince them to let you join. If I’ve learned anything about you, Harry, it’s that you’re genuinely more mature than your fifteen years. I do think you’d be a good asset to the Order, as long as you accept that you won’t have a physical role.”

“That’s fine by me,” Harry said with a smile on his face. “Thank you for listening to me and trusting me,” he said simply. Sirius smiled and embraced him.

“Just don’t do anything stupid, Harry,” he whispered softly in his ear. “I don’t know what I would do if I were to lose you.”
Chapter 14

It was almost a week before Sirius managed to get the important members of the Order together for a meeting about Harry potentially joining. Kingsley was overrun at work, as were most of the other members that worked at the Ministry. Sirius said that Dumbledore wasn’t available, but Harry wasn’t sure if Sirius had even contacted him in the first place. The both of them were still rather mistrustful of the headmaster, and Harry knew perfectly well that Dumbledore would probably do as much as he could to stop Harry joining.

Harry would be lying if he said he wasn’t anxious about the meeting. Convincing Sirius had been difficult enough, and he was biased. The other members of the Order would take a very serious approach to this, and Harry could only hope that they would hear him out, and that he would be able to put forward a decent argument. Having Sirius on his side could be very helpful, and he really hoped that Remus would help him out too.

Things were still a bit strained with Remus, although they’d talked about the situation after he’d had a chance to cool off, and Remus had reluctantly agreed that Harry and Sirius were good for each other. It would take a bit of time for him to come around completely, but Harry really hoped that he would at least look past this for now and objectively put his opinion forward in Harry’s favour. After all, Remus knew perfectly well what Harry had been through, and hopefully would respect his decision to join the prodigious Order of the Phoenix.

Harry sat at the kitchen table, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the Order members Sirius had managed to contact. His heart was racing slightly faster than usual, and his palms were sweaty. Talking in front of people had never been something that came easily to him, and this was something really important. He just hoped that he would be able to say the right words when everyone was sitting there, looking at him. Sirius, who was sitting next to him at the table, seemed to notice Harry’s nerves. Squeezing his hand under the table, he gave Harry a comforting smile.

The front door opened loudly, luckily not loud enough to wake up the portrait in the hall, and voices drew nearer to the kitchen. Harry sat up straighter and stared at the door, and a moment later Remus entered, followed by Tonks, and finally Kingsley Shacklebolt. Harry had barely time to greet them before the front door opened again. This time Mad Eye Moody walked in, and sat at the kitchen table with the rest after giving Harry a suspicious glare and a growled acknowledgment. Finally, the door opened one last time and Molly Weasley bustled into the room. Harry sighed, wondering why Sirius would even ask her to come.

He glanced at Sirius to see his reaction, and was pleased to see that he looked just as annoyed as Harry felt. There was a scowl on his face, which he wiped quickly when Molly looked his way. The look on Sirius’ face suggested that it hadn’t been him that contacted Molly, and Harry noticed Sirius looking suspiciously at Remus who carefully avoided his gaze. The Order members congregated around the table, taking seats after quickly greeting each other.

Sitting around the table, the members of the Order were staring at Harry with expressions ranging from undisguised curiosity to outright suspicion. Harry fidgeted nervously and looked at Sirius, hoping he would talk to them first and give Harry time to think. Sirius smiled at him and squeezed his hand once more under the table, then cleared his throat. Everyone’s attention turned to him, and Harry breathed a sigh of relief while he desperately tried to remember all the reasons that he felt he should join the Order.

“Okay everyone, I’m sure you’re all wondering why you’re here,” Sirius began. “Harry has something he wants to ask everyone, so all I ask is that you listen to him and give him a chance to
say everything he needs to say before you offer your opinions.” He looked specifically at Molly as he said this, clearly expecting her to want to butt in. As Sirius stopped talking, everyone’s attention turned back to Harry and he felt his face redden, suddenly wishing he had a glass of water to moisten his dry mouth.

“Er, thanks for coming, everyone,” Harry began awkwardly, feeling his face become redder. He deliberately avoided looking anyone in the eye, instead delivering his speech to the table. “Well, the reason I wanted you all to come here today is because…because I want to join the Order of the Phoenix.”

He saw the looks of apprehension on everyone’s faces, and quickly soldiered on. “Please, hear me out before you all disagree with me. I believe that I have every right to join the Order. For a start, Voldemort has targeted me since I was a baby. He’s tried to kill me so many times, and he killed my parents, so if there’s anyone here more dedicated to bringing him down than me, I’ll be surprised.”

Harry glared at everyone sitting around the table, gaining confidence when he saw the shocked expressions on some of their faces. “Not only that, but since I saw him come back to full power back in June, with my own eyes, I think that I could actually have some important information about Voldemort if someone bothered to ask me about it. I’m not asking to go out there and fight, but I think that I’ve at least earned the right to be able to sit in meetings and hear information, to give my opinion on things and do my best to help bring the bastard down.”

Harry stopped talking, feeling his heart pounding in his chest. He hadn’t meant to swear at the end there, but it seemed to have made everyone stop and think. The silence in the room was deafening as everyone let Harry’s words sink in. Most people looked like they were giving serious thought to Harry’s words, but there was one person in particular who stood out with her look of polite incredulity.

“Harry, dear,” Molly began in a motherly tone, “do you really think it’s wise to involve yourself in this? You’re only a child, you haven’t even finished school.” She sounded as if she was trying to be helpful, but Harry found her tone patronising and irritating.

“I may be young, Molly, but I’m not a child anymore,” he started angrily, trying to keep his voice even, “I’d really appreciate it if you’d stop patronising me. This isn’t a childish decision, I’ve put thought into it and I would really appreciate it if you’d at least give it serious consideration.” Harry inwardly smirked at the shocked and offended look on Molly’s face. To his relief, no one else around the table seemed to be as quick to discount him as Molly was.

Before Molly could speak again, Remus cleared his throat and spoke in his calm, quiet voice, “Harry does have a point, Molly,” he said somewhat sternly, and Harry felt hope spring in his chest, “he’s been through a lot in his life and he can’t really be called a child anymore. He’s more emotionally mature than a lot of people twice his age.” This was met by a few nods from people around the table, and Harry smiled slightly. At least if he could convince everyone apart from Molly then they could outnumber her.

“Thank you, Remus,” Harry smiled gratefully at him and received a small smile in return.

Kingsley was the next person to speak up, in his deep, measured voice, “I can understand how important this is to you, and I don’t doubt your maturity levels, but would you be able to resist the urge to ignore orders and leave headquarters if something serious happened? Can we trust you to protect yourself and stay safe?”
Kingsley’s face was serious, and Harry let his words sink in before formulating an answer. It was a fair question to ask, it was well known that Harry usually let his heart rule his head. Like Sirius he had been known to be reckless, and he wasn’t surprised that people were hesitant to trust the two of them together. However, he felt that he had grown up enough to be able to control his actions more now, he knew that it was important to keep himself safe.

“I see why you’d question that, Kingsley,” Harry said, feeling nervous in case he messed his words up, “I know that I’ve been reckless and irresponsible in the past. However, I’ve grown up a lot now and I know that I’m perfectly capable of following rules and keeping myself safe when necessary.”

“Oh really? What about that time not so long ago when you and Sirius left the house and gallivanted off to the park while everyone else was out?” Molly asked defiantly, giving Harry a smug look. Harry’s face reddened and he struggled to think of something to say.

“Er, well, I already promised that it won’t happen again. You know I regret it,” Harry muttered, hating Molly for making him look stupid. He’d almost forgotten that amazing morning he’d spend with Sirius in the park while everyone else had been going off to Hogwarts. He’d almost kissed Sirius as they sat next to the river, and then he’d panicked…but now wasn’t the time to reminisce, it was imperative that he kept his wits about him and managed to give a decent argument against Molly if he wanted everyone else to take him seriously.

“That wasn’t Harry’s idea anyway, that was mine,” Sirius spoke up unexpectedly, “we all know I’ve done stupid things in the past, but don’t let it change your mind about Harry. He’s got a mature, intelligent attitude and he’s a damn sight more controlled than I am. I trust him to listen to any orders he’s given, and I know for a fact that if he’s given the privilege of joining meetings then he’ll be happy with that and he won’t feel the need to break out and do anything stupid.”

Harry looked at Sirius in shock for a moment, knowing for a fact that it was indeed himself, not Sirius, which had come up with the idea of sneaking out back in September. Sirius was covering for him, and arguing a very good point at the same time. Harry grinned widely at him, feeling a rush of affection for the older man, and Sirius grinned back at him.

“Fair enough,” Kingsley said simply, giving Harry a searching look. “I think I can trust you, Harry, but what does everyone else think? Alastor?” Kingsley turned to Mad Eye Moody, who had been so far silent throughout the meeting. His expression was inscrutable, and Harry was slightly worried about his opinion. Moody was usually suspicious of everyone and everything and if there was anyone here that wouldn’t trust Harry, it would probably be him. Harry was pleasantly surprised, however by Moody’s response.

“If you feel that you’re up to the job, Potter, then that’s your decision. I’ve heard enough to believe that you have a sensible head on your shoulders, but know that if you put a toe out of line, if you jeopardise the secrecy of the Order, or endanger the lives of any member with stupidity or recklessness, then you’ll feel the…displeasure…of myself and my colleagues, do I make myself clear?” Moody growled this at Harry in his rough voice, his scarred face showing a look of intimidation. Harry gulped, knowing that Moody meant business.

“Yes, I understand,” Harry said quickly. He let out a shaky breath, pleased that both Kingsley and Moody, the two senior and most powerful members in this room, seemed to have put their trust in him.

“What do you think, Tonks?” Remus asked her with a small smile. She was the only person not to have spoken yet, which was unusual for her. She blushed slightly as she looked at Remus, and Sirius rolled his eyes with a grin.
“I’m with Harry all the way. I reckon he’d be great in the Order,” she grinned at Harry. She was probably feeling particularly happy towards Harry after their conversation the other day had resulted in her finally getting together with Remus. Harry was happy for the two of them, and also happy that Tonks trusted him enough to join the Order too.

“Well, it appears that everyone at this table is in agreement apart from you, Molly.” Kingsley spoke quietly and everyone at the table turned to stare at the slightly apprehensive redhead. She squared her shoulders and sat up straighter in her chair, a defiant expression forming on her face. Harry sighed, knowing that she wasn’t going to give up that easily.

“It’s not just about my opinion, Kingsley, or the opinion of everyone else here. Dumbledore simply won’t allow this to happen.”

“Since when is it Dumbledore’s decision? This is my life, not his, and if everyone else here supports me and agrees with me then why shouldn’t Dumbledore let me join?” Harry retorted angrily. He should have known that Molly would bring the meddling headmaster into this. It was for the greater good, Harry appreciated this, but he still didn’t think that Dumbledore should control his every move.

“He’s only thinking about your safety, Harry, as am I,” Molly said gently, trying to convince Harry that she was only trying to mother him.

“My safety? That’s very noble of him, but as we’ve already established, I’m perfectly safe in Grimmauld place, and I have no intention of leaving here again,” Harry said coldly.

“We get it, you worry about him,” Sirius said to Molly exasperatedly, “but that doesn’t mean that either you or Dumbledore gets to control his every move. Everyone else here agrees that Harry joining the Order is a good idea, therefore I think we should overrule you and make it official. What does everyone else say to that?” Sirius’ voice was loud and commanding, and everyone looked at him seriously. Harry’s heart raced suddenly, feeling the tension in the room rise to breaking point.

“I say that we let Harry join from now on, and hear Dumbledore’s opinion on the matter when he’s next available. He’s rarely at meetings now that the Hogwarts term has started, and it really doesn’t affect him much either way if Harry is here or not.” Kingsley’s voice was confident and authoritative, and his statement was met with murmurs of agreement and nods of the head.

“I second that.” Moody growled his agreement, and he was shortly followed by Remus, Tonks, and an enthusiastic Sirius. Molly stayed silent, scowling in the corner, but it didn’t matter at this stage. She was overruled, and there was nothing she could do about it.

“Alright then, I officially declare Harry James Potter as a member of the Order of the Phoenix. If you could sign this document, Harry,” Kingsley handed Harry an official looking piece of parchment. He scanned it quickly, seeing that it was a Document of Secrecy. He signed it with the quill and ink that was thrust at him, and he briefly felt a warm shiver run through him as the magic took effect.

“Thanks, Harry,” Kingsley said, collecting the document and Vanishing it with a tap of his wand.
“Now if you speak a secret that you’ve learned from an Order member to someone who is outside the Order, and it is seen as a betrayal, you and everyone else in the Order will know about it, you can trust me on that.” Moody sounded threatening, and Harry wondered what terrible fate would befall him if he spoke Order secrets to anyone.

“You can trust me.” Harry looked directly into Moody’s uneven eyes, and Moody seemed pleased with his response. The meeting seemed to be over now, as people began to stand up and gather their belongings together.

“We’ll be seeing you shortly, Harry. There’s a meeting planned for next week, Sirius will tell you the details when they become more solid,” Kingsley said, holding out his hand for Harry to shake. Harry shook it firmly and smiled at Kingsley, saying his goodbyes to him and everyone else in the room. Everyone filed out of the kitchen, then out of the front door, disapparating when they reached the end of the street and disappearing into the night. Remus left with the others, he had been spending most of his time away from Grimmauld place since he’d got together with Tonks. Harry wasn’t complaining, it gave him much more free time to spend with Sirius.

“Well done Harry, you did really well this evening,” Sirius smiled warmly at Harry, that beautiful smile sending shivers down Harry’s spine.

“Thanks Padfoot. It was all down to you really, though, you saved me from Molly’s annoying arguments.”

“That woman really needs to learn to leave you alone and stop acting like Dumbledore’s lapdog,” Sirius growled angrily. Harry chuckled, he couldn’t agree more with that statement.

“Definitely. Let’s not worry about that now, though. We have the rest of the evening to ourselves...” Harry trailed off, stepping closer to Sirius and looking up at him suggestively. He was in a very good mood now, adrenaline still rushing through him from the nervousness of earlier, and the rush he’d got from actually being accepted into the Order. Now he was alone with Sirius at last, he couldn’t get the handsome older man out of his head.

Sirius looked down at him, guessing exactly what Harry was hinting at. He smirked, a glint in his silvery grey eyes, and Harry was left breathless once again by how gorgeous the man was. Sirius moved his face closer to Harry’s, and Harry felt his pulse racing, his eyes flickered shut and he moaned involuntarily as he felt his godfather’s lips pressing softly along the curve of his jaw. He turned and captured Sirius’ lips in a searing kiss, running his hands through the older man’s unruly hair and deepening the kiss, savouring the taste, the sensation of Sirius’ warm body pressing insistently against his own.

They moved slowly towards the stairs, stopping every few steps to kiss. Harry couldn’t get enough of Sirius tonight, and his excitement was starting to make itself known in a particularly prominent way. He thought briefly about going further with Sirius than he had before, they’d only kissed so far, this thought made his heart race faster and his palms sweat. Eventually they made it to the bedroom and collapsed onto their bed together, Sirius straddling Harry and pressing their bodies together again. They kissed passionately, Sirius’ thigh pressing against Harry’s obvious excitement, and Harry distinctly heard him left out an almost animalistic growl of anticipation.

After a little while of this, Harry was breathing heavily and gently grinding himself on Sirius’ perfect body, Sirius returning the favour. Harry began to feel slightly light headed, but not in a good way. He felt...strange. A weird feeling was overtaking him, and he pulled away from Sirius for a moment, shaking his head and frowning in confusion. Something didn’t feel right. Sirius looked at him, his face flushed and eyes bright with excitement, but soon turning to concern as he took in Harry’s expression.

“I don’t know…” Harry said, and he began prop himself up on his elbows when suddenly a massive pain erupted in his scar, and he shut his eyes against the pain, curling up in a ball and screaming out loud involuntarily. He forgot who he was, where he was, what was happening, for an indeterminate amount of time he knew only pain. Eventually it began to recede, he breathed out in short pants and tried to open his eyes, feeling a splitting headache taking hold. Blearily, he managed to opened his eyes and come to his senses enough to see that Sirius was standing over him, looking terrified and shouting his name.

“Harry! Harry, talk to me, please, Harry!” Sirius sounded almost hysterical.

“I’m alright, Sirius,” Harry whispered, wincing as the small movement of talking made his head hurt more.

“Oh Merlin, Harry, what happened? Was it your scar?” Sirius spoke softly, obviously trying to calm himself down.

“Yes, I can’t remember ever feeling it hurt that much before,” Harry said quietly. “I think Voldemort is extremely angry about something.”

“How do you know?” Sirius asked quickly.

“I get pain in my scar when he’s feeling powerful emotions. I’ve never felt anything like that before, but it sure felt like anger to me,” Harry said gingerly. He didn’t have a clue about what could have made Voldemort that angry, but he was sure he’d find out soon enough. Sighing, Harry climbed under the duvet and lay back, wishing that Voldemort could have waiting just a little bit longer before getting so angry. His evening with Sirius had been ruined, now he just wanted to go to sleep and get rid of this horrible head ache. His scar was still twinging every now and then, and it was incredibly irritating. He saw Sirius settle down in bed next to him, and gave him a tired smile. They snuggled closer to each other, enjoying the warmth and the safety. It thankfully didn’t take long for Harry to doze off, and he slipped into the painless comfort of sleep.

Harry tossed and turned, struggling to get out of the nightmare that was holding him down. He saw flashes of red, he heard someone screaming as if they were being tortured, but saw nothing solid enough to know what was happening. A high, cold laugh erupted from his mouth and he woke suddenly, gasping for air, seeing a worried Sirius sitting next to him in the bed.

“Another nightmare?” Sirius asked him gently. “I’d seen Harry wake from them many times, although the nightmares happened a lot less often now that Harry was sharing a room with Sirius.

“Yeah, but it was different this time. Usually I’m running down corridors, or feeling terrified of something that I can’t put my finger on. This time something was happening, someone was being attacked, and I think… I think I might have been seeing it from Voldemort’s point of view,” Harry said quietly. “At the end, I could hear myself laughing in Voldemort’s voice, and I felt as if it was me that attacked those people.” Harry felt cold and sweaty, his voice uneven. He raised his hands
up to his face and realised he was shaking. Whatever it was that had made Voldemort so angry
last night, Harry was almost sure he’d just seen glimpses of it in his dreams.
Harry awoke suddenly, feeling a hand shaking him gently and a rough voice whispering in his ear.

“Wake up, Harry!” Harry opened his eyes blearily and looked at his godfather questioningly. “An emergency Order meeting has been called, Kingsley didn’t go into details but I have a feeling we might be about to find out what made Voldemort so angry yesterday…” Sirius trailed off, striding from the room. Groaning, Harry dragged himself out of bed and padded towards the bathroom. Intrigued though he was about the meeting, he really wasn’t a morning person.

A few minutes later, after hurriedly freshening up and throwing on some clothes, Harry walked into the kitchen to see several Order members sitting around the table in tense silence. He slowly sat down in the chair next to Sirius, gazing round the room and wondering what on earth had happened. Kingsley was sitting at the head of the table, he seemed to be the leader whenever Dumbledore wasn’t around. Remus and Tonks were here too, hand in hand, Mundungus Fletcher was sitting slouched in one corner of the room, and Mad Eye Moody was a few chairs along from him, his magical eye pointing sideways at him as if keeping watch. They all had grim expressions on their faces.

Kingsley was the first to break the silence. “I’m sure you’re wondering why we’re here,” he began in a slow, gentle voice, looking directly at Harry. “We had word in the early hours of the morning that there had been an attack, almost definitely by Voldemort himself, on a group of Muggles.” Harry’s eyes widened, connecting this immediately to the vision he’d had last night. There had been screams, torture, and Voldemort’s distinctive chilling laugh. Why was Kingsley speaking as if this was directly relevant to Harry though? One glance into Kingsley’s sombre face told him there was more.

“Harry…the family of Muggles that were murdered. They were the Dursleys.” Kingsley looked uncharacteristically cautious, as if trying not to upset Harry. A quick sweep of the room told Harry that everyone else, barring Sirius, seemed to expect him to burst into tears or something. He was shocked, yes, but he couldn’t bring himself to feel particularly upset about the deaths of the family that had abused and neglected him for all those years. Clearly, the Order hadn’t been told the details of Harry’s upbringing.

“You can stop looking at me as if I’m going to break down, it’s not going to happen,” Harry said tersely. “I won’t say I’m happy that they’re dead, because I’m not that twisted, but I’m certainly not upset about it.” Harry scowled, and noticed the looks of shock on the faces of the Order members.

“But Harry…you’ve lived with them since you were a baby, they raised you!” Remus said quietly to him, a look of confusion on his face. Harry was slightly surprised that Sirius had never mentioned anything to him about the Dursleys, but he was happy that Sirius had kept it private for him. It seemed the truth was going to come out now, anyway.

“They may have let me stay in their house, but that’s about as far as their so called kindness went. Until I was eleven, and they realised I might be magical, I had to live in the cupboard under the stairs. If I did something wrong, which happened fairly often because of my accidental magic, they would lock me in there and not let me eat for days…” Harry spoke bitterly, and he relished the looks of revulsion and horror on the faces of the Order members. Remus had put his head in
his hands, and Kingsley's eyes were wide. Moody was muttering something under his breath that Harry couldn't quite hear but he gathered that it was fairly aggressive.

“Harry…” Remus said weakly, “I wish I’d known. I knew your father so well, and yet I left his son to be raised by an abusive family instead of seeking you out to raise you myself. I was terrified that my…problem…would be dangerous for you, but even that would have been a better environment to have been raised in.” He looked distraught, and Harry tried his best to comfort him.

“Hey, it’s fine. I got through it. There’s no point dwelling on the past when there’s nothing we can do to change it. I don’t blame you at all,” Harry said softly.

“Yeah, let’s not forget that the people to blame for this situation are the Dursleys. They’re the ones who let their fear of magic turn them into abusers.” Sirius’ voice was dark, and Harry wouldn’t have been surprised to learn that Sirius had a twisted pleasure in finding out that Harry’s tormenters were dead. Remus looked slightly placated, but still remorseful.

“Let’s forget about my childhood for now,” Harry said quickly, anxious to continue the meeting, “how did Voldemort find the Dursleys in the first place?”

“We think that Voldemort has been having his Death Eaters scout the area around Little Whinging ever since you’ve been there, just in case an opportunity arose, although they’ve never been able to get close due to the strong enchantments put on the house by Dumbledore. However, since you were expelled and started living at Grimmauld Place, you no longer call Number 4 Privet Drive home, so the protections broke. We’re just speculating at the moment, but we assume that a Death Eater found this out by chance, summoned Voldemort immediately and they proceeded to torture the Dursleys to attempt to find your whereabouts.”

Harry gazed at Kingsley, his mouth slightly open. This explained a lot, and he was suddenly filled with a sense of dread. Voldemort now knew that he wasn’t at Privet Drive, and would be searching for him. No wonder his scar had been prickling on and off since the visions of yesterday, Voldemort was probably fuming at the knowledge that Harry wasn’t where he was supposed to be. He could imagine him now, pacing up and down, ordering his followers to search high and low for the Boy Who Lived. Harry felt a sense of grim satisfaction that he’d at least outsmarted the Dark Lord.

As if on cue, Harry’s scar gave a particularly violent twinge and he winced. Sirius looked concerned, but Harry waved it off. He was going to have to get used to this, because he was pretty sure Voldemort was never going to find him here. Not unless a member of the Order betrayed them…but that wasn’t going to happen, he was sure. His mind flicked subconsciously to Snape, and he narrowed his eyes. Could he trust that his bat-like professor was on the side of the Light?

“How can we be sure that no one in the Order will betray my whereabouts to Voldemort?” Harry asked suspiciously. “I don’t trust Snape-“

“Dumbledore trusts him,” Remus started, but Harry scowled at him.

“Maybe Dumbledore is wrong.”
“Or maybe he trusts Snape because he has solid proof that he doesn’t feel the need to share with everyone else,” Remus said with a wry smile on his face. “Dumbledore wouldn’t let Snape into the Order unless he was one hundred percent sure that he could trust him.”

Everyone else in the room seemed to agree with this statement, so Harry decided to let it go for now. That didn’t mean he had to trust Snape himself though… He zoned out while the meeting continued, his mind wandering absently over the death of the Dursleys. It was strange, knowing that they were dead, he felt almost empty as he thought about it. He remembered what Kingsley had mentioned about them being tortured for Harry’s whereabouts, and he felt an almost grim sense of satisfaction. Wrong though it probably was, he was glad that they had suffered after all that they’d put him through during his childhood.

Before he knew it, the Order members were saying their goodbyes and pushing their chairs back. Harry sat up straight, blinking and trying to look as if he’d been paying attention the whole time. Sirius gave him a suspicious look, but smirked at him when Harry half-heartedly shrugged in response. Harry dimly registered the voices of his fellow Order members moving towards the front door, and he shook himself mentally, trying to snap back into reality. Sighing, Harry rubbed his eyes and stretched, wanting nothing more than to talk to his two best friends. It had been way too long since they’d spoken, and he had loads to discuss with them now.

Standing up slowly, Harry began making his way towards the stairs when he was interceded by Sirius’ hand on his arm.

“Harry…” Sirius’s voice was rough, almost a whisper. He looked searchingly into Harry’s eyes and gave a dark grin, obviously pleased with what he saw. “You’re glad, aren’t you,” he said quietly, a glint in his eye, “that Voldemort tortured them before he killed their worthless selves.”

Harry looked at Sirius for a moment, slightly disconcerted, but he couldn’t deny the truth. “Yes…” he whispered softly, echoing Sirius’ dark smile on his own face.

Sirius smirked and put his arms around Harry’s waist, pulling him closer. Their lips met, passionate, hungry for each other. Harry gripped Sirius as if he was a lifeline, almost growling with want as he tasted Sirius’ unique taste on his tongue. He couldn’t get any closer to the older man but it still wasn’t enough, Harry impatiently broke away and pulled Sirius’ shirt roughly off of him, repeating the action on himself before throwing himself on his godfather again. Sirius moaned at Harry’s obvious desire, and Harry revelled in the feeling of their bare chests pressed together.

Harry dimly registered that Sirius was walking him backwards, feeling a cold wall pressing against his back and the warmth of his godfather pressing pleasantly against his front. Sirius’ mouth moved from Harry’s lips to his neck, biting and sucking the soft flesh and making Harry squirm in pleasure. He gasped for breath, his heart beating twice its normal pace, lost in the feeling of the older man’s mouth on him. It was going to leave a mark, but he found that he really didn’t care. If anything, the thought of Sirius marking him and claiming him turned him on even more. Running a hand through his godfather’s soft hair, Harry’s eyes flickered shut and he lost himself in the moment, feeling Sirius’ lips return to his own and responding eagerly, darting his tongue into Sirius’ mouth and lasting him.

They carried on this way for some time, until Sirius’ stomach growled and Harry laughed at him. “Hungry?”

“I guess so,” Sirius said sheepishly. “I guess I should make some breakfast, seeing as the Order didn’t give us time to have any. You want anything?”
“I’ll have something in a bit, I want to talk to Ron and Hermione,” Harry said, suddenly remembering what he had been heading upstairs for before he’d been distracted by Sirius. His godfather smiled understandingly at him and turned away to see what was in the fridge. Harry grabbed his shirt and ran up the stairs, hastily throwing it back on before finding his mirror and calling Ron’s name.

Impatiently, Harry tapped his foot, sitting on his bed and leaning against the wall. After a minute or two, Ron’s face appeared in the mirror with a mildly annoyed expression.

“Harry! Where’ve you been, mate, you haven’t spoken to us in ages!” Ron spoke accusingly, then turned and beckoned Hermione over. “Oi, ‘Mione, guess who’s finally decided to show his face!”

A moment later Hermione appeared next to Ron, her look of annoyance mostly outweighed by her obvious relief that Harry was ok.

“Thank goodness you’re okay Harry, we were starting to worry. Well, I was worrying, and Ron was plotting your speedy demise.”

Harry smiled at his friends, wondering why he’d left it so long before talking to them. He supposed he’d had plenty to get distracted by, such as his relationship with Sirius, joining the Order, lessons with Sirius and Remus, plus trying to learn how to become an Animagus. Somewhere in all of that he’d left his friends behind, and now he was determined to catch up with them properly.

“I’m really sorry guys, it’s been really busy round here. In fact, I had some pretty serious news this morning…” He proceeded to tell them about the death of the Dursleys, and by the end of his explanation Hermione looked horrified, and Ron mildly vindictive.

“Harry, that’s terrible! I know you didn’t get along with them, but-“

“Terrible? Of course it’s not terrible, they pretty much abused Harry his whole life. If anything it’s a good thing they’re dead…” Ron interrupted Hermione angrily, and she looked scandalised at his opinion.

“How dare you say that, Ron? They’re still human beings, even if they were terrible people.”

“So you’re saying you wouldn’t be happy if someone like Bellatrix Lestrange, or You Know Who died?” Ron asked her incredulously.

“You Know Who doesn’t count, he’s barely human anymore. But I can’t say I wouldn’t be at least a little bit pleased to know that Bellatrix was dead…” Hermione trailed off, her face becoming slightly bitterer.

“That’s more like it, Hermione,” Harry said with a dark look on his face again. “Anyway, the important point isn’t that they’re dead. It’s the fact that Voldemort now knows I’m not at Privet Drive, and he’ll be searching for me.”
“Oh my!” Hermione exclaimed anxiously, “but what if he finds you?”

“He won’t,” Harry said firmly. “Grimmauld Place is impenetrable. The only thing I’m worried about is Snape, I don’t completely trust him not to betray me to Voldemort.” Harry ignored the fact that both of his friends flinched at the name. “But I suppose Dumbledore must have a reason for trusting him. I may disagree with how controlling and downright annoying the old man can be, but even he wouldn’t let someone like Snape into the Order unless he was completely sure he could trust him.” Much as it pained Harry to say this, he thought it was probably true.

“You’re right, Harry,” Hermione nodded, “Dumbledore must have seen some sort of proof before he decided to trust that Snape was on our side.”

They discussed Snape and his loyalty for a little while, Harry also mentioning that he was now an official member of the Order of the Phoenix. Ron looked jealous and Hermione awed, but Harry assured them that he wasn’t going to be doing anything interesting other than sitting in meetings. They were still enthused by the news, and also downhearted when Harry told them that he had signed a magical document that would stop him from telling them anything he heard in meetings.

“I don’t suppose you heard anything about Hagrid, did you?” Hermione asked Harry anxiously. “He still isn’t back yet and we’re really getting worried now.”

“Oh yeah, I’ve been meaning to tell you about that! Now that I’m in the Order I’m hoping I’ll be able to get some more information from Sirius, but so far he’s told me that Hagrid is on an important mission for the Order and he should’ve been back by now.”

“What?” Ron and Hermione said together, looking horrified.

“Apparently they’re not sure what’s happened to him, although Sirius said that they weren’t worried about him just yet. He was with Madame Maxime, but they got separated on the journey home and she arrived back without him. I must remember to ask Sirius what it was that Hagrid was doing…” Harry tailed off, making a mental note to ask him about that later. Maybe it would give them an idea as to what could’ve happened to hold Hagrid up for so long.

“I just hope he’s okay,” Hermione said in a small voice.

“Me too,” Harry agreed emphatically. “So what’s been happening at Hogwarts since we last spoke?”

He was filled in on a lot of goings on from both Ron and Hermione, in between brief arguments between the two of them. Their Defence lessons were still disappointingly without magic, and Umbridge was becoming unbearable. Hermione spoke about how worried she was that they weren’t learning any defensive magic at all, and not only would they fail their exams but they wouldn’t be able to defend themselves against Voldemort or his followers outside of school if they didn’t learn any magic all year. Harry suggested trying to learn magic outside of lessons, and they discussed this topic enthusiastically although they couldn’t come up with a fool proof way of doing it.

“What about Dumbledore, is he still mysteriously disappearing all the time?” Harry asked interestedly.
“It’s funny you should bring him up, actually,” Ron said thoughtfully, “he turned up to breakfast this morning after being gone for at least a week this time, and his hand was all…well…kind of dead,” Ron said with a grimace on his face.

“Yes, it was withered and black looking, as if he’d touched some horrible dark curse.” Hermione added, and Harry frowned, now even more interested about what Dumbledore could possibly be doing outside of Hogwarts.

“That’s strange… I wonder what he’s up to. Sirius seems to think that it doesn’t have anything to do with the Order.”

Their headmaster’s odd behaviour turned out to be a fascinating subject to discuss, and they speculated on it for quite a while before Ron suddenly stared at Harry and widened his eyes.

“Hang on a minute, mate, what’s that?” His face got closer to the mirror as if he was leaning in.

“What?” Harry said, confused.

“On your neck. It looks like a bruise…”

Harry immediately went bright red, and turned away, embarrassed. He knew exactly what that mark was, and he really didn’t want to talk about it. When they’d been caught up in the moment, Harry had thought it was a great idea for Sirius to give him a love bite but now he was seriously regretting it.

“It’s nothing, really,” he said quickly, but he wasn’t fooling anybody.

“It’s not nothing! It looks like…” Ron’s eyebrows shot up and he looked both impressed and surprised at the same time, “it looks like a hickey! It is, isn’t it?” he said, laughing at Harry’s obvious discomfort.

“No, it isn’t,” Harry said adamantly, but there was no convincing Ron. He turned desperately to Hermione but she looked like she agreed with Ron, although she was looking more displeased than amused by it.

“Honestly, Harry, who did that to you? Got a bit hungry, did they?” She said in a somewhat amused but still cool voice.

“I…look, I really don’t want to talk about it,” Harry said anxiously. This really wasn’t how he’d imagined telling his best friends about his relationship.

“Come off it, mate, there’s no point hiding it now. We know you’re with someone, and it must be someone in the Order because they’re the only people that can get into Grimmauld place! I know! It’s Tonks, isn’t it?” Ron asked, leering at Harry.

“No, it isn’t Tonks,” Harry said shortly. “She’s in a relationship with Remus.”
“Really?” Hermione asked excitedly, “that’s so sweet!” Ron gave her a look, and carried on grilling Harry.

“But there aren’t any other girls in the Order, are there?” He asked confusedly. “Unless you count McGonagall,” he said, cackling with laughter. Harry rolled his eyes, annoyed at Ron’s attitude.

“There’s also your mother,” he said snidely, chuckling to himself as Ron sobered up and glared at him.

“Oi, uncalled for,” he said moodily, and gave up on joking around. “Look, if it’s not Tonks then it must be a guy, right?” Ron looked uncertain at this, but even he had worked out that it was the only available option left. Harry’s blush confirmed it for him, and his eyes widened. “Blimy mate, I didn’t realise you were…I mean, I’m fine with it,” he said hurriedly, seeing Hermione raise her eyebrows at him. “It’s just unexpected, that’s all.”

“It was unexpected to me too, trust me,” Harry said begrudgingly.

“Come on, you have to tell us now.” Ron said eagerly. “Who is it?”

“Fine, fine,” Harry conceded, feeling his heart race and heat rush to his face, “but promise me you’ll try to be understanding.”

“Of course we will,” Hermione said at once, smiling encouragingly at him.

“Alright. Well,” Harry said nervously, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath. With his eyes still closed, he blurted it out before he could lose his nerve. “It’s Sirius.”

Hearing silence at the other end, he tentatively opened his eyes and saw his friends staring back at him, dumbstruck.

“What?”

“But he’s your godfather-“

“He’s so much older than you-“

“Are you crazy, Harry?”

Their reactions were just as Harry expected them to be, and he sighed. “Look, I don’t even know how it happened. We just started, you know, developing feelings for each other.” He felt himself blush again, and bit his lip. He was really bad at this kind of conversation. “Look, I don’t really want to talk about it. The point is, we really like each other and if the both of us can get past how complicated this relationship is, then I hope that my best friends can accept it too.”
They both looked sceptical, but Hermione was the first to speak up. “Oh Harry, nothing is ever simple for you, is it?” She smiled tentatively at him, and Harry grinned back, letting out huge sigh.

“Nope, I’m not sure anything will ever be easy for me,” he agreed readily. “I’m just glad that something great, something really incredible came out of it this time.” He smiled softly, thinking of Sirius, and his friends glanced at each other. They could really see just how important Sirius was to Harry, and they weren’t going to argue with that.

“Look, we have to go, Harry, but it’s been good to catch up,” Hermione said softly. “Good luck with Sirius. I know it must be really hectic for you at the moment, but please remember to ask about Hagrid. We miss him.”

Harry smiled at her warmly and assured her that he would find out as soon as possible. They went their separate ways soon after that, and Harry laid back on his bed, looking at the ceiling and pondering what they’d discussed. He felt strangely relieved now that Ron and Hermione knew about his relationship with Sirius, and accepted it so willingly. His mind wandered to what they’d told him about Dumbledore, and his withered hand. What did that mean? Was Dumbledore messing with some kind of dark magic on his frequent trips away from the castle? Was this something to do with Voldemort?

As he thought about the Dark Lord his scar started prickling again, and he screwed up his eyes, wishing it would stop doing that. The pain got steadily worse, and he got flashes of red in front of his eyes, a feeling of intense anger bubbling in his mind which had nothing to do with the contented and thoughtful mood he’d been in a moment ago. Feeling the anger building up, he stood up and began pacing back and forth in his room, suddenly feeling the urge to smash and break things. He gave in to his temptation and pulled out his wand, pointing it at all the faded old furniture in his room and blasting it, smashing everything to smithereens and shouting out loud in frustration.

The rage was gone as quickly as it had appeared, and he collapsed weakly onto his bed. Footsteps soon came charging up the stairs and Sirius barged into his room surveying the damage with a wild expression.

“What the hell happened?” he said, confused.

“I…I don’t know what’s happening to me,” Harry said worriedly, putting his head in his hands. “One minute I’m fine, and the next I’m full of unexplained anger. I know it’s because of Voldemort, but I just wish I knew why.” He watched absent-mindedly as Sirius waved his wand and fixed everything in the room, then climbed onto the bed next to Harry and lay down next to him, putting an arm around him and pulling him close.

“I don’t know why this is happening to you, Harry, but I know that it’s not your fault, so don’t blame yourself. It’ll all work itself out in the end,” Sirius comforted him softly, and Harry calmed down, enjoying the moment with Sirius. They looked up at the ceiling and watched the stars twinkling in the artificial sky that they’d created together on their bedroom ceiling. Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, shone down brightly and counteracted the irritating pain that continued to build in Harry’s scar. It reminded him of how lucky he was to have the man next to him, and as he focused on that feeling, the prickling sensation faded away.
Harry lay on the bed, breathlessly gazing up at the older man above him. Sirius gave him a devilish smirk and brought his face down, their lips meeting in a passionate kiss. Moaning unashamedly, Harry gently rocked his hips against Sirius and explored his mouth with his tongue, the spicy taste overwhelming his senses. He was sure he would never get tired of this. Sirius’s hands slipped under Harry’s shirt and he gasped at the delicious sensation of rough fingers ghosting over his sensitive skin. They were lost in each other, lost in their senses, not a single inch of space between them as they embraced. The perfect moment was ruined not a moment later, however, as a loud knock at the door disrupted them.

“Harry, Sirius, are you in there?” Remus’s voice came from the hallway. At least he had learnt to knock, Harry thought to himself grumpily, after the many times he’d walked in on them. Sirius reluctantly climbed off him and walked towards the door, a stony expression on his face.

“This had better be important,” he growled at Remus, almost impersonating his canine animagus form in his anger. Remus ignored him.

“You know perfectly well that there’s an Order meeting happening, Sirius. Get your lazy arses downstair before I make you. That goes for you as well, Harry!” Remus called into the room, before turning and heading back downstairs.

Sirius turned dramatically away from the door and stomped back towards the bed, letting lose a stream of curses towards Remus and his bad timing. Harry looked at him and smirked, annoyed about his moment with Sirius being ruined but finding the older man’s reaction amusing to watch.

“Come on, I guess we should actually head down there,” Harry said reluctantly, getting off the bed and strolling towards the door. Sirius grabbed him as he was about to pass by, and placed a quick, searing kiss on his lips.

“We’ll continue after the meeting,” Sirius whispered huskily into Harry’s ear, and Harry’s eyes lit up in anticipation. He was almost annoyed that they were headed to an Order meeting, despite all the fuss he’d kicked up in order to even be allowed in. He tried to forget Sirius for the moment and to focus on more important things as they headed down the stairs and into the kitchen where several Order members were waiting impatiently.

“Finally!” Remus called to them half frustrated, half amused as they both sauntered into the room. Harry looked somewhat apologetic, but Sirius just grinned obnoxiously and sat down at the table, pulling out the seat next to him for Harry.

“Now that we’re all here,” Kingsley Shacklebolt began speaking in his deep voice, looked somewhat pointedly at the two of them, “we can begin this meeting of the Order of the Phoenix. Seeing as it’s Harry’s first proper meeting, it would probably be wise to fill him in on some details.” He looked at Harry and Sirius, assuming quite rightly that Sirius would be the one to do it.

“Thanks, Kingsley, I’ll do it,” Sirius smiled at him politely and turned to Harry, his smile immediately softening and becoming more sincere. “Ok, so we’ve been monitoring Voldemort’s movements as best we can for a while now, trying to get a good picture of what his plans are. One
of his main strategies at the moment seems to be recruitment. He’s trying his best to boost his following by having his Death Eaters scouting for dark wizards to join his ranks. And he’s not only recruiting people that are willing to join, he’s using his old tactics of coercion and dark magic to convince people to follow him. There have been reports of torture, blackmail and the Imperius curse being used.”

Sirius paused, and Harry looked at him with a dark expression in his eyes. He was filled with so much hate for Voldemort, he almost felt it bursting out of him sometimes. What right did that evil bastard think he had to send his minions out to torture innocent, terrified people into joining him? It was sick and twisted. He scowled, and Sirius’ eyes narrowed, obviously feeling the same way as Harry.

“I’m not surprised, but I still find it difficult to think about,” Harry said softly with a poisonous edge to his voice. “What else have you found out?” He asked, determined to know as much as possible about the plans of their enemy.

“It’s not just wizards and witches that he’s recruiting. There have been rumours, hints that he’s also trying to liaise with various different groups of dark creatures. He has Death Eaters hidden amongst groups such as the vampires and werewolves, spreading the word and trying to convince them that the only way to survive the war with powers and rights is to join him.”

Harry swallowed, a sense of dread coming over him. There was so much damage these creatures could do if they fell into Voldemort’s trap and decided to fight against them.

“Is that where you’ve been, Remus?” Harry asked the man, looking at him worriedly. “Have you been trying to convince the werewolves not to fall for Voldemort’s propaganda?” Remus looked at him seriously and nodded his head.

“Yes, I’ve been living with a large group of werewolves recently, trying to fit in with them and become a trusted member of their group. I need to be able to convince them that Voldemort is evil and they’ll be doing a terrible thing if they join him, but it’s tough work. Thanks to people like Umbridge bringing in anti-werewolf legislation, they all feel betrayed by humans as it is and they’re happy that Voldemort is planning on bringing down the Ministry of Magic. They believe him when he says that he’ll give them rights, they won’t be shunned by society any more. The werewolves I’ve been living with are very different to me, Harry. They live rough, and they embrace the wolf whenever the full moon comes around, some of them taking pleasure in murder. Voldemort is playing on that by telling them he’ll provide them with muggles and muggle-borns to feed on and hunt.”

Remus looked ill as he spoke these words, and Harry couldn’t help but feel the same way. He was so used to interacting with Remus that he hadn’t really thought about the fact that there were werewolves out there that didn’t have the Wolfsbane potion, or a dedicated group of animagi friends to help them out during their transformations. It was easy to forget how unpopular werewolves were in general society, as Harry knew for a fact that Remus was one of the kindest and most genuine men he knew, and that being a werewolf didn’t change that in the slightest.

Harry turned back to Sirius, seeing his grim expression mirrored on Sirius’ handsome face. “So, Voldemort is gaining ground with the werewolves and probably the vampires too. Are there any other creatures he’s hoping to coerce?” Harry asked bitterly, already knowing the answer.

“Sadly, yes. We believe he may be coming quite close to convincing the dementors to leave Azkaban and join the Death Eaters.”
Harry gasped, feeling a chill settle over him as he thought about those horrifying creatures. “But if the dementors leave Azkaban that means…”

“A mass breakout, exactly. Voldemort has a lot of loyal followers imprisoned there, and it would be a big blow to our side if he managed to gain all of them back as well as a swarm of dementors. Unfortunately there isn’t much we can do about that at the moment, apart from hoping that the Ministry stay competent enough to keep the dementors under their control for as long as possible. Which, seeing as Fudge is being deliberately stupid, is looking less and less likely.”

Sirius frowned deeply, and Harry took in a shaky breath. It was tougher than he thought it would be, finding out all of this information. It was starting to dawn on him just how dangerous Voldemort really was, and how important the work of the Order was. They couldn’t let Voldemort’s plans take hold, they simply couldn’t! Sirius noticed his distressed expression and gently squeezed his hand under the table. Harry gave him a grateful smile, and Sirius smiled back, not letting go of his hand.

“Anything else I should know about in regards to Voldemort’s recruitment?” Harry asked softly, “or should we move on?”

Sirius looked uncomfortable, and spoke hesitantly. “There’s one more thing, actually. A force Voldemort used to great effect in the last wizarding war was the giants. It looks like he’s trying to recruit them again this time. This is why…why Hagrid has gone to attempt to liaise with them.” Sirius spoke quite quietly towards the end, but Harry heard every word as if it was shouted. Hagrid had gone to liaise with giants, that’s why he was gone! He was supposed to be back by now, though. What if something terrible had happened to him?

“No!” Harry exclaimed loudly. “That’s ridiculous! You sent him after the giants? No wonder he hasn’t come back yet, they probably killed him as soon as they saw him!” Harry’s voice broke and he stopped talking, feeling an unnatural quiet fall over the room. He felt Sirius’s hand leave his, only to be replaced by a comforting arm around his shoulders, pulling him into a hug. Harry sighed, leaning onto him for support.

“There’s no evidence to suggest that Hagrid is dead, or seriously injured,” Kingsley spoke up softly. “He was travelling with Madame Olympe Maxime, and she returned alone only a week after they were due to be back. She said that Hagrid was fine when she left him, but they had got separated on the journey home.”

This didn’t do much to appease Harry’s worry. “But still, he was supposed to be back months ago and no one has heard from him!” Harry said, sighing and putting his head in his hands. When he’d heard Ron and Hermione talking about Hagrid, he hadn’t imagined anything like this. Giants were ruthless, bloodthirsty creatures and he was horrified by the idea of Hagrid walking right up to them and trying to convince them not to follow Voldemort.

Sirius looked at Harry, clearly worried about how upset he was. “Alright, I think that’s enough for now,” he said softly to the room at large. Everyone nodded and agreed, planning another meeting for a few days from now when they would go over any progress that had happened. The members of the Order all began to stand up, stretch and head towards the door, while talking quietly amongst themselves. This all passed Harry by as he sat at the table, thinking sadly about the war and how many people would be lost to it. It filled him with even more determination to do what he could to take Voldemort down and stop his violence once and for all.

“Are you ok, Harry?” Sirius broke his train of thought to ask him gently. Harry gave him a small smile.
“I’ll be ok. Thank you, Sirius,” Harry squeezed his hand, grateful for the comfort the older man brought him.

“For what?”

“For being here for me whenever I need you. For helping me get into these Order meetings so I can wrap my head around everything and give myself more determination to finish this war. For being you,” Harry said quietly, looking sincerely into Sirius’ stormy grey eyes. They brightened as Sirius smiled at him, and he was pulled into a firm hug.

“You’re welcome, Harry,” Sirius breathed, and Harry’s throat constricted as a sudden surge of emotion swept over him. He knew that he loved Sirius, he’d known that since he learnt the truth about him and subsequently saved him from the Ministry, but he was starting to think that he may be falling in love with the man. This thought set his blood rushing and his heart pumping, and he got a violent case of butterflies in his stomach. He couldn’t help the goofy grin that came over him when he thought about his feelings for Sirius. There was no doubt about it, he was falling for the older man.

His thoughts were interrupted as Sirius pulled away and he registered the fact that they were alone in the kitchen, all the Order members having gone on their way. He needed to take his mind off of the seriousness of the meeting for a while, and he thought he knew how. He pulled back slightly from the embrace, looking into Sirius’ eyes again but this time with a playful, almost seductive look in his eyes. He smirked slightly and whispered into Sirius’ ear.

“Remember what we were doing before the meeting started? I believe you told me we would continue…” Harry breathed huskily and Sirius’ eyes darkened with lust.

“Of course, how could I forget?” he answered with a roguish grin, and Harry felt butterflies in his stomach again as he once more realised just how gorgeous Sirius really was. Before he knew what was happening, the older man had grabbed him by the waist, thrown him over his shoulder in a fireman’s lift and was carrying him up the stairs to their bedroom. Harry hardly had time to complain before he found himself thrown down onto their bed by an enthusiastic Sirius. “Now, where were we…?” he asked silkily, straddling Harry and leaning over him.

“I think I remember…” Harry answered roughly, grabbing Sirius by his perfectly styled hair and pulling him down into a forceful kiss. Sirius moaned in appreciation and slipped his tongue into Harry’s mouth as if it was made to be there, exploring and tasting him, probing his tongue over the sensitive spots that made Harry moan and writhe in pleasure.

Moving from Harry’s, Sirius’s mouth trailed down Harry’s jaw line, leaving a trail of wet kisses along his neck. He paused here for a moment, sucking and nibbling at a particularly sensitive spot as Harry moaned and cursed out loud, tangling his hands further into Sirius’ soft hair and begging him not to stop. Sirius laughed huskily against Harry’s skin, his soft breath tingling against him and leaving him breathless. He moved further down, softly sucking Harry’s collarbone, and abruptly sitting up to rip off Harry’s shirt as he became impatient with the amount of skin on show.

Before Sirius could resume his ministrations, Harry shamelessly reciprocated by pulling Sirius’ shirt off too. He ran his hands over the older man’s perfect body, feeling taught muscles and soft skin under his hands. Sirius closed his eyes and smiled softly, giving Harry the confidence to lean forwards and hesitantly kiss the tantalisingly exposed flesh of his chest. Harry moved his hands around to Sirius’s back, holding him in a gentle embrace while he boldly moved his mouth over his nipple and licked it. Sirius’ eyes opened wide in surprise and he moaned loudly, prompting Harry to take the sensitive nipple in his mouth and suck on it tenderly, brushing his teeth over the
tip as he pulled away and relishing the look of sheer desire in Sirius’s face.

Sirius pushed Harry back down onto the bed roughly, pressing their bodies together until there was no space between them at all, their bare chests causing a delicious friction. He crashed their lips together in a searing kiss, pouring all of his pent up desire into it and gasping softly as Harry kissed him back just as forcefully. He had come a long way from the shy, inexperienced boy he had once been when they had first realised their feelings for each other. Sirius certainly wasn’t complaining as Harry reacted to their passionate kiss by grinding his hips against Sirius’, a sinfully exquisite feeling starting to build, his growing erection pushed against Harry’s thigh.

Harry revelled in the feeling of Sirius’ excitement pressing against him, it turned him on even more than he already was and he moaned again as their pace began to quicken, grinding against each other as they kissed. Sirius soon decided there were too many layers between them and he began to unbutton Harry’s trousers, the younger man looking at him with excited anticipation. They hadn’t come this far before, Sirius didn’t want to pressure Harry into doing anything he wasn’t ready for, but he certainly seemed ready now. He gave him a questioning look as he slowly undid the zip, not wanting to go too far.

“Just hurry up and take my trousers off, Sirius,” Harry said roughly, his voice deep with obvious desire. Sirius grinned at him, taking that as all the permission he needed, and he quickly ripped the offending item of clothing off of the green eyed man. Harry was quick to reciprocate, completely ripping Sirius’ trousers when he seemed to decide they weren’t coming off quickly enough. Sirius smirked and reached his hand between them, palming the obvious erection in Harry’s underwear. Harry threw his head back and moaned loudly, prompting Sirius to press harder and faster. Harry opened his eyes, gazing at Sirius lustily. He moved his own hand down, taking Sirius’ erection in hand and gently squeezing it. He relished the look of pure desire on Sirius’ face and decided he wanted to see him look like that as often as possible from now on.

Sirius gave Harry a sloppy kiss, they were too far gone for precision now. They writhed against each other, palming each other through their underwear, too caught up in the moment to stop and get rid of that final layer. Harry was first to let his orgasm take him over, never having felt anyone touch him like this other than himself. The feeling of Sirius’ large, rough hand pumping him was too much for him to take and he screamed out loud, coming hard and fast in his boxers. Sirius wasn’t far behind, relishing the look of ecstasy on Harry’s face and letting it throw him over the edge. They collapsed in a sweaty heap on the bed, Sirius just about having the effort left to use his wand to clean them up, before curling up in a ball and pulling Harry flush against him.

“Wow…” was all Harry could say, feeling adrenalin and endorphins rushing through his system. That had definitely been the most incredible climax he had felt, and he turned shakily to look at Sirius. The older man smiled at him and pulled him even closer, wrapping his arms protectively around Harry and kissing him softly on the forehead.

“Wow pretty much sums it up,” Sirius breathed softly, his breath still quick and shallow as his body began to relax. “You’re an incredible man, Harry.”

“Sirius…” Harry spoke softly, looking directly into his silver grey eyes with ill-disguised tenderness.

“Harry?”

“I… I think I’m in love with you…” Harry said hesitantly, worried about Sirius’ reaction. He didn’t have to worry, however, as Sirius’ face split into a wide grin and he laughed out loud, taking Harry’s face gently into his hands.
“I love you too, Harry,” he said ecstatically, his laughter infectious, and Harry started laughing too. He felt that if he’d needed to cast a Patronus at this moment in time, he would’ve had no trouble banishing an entire swarm of dementors.

Harry sat in the kitchen, staring aimlessly at the wall. He was waiting for their dinner to cook while Sirius showered upstairs. Every now and then a smile would creep across his face as he remembered the afternoon he’d spent with Sirius, their passion and desire finally winning out, and telling Sirius that he was in love with him. Euphoric didn’t even come close to describing how Harry felt about the fact that Sirius felt the same way. He had known that Sirius had some feelings for him, of course, but hearing him say the L word out loud just clarified it. He was pulled out of his musings by Sirius bounding into the room, something in his hands.

“Harry, your friends are calling you on the two-way mirror,” Sirius said to him as he walked into the room, handing the mirror over to him. Harry took it gratefully, warning Sirius not to let the dinner burn as he headed into the drawing room to talk to Ron and Hermione. He sat down and looked into the mirror, seeing the concerned faces of his friends looking back.

“Hey guys, I’m here!” Harry said quickly.

“There you are Harry!” Hermione said, relieved. “We were worried about you, you didn’t respond to us trying to call you all afternoon!”

Harry blushed, thinking about what he had been busy doing while his friends were trying to talk to him. Oops…

“Sorry about that…I was, er, I was kind of busy…” Harry said, eloquent as ever in his awkward embarrassment. He couldn’t help himself blushing and Hermione shared a look with Ron, knowing exactly what Harry was hiding.

“I really didn’t need that mental picture,” Ron said, wrinkling his nose in disgust.

“I didn’t say anything!” Harry said in his defence.

“You didn’t need to,” Hermione said in amusement. “It’s written all over your face. Anyway, moving on from that…” She tailed off. “Have you found out anything about Hagrid?”

“I have, actually,” Harry said, sobering up immediately. “We had a meeting this morning and the Order filled me in on some things. I’m not sure I can tell you though, because I signed an Oath of Secrecy when I joined the Order that I wouldn’t tell anyone any information.” Harry had forgotten about this unfortunate piece of information until now, suddenly realising that something very bad might happen if he told Ron and Hermione any Order secrets.

“Surely you can tell us something, mate,” Ron said with a scowl on his face. “Hagrid is our friend, we need to know if anything has happened to him.”
“I know, I know. I can’t tell you any details, all I can say is that he was supposed to return from this mission that he was on with Madame Maxime. She got back months ago, and she says she got separated from Hagrid on their journey home and that he was fine when she last saw him”. Harry thought that was informative enough without actually saying anything important.

“He was travelling with Madame Maxime?” Hermione said thoughtfully, obviously reading into the situation what Harry had hoped she would. “But that would suggest…”

“What?” Ron said blankly, looking between the two of them. Harry gave Hermione a tiny, almost imperceptible nod. She gasped. “What?” Ron asked again when no one answered him.

“What links Hagrid with Madame Maxime, Ron?” Hermione asked him patiently.

“Er…they’re both massive?” Ron said, before his face suddenly lit up in recognition. “OH! I see, they’re both half-giant…” Ron said, looking enlightened, before the reality of the situation dawned on him. “You mean, the two of them went looking for…” Harry quieted him with a look, reminding him not to say anything out loud. Anyone could be listening to them in the castle without them knowing.

“Your suspicions are almost definitely correct, but I can’t comment any further,” Harry said, wishing they could discuss it properly. “I wish I had news that Hagrid was fine, but sadly we’ll just have to wait and see what happens.” Harry said softly, looking apologetically at his friends.

They called it a night shortly after that, not having much more to say to each other while in such a morose mood. Harry trudged back to the kitchen to eat what was left of the dinner after leaving it alone with Sirius for all this time.

As they ate their dinner, Harry and Sirius were mid-conversation when they were interrupted by someone entering the front door. They looked at each other in confusion, not expecting anyone to visit. It was nearing full-moon so Remus would be busy with the werewolf pack, and other Order members didn’t tend to visit so late in the day. Their curiosity was soon satisfied as none other than Albus Dumbledore walked into the kitchen.

“Ah, Harry, Sirius, there you are!” He said happily, a twinkle in his piercing blue eyes. Sirius simply narrowed his eyes, but Harry felt the need to be civil to the meddling old wizard. He was, after all, working for the destruction of Voldemort, no matter how annoying his meddling happened to be.

“Good evening, Professor Dumbledore,” Harry said quietly. “Can I offer you a drink?”

“No thank you, Harry my boy, I’m just stopping by.” He walked smoothly through the kitchen, heading into the drawing room for whatever purpose. Only a couple of minutes later he walked back past them, tucking an envelope into his robes with his left hand. His right hand was black and withered, dead looking, just like Ron and Hermione had told him. It looked like he had been touched by some terrible dark magic.

“What happened to your hand, sir?” Harry asked boldly, in as polite a voice as he could manage while being extremely curious. Dumbledore appraised him for a moment over his half-moon glasses, his piercing eyes making him feel uncomfortable. After a moment, he replied.

“I’ll tell you the story, Harry, but I would rather we spoke about this alone,” he said softly, giving Sirius a pointed look. The older man stood up angrily and looked as if he was going to argue, but
Harry gave him a small shake of the head. He would rather find out important information that he
could then pass on to Sirius, than Sirius trying to argue and him not finding anything out at all.
Sirius backed down, and stalked out of the room towards the stairs, no doubt to sulk in the highest
bedroom with Buckbeak.

“Take a seat, Harry,” Dumbledore said, gesturing to the kitchen chairs. Harry sat down opposite
the headmaster and looked at him expectantly. “My hand, my boy, was injured in the process of
trying to locate something that would help bring about the downfall of Lord Voldemort,”
Dumbledore said calmly. “However my reflexes aren’t what they used to be, and I unfortunately
only just escaped with only an injured hand.”

Harry looked at him cautiously, thinking over his words. Dumbledore was looking for something
that would help kill Voldemort? Did the Order know about this?

“What were you trying to locate, professor?” Harry asked carefully, observing Dumbledore’s
facial expressions. Annoyingly, the man was very good at hiding his emotions. He wouldn’t like
to play poker against the meddling old wizard.

“Oh. That, Harry, is information that I don’t believe you are ready for yet,” Dumbledore said, his
calm tone beginning to annoy Harry. Of course the bastard wouldn’t actually tell him anything,
Harry thought angrily.

“I see. Is this something the Order is working on?” Harry asked pointedly, and he almost thought
he saw a flicker of something in Dumbledore’s eyes. Annoyance, maybe?

“No. Not yet, no. As you can see from my hand, it is something highly dangerous and isn’t proven to
be of use yet anyway. There is no need for members of the Order to concern themselves with
something as dangerous and tenuous as this.” Dumbledore’s words had a finality to them, but
Harry wasn’t finished.

“But you have an idea of an object or something that could help destroy Voldemort?

“Yes.”

“What is it? How can I help?” Harry said, determined to get something out of the man.
Dumbledore scrutinised him for a moment, as if looking into his soul to see if he was worthy.

Perhaps you can help me with something, although you must understand that any details will not
be disclosed at this particular time,” Dumbledore said slowly, narrowing his eyes infinitesimally as
he stared down Harry.

“Ok.” Harry eagerly replied, hoping this wasn’t going to be some made-up story Dumbledore was
feeding him to keep him quiet.

“You seem to have a close affinity with the mind of Lord Voldemort. You can relate to him in
several ways, perhaps have an intuition about his mind,” Dumbledore started, and Harry was
taken aback. There may be a couple of similarities between them but he didn’t appreciate being
compared to Voldemort. “Let me continue,” Dumbledore said quickly, obviously noting Harry’s
annoyed expression. “Can you think of a place in which Lord Voldemort may choose to hide an
Harry looked at him, confused. What did a sentimental object of Voldemort’s have to do with anything? He tried to think, however, simply to humour Dumbledore. If he was Voldemort, where would he hide a treasured object? The first thought that came to him was the obvious choice. Something that Harry definitely agreed with Voldemort on was that Hogwarts was, and always will be his home.

“Hogwarts,” Harry said to the aged professor. “That’s definitely the place where he would hide something of sentimental value, a treasured item,” he continued. Dumbledore looked mildly frustrated.

“That thought did occur to me too, Harry, however I simply cannot think of a time in which Voldemort would have planted this…object in the school. Also, despite the vast size of the castle, there are very few places that haven’t been explored. If such an object was in the castle, I like to think I’d have come across it by now.” Dumbledore looked fairly confident in this statement, however Harry begged to differ.

“No one can ever know every secret that the castle holds, surely,” he began, “no one found the Chamber of Secrets until my second year at the school for a start.”

“This is true,” Dumbledore said thoughtfully. “But where else in the school could an object be hidden? The Chamber just wouldn’t have been possible…” Dumbledore was almost speaking to himself now, as if far away in a memory. A thought suddenly occurred to Harry.

“Have you thought about asking the house elves?” He said thoughtfully. “If anyone knows the castle inside and out, it’s them.” Dumbledore’s eyes widened and he smiled a genuine smile.

“A wonderful idea, my boy! Perhaps you could call that house elf friend of yours, Dobby, he may have an idea or two for us!” Dumbledore grinned at him, and Harry nodded.

“Dobby!” he called, and the excitable elf appeared a moment later with a loud crack.

“Mister Harry Potter, sir, you called me!” Dobby said with an adoring look on his face. He was wearing several pairs of odd socks on each feet and a hand-knitted tea cosy as a hat.

“Yes, Dobby, professor Dumbledore and I have a few questions for you about the castle,” Harry said, smiling gently at the elf.

“Of course, sirs, Dobby will answer any questions you have!” He said enthusiastically, his head bobbing up and down as he tried to contain his excitement at being able to impart useful information to his master.

“Can you think of anywhere in the school that someone would be able to hide an object without it being found for years and years?” Harry asked carefully, hoping the elf would have some kind of answer. Luckily, his tennis ball eyes lit up and he nodded excitedly.

“Yes, Mister Harry Potter, sir, I knows a place! It is called the Room of Requirement, or the Come
and Go room. It only appears when someone has great need of it,” he said importantly, and Dumbledore’s eyes grew wide.

“Where is this room, Dobby?” he asked quickly, and the elf hastened to reply.

“Tis on the seventh floor, professor Dumbledore, sir, to open it you must pace in front of it three times while thinking about what you need. There is a room in there, which generations of Hogwarts students and teachers alike have used to hide things they do not want anyone else to find!” Dobby looked up at the two wizards, hoping that his information was useful to them. There was a gleam in Dumbledore’s eye and he looked like he had found exactly what he had been searching for.

“Thank you, Dobby, you have been extremely helpful. You may go back to the kitchens now,” Dumbledore dismissed him, and the elf quickly hugged Harry around the middle before acquiescing to Dumbledore’s request. He shared a look with Harry, and his voice was low and excited. “Did you know about this place, Harry?” He asked, and Harry could tell why. With the invisibility cloak that Dumbledore himself had gifted to Harry, it was quite likely that he had stumbled across such a room on his night time travels. This was a secret of Hogwarts that Harry had not encountered before, however.

“No, professor, I've never heard of it. It sounds like a fascinating space, though. So you think Voldemort might have hidden something in there?” He asked interestedly.

“Perhaps, perhaps,” Dumbledore said evasively. “I really must be going, dear boy. It has been an enlightening visit. Do tell Sirius my goodbyes,” he said quickly, and strode towards the door, leaving Harry standing slightly dumbstruck in the kitchen. He heard the front door slam and drifted off into his thoughts, trying to work out what on earth had just happened. It seemed Dumbledore knew something that he hadn’t told anyone else, not even the Order of the Phoenix.
Harry sat at the desk in his and Sirius' bedroom, scowling down at the parchment in front of him. He had been working on Remus’s History of Magic essay for hours, and all the words on the parchment were starting to blur together. Sighing, Harry rubbed his eyes and leaned back, deciding to rest for a minute before starting again. He had been a lot more focussed on his work since being taught one on one by Remus, but his mind today was elsewhere.

Thoughts of Voldemort, and an unknown dark object, kept plaguing Harry's mind. After Dumbledore had spoken to him about something being hidden in Hogwarts, he couldn’t stop thinking about it. Could there really be some kind of object that Voldemort had hidden in Hogwarts, which could help bring about his downfall? It seemed too good to be true, but why would Dumbledore bring it up if it wasn’t true? The man was a meddler and could be downright infuriating at times, but he was still working towards the greater good, trying to bring down Voldemort, and Harry felt he should at least still trust the old man in that respect.

However, Harry couldn’t help but be nervous. It was becoming increasingly obvious that Dumbledore was not the flawless fighter everyone assumed him to be. He was old, he was injured, and he did not have all the answers. How many times had Harry himself been in danger because Dumbledore neglected to keep him safe? Such as in his first year, when Dumbledore knew full well that Harry and his friends had found out about the Philosopher’s Stone, and yet he almost actively encouraged him to go down that trapdoor to face the horribly dangerous traps that resided beneath it. Not to mention the fact that he ended up facing Voldemort himself, not just at age 11 but in his second and fourth years at the school as well. Harry frowned and tried not to think about the end of his last school year, when he had witnessed the death of Cedric at the hands of the Dark Lord.

The point was, Voldemort must be incredibly angry after Harry ruined his plans to regain strength outside of the public eye and rise to power without Dumbledore’s knowledge. If Voldemort wanted Harry dead, then who was to say he wouldn’t succeed? If Dumbledore was planning to destroy Voldemort with whatever dark object he seemed to think was hidden in Hogwarts, and his old age and his injuries failed him, then Voldemort would have a free reign and Harry would surely be first on his hit-list. He couldn’t stay safe inside Grimmauld Place forever, and he certainly had a knack for getting into trouble and always being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Harry sighed, burying his face in his hands. There was no way he could finish his essay now, he was far too distracted and worried. After a minute or so of staring wearily at his desk in defeated silence, Harry heard a noise behind him and turned to see the welcome sight of Sirius entering the room. He smiled at the older man tiredly, and Sirius seemed to instantly sense that something was wrong. The easy-going smile on his face was replaced with a look of concern.

“Hey, what’s wrong Harry?” Sirius asked worriedly.

“Nothing, really. I’m just tired,” Harry sighed, not wanting to burden Sirius with his pointless worries. Sirius simply raised an eyebrow and looked unimpressed.

“You expect me to believe that?”

“Okay, fine. I was just worrying about what Dumbledore told me, and how powerful Voldemort is, and if Dumbledore is just going to endanger us all by being a meddling old fool.” Harry looked
at the ground, weary and slightly self-conscious. He didn’t want Sirius thinking he was stupid for overthinking things, or weak for not wanting a confrontation with Voldemort. He started as he felt a warm hand on his face. Sirius gently tilted his head up until Harry was looking into his eyes.

“Look at me, Harry. You don’t have to feel so insecure about being worried or anxious. Everything is changing, Voldemort is becoming more powerful, but you don’t have to worry about that at the moment. The rest of the Order and I are all here to keep you safe. I won’t let anything happen to you as long as you stay here with me.”

Sirius looked so sincere, and Harry couldn’t help but give him a proper smile. He stood up and closed the distance between them, pulling the taller man into a tight embrace. Sirius hugged him back immediately, gently running a hand through Harry’s hair, and Harry smiled into Sirius’s shoulder. He felt so safe when Sirius held him like this, and it was easy to forget his troubles for now and focus on the happiness he felt whenever he was around this incredible man.

Pulling back slightly, Sirius looked into Harry’s eyes with a soft smile that made the corners of his eyes crinkle perfectly, before softly pressing his lips to Harry’s in a chaste kiss. Harry kissed him back more firmly, cupping Sirius’ face in his hands and smiling against his lips. No matter what was going on with Voldemort, he still considered himself the luckiest guy in the world right now.

“This is great, Harry, you’ve really got to grips with the subject,” Remus said fondly. He was reading through the essay Harry had been working on, which he had finally finished after getting a good night’s sleep and coming back to the next day. He had been writing about giant wars, which he was surprised to find was actually a rather interesting subject. He could only imagine just how tedious professor Binns would have managed to make it, and he was infinitely glad that he was being taught by Remus. The werewolf was particularly talented at giving all of the important facts while also injecting enough enthusiasm and gory details to keep Harry interested.

“Thanks Remus! I actually found it quite interesting, surprisingly,” he smiled at the older man, taking a large bite of his toast.

“We’ll do some practical work next lesson, how about Charms?”

Before Harry could answer, a loud voice came from the doorway. “Of course he doesn’t want to do Charms, Remus, that’s boring.”

Harry turned and smiled at Sirius, rolling his eyes at the older man. “Shut it, you old dog. Maybe I do want to learn Charms,” he grinned playfully.

“Oh? Well, if you’re busy doing Charms then I guess you won’t want to take part in my lesson today…” Sirius said in a silky voice, smirking at him.

“What lesson would that be?” Harry asked huskily, smirking back at Sirius.

“Ugh, get a room, you two,” Remus said with a roll of his eyes, getting up from his chair and starting to walk towards the door.
“I was talking about Animagus lessons!” Sirius laughed, shaking his head at the werewolf. “Honestly, Moony, you have such a dirty mind.”

“You can’t blame me for jumping to conclusions when you look at each other like that,” Remus said sardonically, “you’re practically undressing each other with your eyes. Anyway, I’m heading out, you two have fun with your Animagus training…” With one final nod of the head, Remus wandered out of the kitchen and a moment later Harry heard the front door slam shut behind him.

“Well, I guess we’re alone now…are you sure you wanted to do some Animagus training?” Harry smirked at Sirius, walking up to him and gently placing his hands on the older man’s waist. Leaning closer, he pressed his lips to Sirius’ exposed neck and gently kissed him, sucking slightly and darting his tongue out to lick the soft skin. Sirius moaned and threw his head back, letting out a breathy laugh.

“I suppose that could wait…” he whispered silkily, a glint in his grey eyes as he suddenly grabbed Harry’s hand and pulled him up the stairs to the first floor. Harry ran behind him happily, a wide grin on his face. They stopped on the landing and Sirius pushed Harry against the wall, crashing their lips together in an intense kiss. Harry felt Sirius’s strong, toned body pressing him firmly against the wall, not an inch of space between them. Their tongues entwined, revelling in the taste of each other.

Sirius gently took Harry’s wrists into his hands and held them above his head, effectively anchoring him against the wall. Wriggling slightly, Harry adjusted to the feeling of being held in place, the sensation of being protected and safe. Harry loved the feeling of the stronger, taller man controlling him. Sirius bent down and nibbled on Harry’s ear, before moving along his jaw line and marking his path with kisses. Harry moaned, eyes closed, lost in the overwhelming feeling of Sirius’s body pressed up against his, their hips rutting against each other, his arms held tightly by Sirius’s strong hands, a soft wet tongue running down his neck and hot lips sucking on his collarbone.

Harry opened his eyes, looking lustily upwards into Sirius’s intense grey ones, only inches from his. Flushed and panting, Harry felt delirious with want for the older man.

“Feeling hot, Harry?” Sirius whispered into his ear, his voice deep and breathy.

“Mmm,” Harry managed to get out, not coherent enough to form words right now. Sirius smirked at him.

“Getting all sweaty, that won’t do…maybe we should jump in the shower and get clean…” There was a devilish grin on Sirius’ face, and Harry stared at him slack-jawed for a moment until the words caught up with him. His eyes immediately focused and he stood up straight.

“Shower…yes, definitely a good idea…” Harry replied, imagining a naked Sirius with water running down his skin. He gulped, the mental images sending a jolt of heat right down into his groin. Before he knew it, Sirius had dragged him across the landing into the bathroom and was ripping off Harry’s shirt. Grinning mischievously, Harry pulled out his wand and muttered a spell, laughing at Sirius’s surprise when all of their clothes suddenly vanished. He ran his eyes down the perfect body of the older man, his eyes lighting up when he noticed that Sirius was just as turned on as he was.

Sirius turned from him and walked to the shower, turning on the water to the perfect temperature. Harry got a great view of his arse, before quickly following him into the steaming hot water. He closed his eyes as the water ran over him, feeling refreshed and slightly more coherent. This all
Harry closed the distance between them, wrapping his arms around this incredible man that he was lucky enough to have. Their lips met once more in a heated kiss, Harry’s hands roaming all over Sirius’ wet, naked body. The older man moaned into Harry’s mouth, running his hands through his hair and tugging on it gently. Harry pulled back slightly, and hazily opened his eyes. He glanced down, taking in the beautiful image of Sirius’ erection, pulsing with need and leaking with excitement. Licking his lips, Harry prepared to do something he’d been thinking about for quite a while, but hadn’t summoned the courage to try. Slowly, keeping eye contact with Sirius, he sank to his knees.

Sirius’s eyes widened, and Harry smirked. Kneeling on the floor of the shower, he looked up and was struck yet again by how simply stunning the older man was. Running his hands over Sirius’ thighs, he gently massaged the skin, moving closer to the area in which he knew Sirius was craving attention. Slowly, torturously, Harry put a hand around the base of Sirius’s cock, leaning closer, before darting out his tongue and licking all the way up from the base to the head, swirling his tongue around the top and taking in the salty taste of pre-come. Sirius tasted just as good as he had imagined.

Harry took a deep breath, feeling nervous, but the lust he felt was overpowering his worries. He looked up, hoping he was doing it right and that Sirius would enjoy it. The look of pure ecstasy on Sirius’s face told Harry all he needed to know, and gave him the assurance to continue. With more confidence, Harry leaned forwards once more and licked his lips, before opening his mouth wide and swallowing as much as he could of Sirius into his mouth. The moan that came out of Sirius’s mouth following that was simply divine, and Harry decided he must do whatever he could to make him moan like that again.

Harry slowly started to find a rhythm, sucking Sirius’s cock as far into his mouth as he could, moving back, swirling his tongue around it, and sucking it back in. Sirius was leaning against the wall, legs weak, gasping and moaning at the top of his lungs. Occasionally the noises were interspersed with “Oh, fuck!” or “Don’t stop, oh Merlin, so good.” Harry took this as a sign that he was doing well, smirking around Sirius and enjoying the waves of heat that were running through his own cock. At this rate, he was going to come without even being touched. Sirius was his priority, however, he was determined to bring the older man over the edge, and by the sounds he was making, he was getting close.

Sirius’s moans started to get more irregular, his breathing ragged and heavy, and his hands found their way into Harry’s hair. Harry relished the feeling of Sirius holding him close, thrusting into his mouth as he let out a cry of Harry’s name and let his orgasm wash over him. Starting at the unfamiliar feeling of come shooting into his throat, Harry’s eyes flew open, but he swallowed and closed his eyes, letting himself get used to the feeling, enjoying the taste of Sirius’s seed. The feeling overwhelmed him, and his hand automatically flew to his own erection, a few pumps enough to push himself over the edge too.

Riding the wave of his orgasm, Harry opened his eyes and saw Sirius sinking to the floor to sit next to him, his legs too shaky to hold him up. He opened his eyes and looked at Harry with a sense of tired wonderment.

“You, Harry, are full of surprises,” Sirius managed to slur in a voice heavy with sated tiredness. Harry smirked in response, opening his eyes blearily and watching the water from the shower wash them clean.

“What can I say? I just wanted to please you,” Harry smiled fondly at Sirius, “maybe I’ll do that
“As long as you let me return the favour,” he smiled with a glint in his eye.

“Oh, I suppose that can be arranged,” Harry laughed. He wanted to sit here in the shower forever, feeling the warm water wash over him and the pleasant warmth of the man next to him, however they couldn’t stay there forever. After a little while they managed to move to the bedroom, collapsing on the bed for a nap before a well-earned lunch.

Harry leaned back in his chair, a smile on his face, his stomach comfortably full of the pasta Sirius had cooked for the two of them. A contented sigh escaped him as he stretched, slouching further down into the chair and smiling happily. Catching Sirius’s eye, Harry smiled at him almost shyly. His cheeks flushed pink and his heart skipped a beat, and Harry was reminded just how much he loved this man. It wasn’t just about the sex, everything about him was simply perfect. Sirius caught him staring.

“Do I really make you that happy?” he asked with a small smile on his face, looking at Harry interestedly.

“Is it that obvious?” Harry laughed, “of course you make me happy, Sirius,” he smiled.

“An old man like me?”

“You’re not old!” Harry said indignantly. “You’re perfect.” He flushed as he realised what he’d said.

“Perfect, eh?” Sirius grinned, “Care to elaborate?”

“Well…you’re gorgeous, intelligent, funny, sometimes simply adorable…I could go on,” Harry smirked at him, enjoying the way Sirius’s eyes crinkled in that cute way as he listened to the compliments.

“Do go on, please,” Sirius quipped.

“Don’t get cocky, now,” Harry countered, ruffling Sirius’s hair affectionately. The two of them laughed together, falling into a relaxed silence. It was so easy to be around Sirius, to spend time with him. Harry was sure he would never get tired of it.

“Do you remember what we were going to do earlier, before we got…distracted?” Sirius said coyly, giving Harry a roguish grin.

“Err…no, I don’t,” Harry admitted.
“You were going to practise your Animagus transformation. Do you still feel like it?”

“Oh yeah! I remember now,” Harry said, “I’d love to practise. I feel like I’m getting closer now, maybe today will be the day I transform!”

“It’s quite possible. You’re so relaxed right now that your brain is in the perfect state to perform a transformation. It makes it so much easier to clear your mind and get in touch with your magical core.”

Feeling optimistic, Harry got up and moved into the drawing room with Sirius. The older man used his wand to clear space in the middle of the room as usual, and Harry sat down on some cushions. With a nod of approval from Sirius, he closed his eyes and went through the usual motions. He cleared his mind, trying to block all thoughts, feelings, sights and sounds from his brain. Sirius was correct, with such a relaxed mind to start with he was managing to clear his mind a lot quicker than usual.

Before long, Harry started to feel a kind of warmth inside his chest. He had been reliably informed by Sirius that this was his magical core, and when he cleared his mind and focused on it he became more in touch with his magic. This helped him to perform more advanced and powerful magic as he felt into his very core to achieve it.

Remembering Sirius’s advice from the last lesson, Harry felt his magic, drew from the source, felt the heat get stronger and spread outwards from his chest down through his limbs. Doing his best to keep his mind clear and focus only on this feeling, Harry began trying to feel his spirit animal coming to the surface. As soon as this thought went through his mind, he felt some kind of shift within the heat of his magical core. He couldn’t put his finger on it but he assumed it was an animalistic feeling that was unfamiliar to him.

Harry’s heart quickened and he fought to keep his mind clear, to not panic, as he felt this strange feeling come over him. He felt almost as if he was shrinking, his arms twisting strangely and prickling all over his skin as if fur or feathers were starting to grow. It started to hurt, felt as though his very bone structure wanted to change, and he couldn’t help but fight back against it. With one last push he tried to clear his mind again but it was too late, the fear and pain had taken over and he lost the momentum.

Opening his eyes slowly, Harry admitted defeat and laid back on the floor. He was somehow exhausted, just from this one attempt. This was further than he’d ever managed to get before though. Looking over at Sirius, Harry wrinkled his nose in annoyance.

“I was so close that time!” He sighed, gladly accepting the chocolate that Sirius passed over to him. He took a small bite, and it made him feel better straight away.

“You did really well, Harry, I’m impressed. You’re picking it up so much faster than I ever did! I’m sure you’ll get it next time,” he smiled encouragingly.

“What did it look like?” Harry asked excitedly, “Did you see me start to change? It felt like my skeleton was changing shape.”

“I think you’re definitely going to be something smaller than a human. I thought I saw some kind
of black fur growing, too, although it could’ve been feathers.”

“Cool!” Harry grinned. He couldn’t wait to find out what kind of animal he was going to turn into. He just hoped it wouldn’t be something lame like an earthworm or a slug.

“I think its best you go rest, Harry, Animagus training can take a lot out of you in such a short amount of time. Here, take this,” Sirius handed Harry the rest of the chocolate he was holding, smiling at him warmly. Thanking him, Harry stood up awkwardly and wandered off to the library. The Animagus training and certain other things had distracted him, but he was determined to do some research on dark objects.

Walking into the old Black family library, Harry was hit with the distinctive smell of old books. He walked over to a random shelf and browsed the titles. ‘Curses Moste Evile and How to Caste Them’, ‘Know Your Enemy’, and ‘The Uses Of Human Blood in Potions’ were some of the first titles Harry saw on the shelf. He grimaced, feeling glad that Sirius had not taken after his parents in their love for the evil and occult. If he was going to find a book about dark Artefacts and how they might be linked to Voldemort’s power, however, this was a perfect place to look.

Browsing further, Harry came across a section of the library that was even more dilapidated and dusty than the rest. Proceeding with caution, Harry craned his head nearer to the shelf to read the titles of the ancient books. Finally, one caught Harry’s eye. It was entitled ‘Dark Objects and Their Uses in Evil’, which certainly seemed to fit the bill. Harry lifted the hefty tome from the shelf and carried it over to a desk at the side of the room. Opening it to a random page, Harry nibbled on his chocolate and began to read.

Frowning, Harry turned the pages gingerly, some of the words making him feel nauseous. The book went into extreme detail about such things as how to cut out a person’s organs for use in the creation of talismans, and what was the best age of a child to use in a sacrifice ritual. Harry flipped through the pages, trying to find something relevant, not wanting to think about how far Voldemort may have gone in the quest for power. ‘I, who have gone further than anybody along the path that leads to immortality…’ The words Voldemort had spoken last summer chilled Harry to the bone, and he both wished to know what Voldemort had done, yet also feared to learn the horrible truth.

After a while of reading the distasteful material, the long words and endless paragraphs began to make Harry sleepy. He was already tired after the Animagus training earlier, and he slowly started to doze off. Before long, Harry had his head resting on the book and he was snoring away peacefully. The peace didn’t last long, however, as Harry began to dream.

He was in a vast room, gleaming with gold and jewels as far as the eye could see. Many beautiful artefacts lined the walls, ornate jewellery dripping with diamonds, piles of gold coins all over the floor and spilling out of countless trunks and chests. The walls were carved from black stone, and Harry got the distinct feeling that he was inside one of the deepest vaults of Gringotts bank. Looking closer at the paintings and tapestries lining the walls, Harry saw that there was something familiar about the faces. Squinting at the plaques, Harry saw that the last name Black was present in all of them. An ancient tapestry, probably centuries old, had the words ‘Tojours Pur’ written in elegant embroidery across the top. So this was the vault of a Black family member? Somehow, he just knew it wasn’t Sirius’s.

Forgetting the mystery of who owned the vault, Harry walked forwards, a strong feeling hanging over him that he was looking for something vitally important, mixed with the ever present dread that haunted his dreams. Scanning the piles of treasure, Harry started to walk faster, jogging, almost running, frantically searching for the unknown treasure. Piles of gold were dislodged with his feet, cascading around him, but he didn’t notice.
Abruptly, Harry stopped running. He saw something in the corner, something which called to him and pulled him nearer. It wasn’t any shinier than the golden items around it, there were no jewels on it, and yet this simple little cup seemed the most important object in the world. Harry edged closer, his arm outstretched, unblinking eyes fixed on the cup. As he got closer he could make out an image etched onto the gold. Some kind of animal? Yes, it looked like a badger. He was so close, his fingers inches from the cup. Drawing ever closer, Harry came to the worrying realisation that the feeling of dread and horror was coming from the cup itself, and yet he couldn’t stop moving towards it. He needed it. Harry drew in a deep, shuddering breath, felt his fingers brush the handle-

“Harry! There you are!” A loud voice exclaimed and Harry awoke with a start. He opened his eyes blearily, confused as to where he was. Sitting up slowly, Harry peeled his face off the book he had fallen asleep on, and he suddenly realised where he was. Turning to the side, he saw an amused Sirius looking at him with his eyebrow raised. “Been doing some light reading?”

“Yes,” Harry scowled at him, annoyed that he had been woken from his dream. But wait a minute, why was his dream important? He thought back, desperately trying to remember what had happened, but as he tried to focus on the details they swam away from him, disappearing into the blackness. He had been in Gringotts…hadn’t he? It had been shiny…very shiny…but why was he there? None of it made sense any more, and Harry sighed in frustration.

“Sorry for waking you up,” Sirius said, looking at Harry strangely. He was obviously wondering why Harry was sitting here looking bemused and frowning at himself.

“That’s ok, Sirius,” Harry smiled tiredly at him, “I was just having a strange dream.”

“Ron and Hermione have been trying to contact you on that mirror for ages, by the way. That’s why I came to find you,” Sirius said, ruffling Harry’s hair and turning to leave the room. Harry stood up and stretched, a huge yawn escaping him. His dream was almost completely gone from his memory now, and he walked slowly up the stairs to his bedroom, wondering what Ron and Hermione wanted.

“Harry? Harry!” Hermione’s aggravated voice was coming from Harry’s room, and he smiled wryly as he opened the door and picked up the two-way mirror from his bed.

“I’m here, I’m here! Calm down!” Harry said with a grin, looking fondly and Hermione and Ron as he held the mirror in front of him, sitting cross-legged on his bed. “What was so important that you woke me from my nap?”

“Finally! We’ve been trying to get hold of you for ages, mate,” Ron said exasperatedly. “All this time you were just asleep?”

“Well, the bad news first. Ron, Fred and George have been banned from Quidditch for life.” Hermione said with a scowl on her face. Harry knew she didn’t care about Quidditch, but her expression and the absurdity of this happening told Harry exactly who it was that had banned them.

“What? How the bloody hell did that happen? It was Umbridge, wasn’t it? How did she get away with that?” Harry raged. Banned for life?! This was utterly ridiculous, surely Umbridge didn’t
have the power to do that?

“It’s true,” Ron said, a look of pure hatred on his face. “Malfoy started poking fun at us after the last match – we won by the way – and me, Fred and George ended up attacking him. He was insulting our family!” Ron said as Harry looked on with his mouth slightly open. “Anyway, Umbridge found out and decided we should be banned for life.

Harry didn’t know what to say. He was sure that had he been there with them, he would’ve attacked Malfoy just as freely. How on earth did Umbridge have the power to ban them for life? It was completely, frustratingly ridiculous.

“You said that was the bad news. Please tell me there’s some good news too?” Harry asked, almost begging for something to make him feel better.

“Yes, there is, actually,” Hermione said, a smile creeping back onto her face.

“Well?” Harry asked impatiently.

“‘Hagrid is back!’ Hermione smiled, she looked happy but there was a certain edge to her tone that suggested there was something wrong.

“He’s back? Brilliant! Have you spoken to him? Is he ok?” Harry asked jubilantly. He had been so worried about Hagrid, off in the mountains liaising with giants. Anything could’ve happened to him, especially considering he should have been home months ago. Hermione hesitated slightly before answering him, and Harry’s fears that something was wrong were confirmed. “What? Tell me, something’s wrong, isn’t it?” he asked quietly.

“Well, Hagrid is back, and he insists that he’s fine…but…” Hermione tailed off, looking to Ron for help.

“He looks like he’s been attacked by something vicious. There’s bruises and cuts all over his face, he looks terrible. He told us the whole story though, and he insists that he didn’t get attacked by the giants.” Ron continued, and Harry’s expression became more and more bemused.

“It’s all very confusing,” Hermione said worriedly. “Hagrid gave us a whole story about how he tried to talk to the leader of the giants, but the Death Eaters had already convinced him that Voldemort was going to help them. They hung around in the mountains, tried to talk to a few outsider giants, spreading the word that Dumbledore was good and that he would campaign for their rights. He managed to get through to a few of them, they seemed convinced, but they’re too scared of the giant leader and the Death Eaters to actually do anything.”

“Right,” said Harry distractedly, trying to follow the story. “So how on earth did Hagrid get so badly injured, if it wasn’t the giants?”

“That’s what we’re trying to find out. You know what Hagrid’s like, though, he can be so bloody stubborn,” Ron said grimly. “We’ll get it out of him eventually though. Maybe we should get him drunk,” he grinned, and Hermione hit him on the arm.
“Of course we shouldn’t, Ronald,” she scowled at him. “Anyway, that’s the drama that’s been happening at Hogwarts. How are you doing, Harry?”

“I’m alright, haven’t been up to much,” Harry said, blushing as his mind immediately went back to this morning. He ignored Ron and Hermione’s pointed looks and carried on, “I spoke to Dumbledore yesterday. He’s being very cryptic as always.”

“Did he tell you anything important?” Hermione asked sharply, looking at Harry suspiciously.

“Well, he hinted at things, and gave me plenty to be worried about,” Harry said shortly. He didn’t much feel like explaining things, especially when anyone could be listening to the conversation at Hogwarts. “I’ll tell you more when I next see you in person,” he said quickly, noting the waspish expression on Hermione’s face. She didn’t look quite convinced, but she could see the logic in not discussing such important things out loud.

“Alright, I suppose we can wait,” Hermione sighed. “Anyway, we should go. Someone still hasn’t finished his Potions essay,” Hermione said, looking meaningfully at Ron. He scowled back at her.

“Ugh, I guess so. We’ll talk to you soon, mate,” Ron said, shaking his head at Hermione in disgust.

“See you soon, Harry!” Hermione smiled at him, before the two of them disappeared to be replaced with Harry’s reflection in the mirror. He had spent the evening intermittently reading, and staring aimlessly at the wall while worrying about all the various things that seemed to be going wrong at the moment. He had caught Sirius looking worriedly at him a few times, and had tried his best to look happy and relaxed, but eventually he gave up and decided to go to bed.

Harry slipped out of his clothes and climbed into bed, beaming when he heard Sirius enter the room shortly after. Sirius smiled warmly at him, taking off his clothes and slipping between the sheets to join Harry. Snuggling closer to him, Harry tucked his head under Sirius’s chin, snaking an arm around his waist and smiling softly to himself. No matter how confusing or frustrating the rest of Harry’s life was, he would always have Sirius here to curl up next to at night, to hold him and keep him feeling safe and comforted. It didn’t take long at all for Harry to drift off to sleep in Sirius’s warm embrace.
tears started to form in his eyes, the dream changed.

He was slithering along the floor, his body long, thin and powerful. He slid across the cold stone floor, through metal bars, keeping a look out. He was flat against the floor, his flexible body twisting powerfully along. Turning his head this way and that, he took in his surroundings. Everything was dark in this corridor, yet he could see objects around him shimmering in strange, vibrant colours. The corridor seemed empty, but then he saw a man crouched in the shadows.

The man was sitting on the floor, eyes closed, his head slumped forwards. Harry put out his tongue to taste the air, he could taste the man’s scent. He was alive, but sleeping, sitting in front of a door at the end of the corridor. It would be so easy, so satisfying to bite the man, to taste his blood. However, he had more important work to be doing.

However, the man was stirring. He moved slightly and a silvery cloak fell from his legs as he jumped to his feet, looking down in horror at Harry. He saw the man withdraw a wand from his belt, point it at him, and he had no choice. He reared high from the ground, striking the man over and over again. Crushing the man’s ribs in his powerful jaws, feeling the blood pulse out of his wounds and into Harry’s mouth. The blood tasted delicious, just as he’d hoped.

The man yelled in pain, staggering and falling to the ground, twitching slightly before lying motionless. Blood was spraying everywhere from the wounds…his forehead was burning…burning…so much pain…

“Harry! HARRY!”

He opened his eyes slowly, every inch of his body covered in cold sweat. His heart was racing, and his scar felt as though it was on fire. Looking around, dazed, Harry saw Sirius standing next to him, a terrified expression on his face. Before he could piece together what had happened, Harry promptly leaned over to the side of the bed and vomited. Sirius looked even more worried.

“Harry, talk to me. What happened? Are you ok?”

Harry groaned, knowing that he had to tell Sirius what he had just seen, it was vitally important.

“Arthur…Arthur Weasley…injured…hurry…” Harry said incomprehensively, trying desperately to get his point across.

“What?” Sirius asked sharply.

“Arthur, he’s been attacked, a giant snake…you have to get help, he’s dying!” Harry said, his voice rising.

“You saw Arthur get attacked in a dream?” Sirius asked slowly, looking at Harry strangely.

“No, it wasn’t a dream, it was different! It was like I was inside the mind of the snake, I saw it all happen from the snake’s point of view. I…it attacked Arthur, he’s really badly hurt! You have to believe me!” Harry said loudly, almost shouting now. Why wasn’t Sirius getting help already? Arthur could already be dead!
Sirius looked at him shrewdly, taking in everything that had happened. Harry willed him to believe what he’d said, no matter how odd it sounded. Finally Sirius looked at him grimly and nodded his head once. “Ok, I believe you. We have to tell Dumbledore. Are you alright to walk? It’ll be best if you come with me,” Sirius asked him briskly.

“Yes, I’m fine!” Harry said quickly, relief rushing through him. He quickly grabbed his jeans and a t-shirt from the floor, pulling them on quickly before rushing out of the door behind Sirius. They walked quickly to the kitchen, and Sirius threw some floo powder in the fireplace.

“Albus Dumbledore’s office, Hogwarts school,” Sirius said quickly, and put his head in the fire. Harry listened anxiously as Sirius briefly explained why he was calling Dumbledore in the middle of the night, watching the seconds tick away on the clock. Eventually Sirius pulled his head out of the fireplace and gestured for Harry to climb in. He quickly flew through the floo to Dumbledore’s office, shortly followed by Sirius.

Dumbledore was sitting behind his desk, looking grave. Harry rushed over and quickly explained everything to the old man, trying to be as detailed as possible. Dumbledore’s eyes widened as Harry mentioned that he had seen it all happen from the snake’s point of view. He stood up abruptly, walking over to the wall of portraits.

“Everard! And you too, Dilys! You were listening?” Two of the portraits who had apparently been asleep a moment ago opened their eyes. They both nodded.

“Of course,” the man replied.

“Everard, you must raise the alarm, make sure he is found by the right people. He has red hair and glasses. Dilys, you know what to do.”

The two portraits rushed out of their paintings, disappearing from view. Harry looked anxiously at the headmaster, who was still avoiding his eyes. The old man turned to him, walking back towards him briskly.

“Harry, it is best that you head back to headquarters before someone finds you here. I have the situation under control.”

“What about Ron-?”

“Mr Weasley will be informed, along with the other Weasley children, and Molly, of course.”

Harry nodded numbly, still in shock from this whole situation. He really hoped that Mr Weasley would be ok...what if they didn’t find him in time? The amount of blood had been scary. Harry swallowed thickly, feeling sick as he remembered the taste of the blood, the feel of it gushing into his mouth as he attacked. What did it mean, that he had seen the attack as if he had done it himself? Was it really him? There was no way he had been transported from his bed in the middle of the night into the mind of snake, though, Harry was fairly sure. But who knew what Voldemort was capable of. As he walked back towards the fireplace, mind racing, he heard someone talking to Dumbledore, slightly out of breath. He spun around to see the portrait of Everard hunched over and wheezing.
“They found him, Dumbledore,” he said quickly, “he didn’t look good. They’re taking him to St. Mungo’s.”

“Thank you Everard. Dilys should see him arrive, then,” he said softly, and a moment later the female portrait emerged back into her painting.


“Thank you, Dilys, Everard. That will be all.” He turned back towards Sirius and Harry, his face pale in the dim light. “The two of you must head back to headquarters immediately. You will be joined by Ronald and his siblings shortly, as soon as they have been informed.” Sirius nodded and grabbed Harry by the arm, pulling him towards the fireplace. The two of them flooed back to Grimmauld Place, staggering from the fireplace and collapsing onto the sofa in the living room.

They sat together in stunned silence, neither knowing what to say. Sirius’s hand was wrapped around Harry’s in a comforting gesture which Harry was infinitely grateful for, as he was anchoring him to real life, away from the terrifying thoughts that were running through his mind. Was Arthur going to die? Did Harry himself attack him? Would Ron blame him for the attack, how much was Dumbledore going to tell the Weasley children? He felt sick to his stomach. After a long, tense silence, the fireplace glowed green and Ginny Weasley emerged from it.

Harry wrenched his hand from Sirius’s grip quickly, but Ginny seemed too stunned to notice anything. She was shortly followed by Ron, then Fred, then George. They looked around dazedly, noticing Harry and Sirius sitting silently on the sofa. Fred was the first to break the silence.

“So, what happened?” He asked roughly, his voice sounding cracked and disjointed. “All Dumbledore said would tell us is that dad is badly hurt, and you saw what happened.” Fred’s voice sounded almost accusing, and Harry gulped, hoping he could explain this correctly. He stood up, walking towards the group of shocked siblings. As quickly as possible, he explained what had happened. How he had seen the attack happen, but it had felt different from a normal dream. He had seen it from the eye of the snake. He then voiced something that had been playing on his mind since he had woken from the dream.

“The way I could see it from the eye of the snake, as if it was me who did it. What if it’s because that’s where Voldemort was at the time? Voldemort has been known to possess snakes before, right?” He said quietly, ignoring the flinches from the Weasleys. Sirius walked over to join them, nodding his head at Harry’s question.

“Yes, he’s been known to possess animals, mostly snakes. But what has that got to do with you seeing it all happen?” Sirius asked him uneasily.

“Well, I’ve always had some sort of weird connection to Voldemort, haven’t I?” Harry said slowly. “I’ve been having flashes of weird emotions this year that have nothing to do with me. And I’ve always had pain in my scar when he feels strong emotions. Maybe the link is getting stronger, only this time I saw completely into his mind?” Harry gasped, seeing logic in this conclusion. Voldemort had been possessing the snake, and Harry had seen into his mind as he violently attacked Arthur. It was entirely possible, and this was confirmed by the look on Sirius’s face.

Ginny looked horrified at this prospect, and Harry was suddenly reminded of his second year at
Hogwarts when Ginny had been possessed by Voldemort. She was the only one here who had any idea what Harry was going through. He caught her eye and gave her a reassuring half-smile, which she almost managed to return.

“Well, at least this weird mind-connection means you managed to see dad getting attacked,” Ron said quietly, the other Weasley children nodding along with him.

“Yeah, what if you hadn’t seen it happen?” George said hoarsely, “no one would’ve found him…” he tailed off, eyes downcast. They were all thinking the same thing. What if Mr Weasley had been found too late?
Harry stood at the window, looking out at the dismal view of the square outside Grimmauld Place. Heavy grey clouds tainted the sky, creating a dark overcast tone, and white flakes of snow fell lightly from the sky. Snow should be happy, Harry thought to himself, it should signal the Christmas season and incite excitement and festivity, however all it managed to do was create a grey sludge on the pavements. The world outside mirrored the melancholic mood within the house. With Mr Weasley in the hospital still, having been gravely injured several days before, the house was mostly full of an almost oppressive silence.

Harry turned, looking instead at the room he was standing in. It was Sirius's mother's old bedroom, and it was now being lived in by Buckbeak the hippogriff. Harry felt like he'd been neglecting poor Buckbeak, he'd been so mixed up in his feelings for Sirius, and the mounting pressure from Voldemort being back, that he'd completely forgotten the hippogriff was even living there. He had offered to feed Buckbeak for Sirius so that he could go and visit the creature, and he threw the last dead ferret for the hippogriff to catch, idly wishing that it was the ferret version of Malfoy that Buckbeak was presently crunching to pieces. Harry walked closer to Buckbeak, being sure to keep eye contact and reminding him what a handsome beast he was. The hippogriff bowed his head in acknowledgement, and walked closer so that Harry could pet him. He absent-mindedly stroked the soft feathers on his neck, sighing as he wished that he could be with Sirius right now. The man was being coddled by Molly at the moment, who was paying even more attention to everyone than usual while Arthur was in the hospital.

Mrs Weasley had visited Arthur at St Mungos daily since the night of the attack, and she kept everyone up to date on his condition. It still seemed to be touch and go at the moment, although the healers were optimistic that he would make a full recovery if he managed to respond to their treatments. The Weasleys mostly spent their time sitting around in groups, barely talking, with worried expressions marring their faces.

Occasionally, Order members would pop in and out of headquarters, however they were all just as grim faced as the Weasleys. Arthur had, after all, been on duty for the Order when he had been attacked. It was a grim time, and felt all the more depressing to Harry because he couldn't spend all his time alone with Sirius, or they would risk everyone else finding out about their relationship. Harry sighed, trudging up the stairs to his old bedroom where he was now forced to sleep again.

Harry slept fitfully that night. The nightmares that had lessened while he slept next to Sirius had come back with a vengeance now, and he tossed and turned as cryptic images smothered his mind. He saw the writhing image of a snake, which instilled in him a deep sense of dread. There was something not right about this snake, he looked into its eyes and it almost seemed to have some kind of intelligence as it stared back at him. The giant black snake twisted and turned, and Harry began to feel as if he was being constricted, his chest felt tight, he couldn't breathe properly. Moments later he woke with a start and shot upright, chest heaving, trying to catch his breath. Exhausted despite sleeping all night, Harry flopped back down onto the mattress, feeling a cold sweat all over him. He hoped his day was going to get better from this point.

Later that day Molly came home from St Mungos with a much brighter expression on her face. “The Healers have finally managed to find a way to stop the bleeding! Whatever snake it was had extremely dangerous venom in its fangs. Arthur is sitting up and reading the newspaper, and he says he's feeling much better!” Her voice rose to a screech as she excitedly passed the news on to anyone that could hear her, which was essentially everyone within a 10 mile radius. The Weasley children all gathered excitedly around her, clamouring to ask questions and gain assurance that their father was definitely on the mend.
Harry smiled to himself, staying on the sidelines to give the family some space. He caught Sirius's eye across the room and smiled at him softly, feeling the heat in the room rise several degrees when the older man responded with his trademark sexy grin. Harry wished so hard that he could just cross the room and kiss Sirius right there in front of everyone, to have them accept the two of them and be happy for them. Sadly, that could never and would never happen. What they had was perfect for the two of them, but sleeping with your godfather wasn't exactly acceptable in society.

Over the course of the next few days, the mood in Grimmauld place lightened considerably. Christmas decorations were put up all around the house, somehow managing to make the dreary old place look festive. The snow started to fall in earnest outside, and Harry had to admit that it really did look Christmassy now. They had all been to visit Arthur at St Mungos, and it was clear to see that he was on the mend. He would hopefully be home within a few days, and would therefore be home in time for Christmas. Sirius had welcomed everyone to stay for the remainder of the holidays, considering how much closer Grimmauld place was to the hospital, and the house was full of laughter and Christmas carols.

Despite everyone else's happy moods, Harry couldn't help but continue to mope around the place. He had been sleeping badly, his cold bed in his old bedroom feeling far too empty without Sirius next to him to keep him warm and safe. Not to mention, they had pretty much no chances whatsoever to be alone together during the day. Every time Harry managed to corner Sirius alone somewhere, moments later Fred and George would barge in, or Mrs Weasley would come looking for Harry to come help him with some Christmas decoration. It was really starting to get on his nerves, and he was getting more and more irritable.

Ron and Hermione had been doing their best to help them out, seeing as they were the only other people in the house that knew about Harry and Sirius's relationship. There was only so much they could do, however, as Mrs Weasley kept trying to keep them busy as well. Short of literally guarding the door and not allowing anyone else to get in, which may be rather suspicious, there wasn't a lot that the two of them could do to help.

Later that day, one of those rare moments arose where Harry had managed to find himself alone in a room with Sirius. They sat together on a small couch in the library, Harry snuggled up to Sirius, his head resting on the older man's chest. He had really missed the little moments like these where they could just enjoy each other's company without being judged. Harry sat up a little straighter, gently resting a hand on Sirius's face and bringing their lips together in a soft kiss.

Smiling against Harry's lips, Sirius pulled the two of them closer together so that Harry was straddling Sirius's hips. He deepened the kiss, moaning slightly when Harry raked his teeth lightly along the older man's tongue. They stayed in this position for a while, enjoying the rare opportunity to let off some steam. After a little while Sirius pulled away, albeit slightly reluctantly. Harry made a small noise of protest and moved forwards to lightly kiss and nibble Sirius's jawline, determined to carry on. Sirius smirked at him, laying his hands gently on Harry's face and pushing him back slightly so they could look into each other's eyes.

"Much as I'd like to sit here and kiss you all day, I do actually have something I wanted to show you," Sirius said softly, his voice like melted caramel. Harry looked at him through half-lidded eyes.

"Oh really? What would that be, then?" he asked languidly, a crooked smile slowly forming on his face.

"I'll show you if you sit next to me properly and promise not to get distracted," Sirius smirked at him, looking pointedly at Harry's wandering hands which were currently under Sirius's shirt, rubbing circles on his lower back.
“Fine,” Harry pouted, climbing off of Sirius's lap and sitting next to him on the couch. Sirius pulled something out of his pocket, and Harry leaned forwards, curiosity piqued. “What's that?” he asked eagerly. It seemed to be old photos of some kind.

“I found these stuffed in the back of an old set of drawers, my parents must have hidden them away out of sight and forgotten to burn them with all of my other stuff that mysteriously disappeared after I ran away from home. They're old photos of James and Lily. I thought you might like to see them.”

Sirius handed them to Harry gently, who took them with a shaking hand. The only photos he'd seen of his parents were the ones in the photo album that Hagrid had gifted to him in his first year at Hogwarts. He had looked through that album so many times that some of the pages were almost starting to fall out, and he had always longed to see more photos of them, to know more about them. What were they like as people? What hobbies did they have, were there any family pets? All of these thoughts rushed through Harry's mind as he sat holding the small pile of photographs. He turned them over, a small smile immediately tugging at the corners of his mouth as he took in the first photo.

James and Lily were standing in what appeared to be a park, autumn leaves were falling around them and their faces radiated joy. Lily was holding out her hand to the camera, excitedly showing off a glittering engagement ring on her finger, and James was looking at her with an expression of sheer pride and happiness. Harry grinned down at the photograph, absent mindedly wiping a tear from his face. Squeezing his hand tightly, Sirius smiled softly at him and encouraged him to look at the next photo.

With shaking hands, Harry looked through the photos. The next one showed Lily in a beautiful wedding dress and veil, her emerald green eyes shining with tears as she looked into James' equally damp eyes. He was wearing a smart black tuxedo, and they held hands at the altar of a church. Harry noticed a much younger Sirius standing to the side, the best man at the wedding. Smiling at the man by his side, Harry continued looking through the stack of memories. James and Lily on holiday somewhere tropical, sipping cocktails. The two of them laughing together with the Marauders, sadly unknowing of the future traitor in their midst. Lily looking radiantly happy, hands gently resting on a prominent baby bump as she sat at home with her feet up. Baby Harry in his fathers arms, a tiny fist wrapped around James' finger. He looked about a year old in that photo and Harry's heart sank as he realised James and Lily had died not long after that photo was taken. They had been so happy together, had a chance at such a perfect life.

Sighing, Harry saw that there were no more photos. He handed them back to Sirius with a bitter sweet smile. “Thanks for showing me these, Sirius. It's nice to actually see them as people that really lived, rather than just a fading memory.”

The older man took the photos back and placed them on the couch next to him, pulling Harry into a tight hug. Harry didn't fail to notice the wetness in Sirius' eyes, and the two of them sniffled as they took comfort in each other. “You're most welcome, Harry,” Sirius whispered roughly in his ear. Harry shivered, enjoying the feeling of warmth that shot through him, the frisson of excitement that immediately sparked in his stomach. Pulling back slightly, he gazed into Sirius' stormy grey eyes, mere millimetres separating their faces. Harry felt himself lightly flush as he lost himself in the older man's gaze. Leaning closer, Harry licked his lips in preparation for the long awaited kiss, but seconds before he could make contact the door banged open and they shot apart, the open door bringing in an icy cold blast of reality. Harry scowled towards the door, seeing a hesitant and seemingly very apologetic Hermione hovering in the doorway.

“I'm really sorry to interrupt, boys, but Mrs Weasley said to fetch you for dinner. Well, she actually told Ginny to do it but I volunteered instead, just in case...” she tailed off awkwardly, and Harry sighed, getting to his feet. He knew it wasn't Hermione's fault but he was getting seriously frustrated. Ever since the others had come to stay he'd struggled to get as much as 5 minutes alone
with Sirius at a time, and it was driving him insane. He stalked to the kitchen with a stony expression on his face, and he could tell without even looking at Sirius that he was just as moody.

The general mood at dinner was a happy one, following the recent news that Arthur would be returning home the next day, which happened to be Christmas Eve. Everyone was very relieved that he would be home for Christmas, and there were smiles all around, except for two very grumpy people. Harry barely spoke to anyone throughout the meal, picking at his chicken pie which he was sure would've been delicious, he simply had no appetite. He almost cracked a smile when he looked up and saw Sirius practically growling at a frightened Ginny who had only asked him to pass the butter.

Harry could feel someone's eyes trained on him throughout the entire meal, and when he glanced around he saw the magical eye of Moody staring suspiciously at him, his face speculative. Harry had no idea any Order members were visiting today, although it was normal for them to stay for dinner when they popped in, Mrs Weasley usually insisted. He wondered why Moody was paying such close attention to him, and when he glanced automatically at Sirius he saw that his godfather was keeping a close eye on the Auror too. Harry glanced furtively back at Moody only to see him staring directly at him with both eyes this time. The Auror raised a single eyebrow at him, and then deliberately glanced between Harry and Sirius with a knowing look in his eye. Harry's eyes widened at this, his heart began to race as he put two and two together. Moody must have seen the two of them through a wall when he passed by the library earlier on. Harry felt the colour drain from his face, and he almost felt as though he was going to be sick. With a mumbled excuse, Harry pushed his chair back and hurried from the room, ignoring the questioning looks from the Weasleys.

As Harry hurried down the hallway, he heard the unmistakable clunk of Moody's foot on the wooden flooring, and he came to a halt. Letting out a shaky breath, he decided to just get this over with. He could only hope that Moody would be understanding, although that prospect seemed highly unlikely as he turned and saw the usual scowl on Mad Eye's ever-suspicious face.

“In here,” Moody growled, pointing his cane at the door to the drawing room. Harry slowly walked towards the door, holding it open for Moody before taking a seat and looking intently at a random spot on the floor. He heard Moody limp across the room and sit down heavily in a chair opposite him, and he continued staring at the ground until Moody cleared his throat loudly. Harry's head shot up and he looked warily at the Auror's face. His gnarled expression gave away nothing.

“So,” Mad Eye growled, his eyes narrowed. “I saw something rather interesting, before dinner. Looked through a wall into the library, and for a moment I thought my eye must be malfunctioning. Any ideas what I saw, Potter?” Moody asked in a carefully innocent voice. Harry cleared his throat nervously, his mouth suddenly very dry. He shook his head, not trusting himself to talk. “Funny that,” Moody continued, “because I'm pretty sure I saw you in there. With your godfather,” he said, his voice becoming quieter. “And you were busy doing something that I'm pretty sure isn't common practice between a godfather and his godson.” Moody paused there, staring Harry directly in the eyes. Harry let his head drop into his hands, wishing a hole would just open up and swallow him right then and there. This conversation could not be happening right now. He stayed silent, wildly hoping that Moody would just give up and leave if he never replied. Sadly, that was not the case.

“Look, Potter, I can't help you if you don't talk. I need to know if I should go to Dumbledore with this information or not.” Moody sounded exasperated, and Harry's head shot up immediately. “No! You can't tell Dumbledore!” Harry said loudly, his cheeks going red as he realised that he had as good as admitted the truth. Well, there was no way around that, now that Moody had seen it with his own eye. He couldn't let the Auror tell Dumbledore, it would be a disaster, he would be sent back to live with the Dursleys and Sirius would be alone. Moody raised an eyebrow at him.
“Is Sirius pushing you into this?” Mad Eye said bluntly, his mismatched eyes boring into Harry’s. Harry blushed further but he forced himself to answer, despite how awkward this conversation was.

“No, he isn’t pushing me into anything,” Harry said quietly, his voice hoarse. “If anything I had to convince him that I really wanted this,” he stammered, trying to put his thoughts into words so that Moody would believe him. The Auror looked unconvinced, but then it was difficult to tell when his default expression was distrustful.

“Are you sure you know what you’re getting yourself into, Potter? Black is your godfather, he’s much older than you, and he’s been cooped up in this house for months. I’m just saying that this might not be the best idea.” Moody looked carefully at him, and Harry let out a small sigh of relief as he realised that Mad Eye was just concerned about him, and didn’t seem to actually object too much to the situation. If he could just convince the man that he knew what he was doing, hopefully the Auror wouldn’t feel the need to go to Dumbledore with his concerns.

“I’ve thought about this long and hard, and so has Sirius. We both tried to ignore how we felt about each other to start with, but that just didn’t work. You may not believe me, because I’m young, but I believe that I’m in love with Sirius and he loves me too.” Harry paused, nervously running his hand through his hair. He couldn’t believe he was saying this out loud, and to Mad Eye Moody of all people. He soldiered on, voice wavering only slightly as he gained courage. “I know there’s a large age gap between us, not to mention that he’s my godfather, but we don’t care about that. We didn’t ask for this to happen, but somehow it did, and there’s no going back now. I’m old enough to know what I’m doing, and I made up my mind a long time ago to follow my heart. Please, don’t tell Dumbledore,” Harry begged, “I think that this relationship is helping Sirius. It gives him something to live for, while he’s cooped up here. He needs someone to help him through it. If everyone finds out, I’ll be sent away from here and Sirius will be alone and I’m scared he’ll do something stupid,” Harry gasped, slightly out of breath from speaking so fast. He’d got slightly carried away trying to save Sirius and himself from Dumbledore’s prying.

“Alright, lad, I get it,” Moody said, rolling his eyes, but appearing to be considering Harry’s words. “I think you’re old enough to know what you’re doing, so I’ll let it go for now.” Harry let out a sigh of relief, looking down at his hands which he realised had been clenched together tightly. He relaxed his hands and saw that he was shaking. “I was just concerned that you were being manipulated, whether deliberately or not, by a man who’s desperate for company. I think you’re right, though. This is good for him, and for you,” Moody said gruffly, and Harry could hear the concern in his voice. He smiled at the man for the first time, feeling a flood of affection for him. Who knew that the scarred old man who had killed and imprisoned so many people had a soft side to him? Moody let him go with a promise not to speak a word of this discussion to anyone, and Harry quickly exited the room, almost crashing directly into Sirius who had been standing right outside the door, clearly trying to hear the conversation.

“Well? What happened, Harry?” Sirius pressed him, a hand tightly wrapped around his arm.

“What happened, what did he say?” Sirius asked quickly, and Harry motioned for the older man to follow him up the stairs. He walked to Sirius’ bedroom and shut the two of them in there, casting a locking and silencing spell on the door for good measure. They really had to be careful, he had been lucky that Mad Eye was lenient, but if anyone else found out about them it could be very bad. They should be safe in here for a little while, although Harry knew that people would start to wonder where he was if he didn’t show his face soon. Harry flopped down onto the bed, breathing another sigh of relief. He was joined by an anxious Sirius.

“Well? What happened, Harry?” Sirius pressed him, a hand tightly wrapped around his arm.

“Calm down, Sirius, Moody said he wouldn’t tell anyone,” Harry said, frowning slightly as his arm started to hurt. Sirius blinked as the words sunk in, and quickly pulled his hand back when he realised he was hurting Harry.
“Sorry,” he said hastily, and Harry decided to let it slide, he didn't want to waste this precious
alone time being annoyed at Sirius.

“He seemed pretty suspicious, and he wanted to make sure that I knew what I was doing and that
you weren't pressurring me into anything.” Harry smiled at him, wriggling closer on the bed so that
they were curled up next to each other. He had really missed this room, with its astronomical
ceiling and the comfortable bed that they shared together. Much as he liked the Weasleys, he
couldn't wait until he could share this bed with Sirius again. The older man frowned at Harry's
words.

“I would never pressure you into anything,” he said forcefully, his stormy eyes indignant.

“I know you wouldn't, silly,” Harry grinned at him, “and that's what I told Moody. I said that I
know what I'm doing, and that this relationship is good for both of us. He seemed to agree with
me, anyway, and he promised not to tell anyone, especially Dumbledore.” Sirius looked relieved,
and Harry couldn't help but try to kiss the worry away. He straddled Sirius's lap and pressed their
lips together, smiling as Sirius growled possessively and pulled him closer, running his hands
through Harry's unruly mop of hair.

Harry ran his hands over Sirius's chest, feeling heat radiating through his shirt, and wrapped his
arms around his godfather's shoulders. They kissed passionately for a little while, Harry
completely losing himself in the taste of Sirius's mouth, the feeling of their bodies wrapped
together, and he subconsciously rocked his hips against Sirius's as they both became more excited
about the situation. Harry let out a filthy moan as he felt Sirius's erection grinding against him
through their clothes, and he was about to unzip Sirius's trousers and do something about it when
there was a loud knock on the door.

“Sirius, are you in there? Do you know where Harry is?” The loud and intrusive voice of Fred or
George came through the door, and Harry growled and swore loudly. He was glad they had put a
silencing charm up, although he wished it blocked out the sounds from outside. Sirius scowled
and pushed Harry off of him, stalking towards the door. He lifted the silencing charm and shouted
back though the closed door.

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back though the closed door.

“Nope, haven't seen him anywhere!” Sirius bellowed, arms crossed and a frown on his face. “Did
you try the library?” A brief pause, and then whichever twin it was replied.

“No, good thinking, Sirius!” They shouted back, their voice already becoming distant as they
moved off towards the library. Sirius groaned, walking back to the bed with a sour expression on
his face.

“I suppose I should get out of here before I'm declared missing,” Harry said morosely, dragging
his feet as he walked towards the door where Sirius was still standing. The man still had an
obvious bulge in his trousers and Harry eyed it lustfully. Surely it wouldn't matter if he was a few
minutes later than planned? With a grin on his face, Harry dropped to his knees in front of the
older man and roughly unzipped his trousers, pulling them down in one swoop along with his
underwear. He looked up and winked at Sirius, laughing slightly at the stunned expression on his
face, before leaning forwards and engulfing his erection in his mouth. The immediate reaction
from his godfather, namely a sexy moan and hands fisted in his hair, spurred Harry on and he did
his best to make the man come apart as quickly as possible. Within minutes Harry was successful,
and he opened his eyes to look up at Sirius's face as he reached his climax, keeping his mouth
firmly around his erection and swallowing down his release.

Sirius gave up on standing and slid down to lean against the wall, his legs too weak to hold him
up. Harry grinned at the sight, then moaned as he realised he had a rather pressing problem to take
care of himself. He was already close to the edge after sucking off Sirius, and it only took a few
He used a cleaning charm to fix them both up, and hastily tried to make himself look presentable and not as if he had just given his godfather a blow job. Sirius smiled weakly at him, beginning to reach normalcy again after riding out the afterglow. They stood, helping each other up, and Sirius gave Harry a quick peck on the lips.

“Thanks for that, Harry. It's been far too long.” Sirius smiled at him, pulling him close for one last hug. They reluctantly pulled apart and Harry slid out of Sirius's room, deciding to just head towards his bedroom and feign ignorance when people asked where he had been. Some people, mostly Hermione, looked at him suspiciously for a while, but she eventually seemed to let it go, and they went their separate ways to sleep.

Harry woke bright and early the next morning to the sound of Mrs Weasley loudly and enthusiastically making breakfast. Harry remembered that today was the day Mr Weasley would be coming home, and Mrs Weasley's exuberant mood began to make sense. Harry was in a much better mood than he had been for days, thanks to his little rendezvous with Sirius last night. It had been quick, but it was great to let out his sexual tension and he really enjoyed watching Sirius come apart in front of him. Harry grinned lazily to himself and felt a twitch in his underwear, but before he could do anything about it he was being summoned to breakfast by a lively Ron.

The day flew by, and before he knew it a flustered Mrs Weasley was hurrying off into London to pick up Arthur from St Mungos. She returned home with him quickly, and they had a large and extravagant dinner to celebrate him coming home. He seemed in good spirits, if slightly paler than usual, and was very happy to see everyone again. He thanked Harry several times for saving his life, and Harry told him time and again that he was just lucky. All in all it was a very festive Christmas Eve, and Harry was looking forward to Christmas day tomorrow. He and Sirius had already decided not to exchange gifts as neither of them was allowed out of the house to actually go shopping, but Harry intended to give Sirius a kiss under the mistletoe at whatever chance he got. Just being with the man on Christmas day was special enough for him. They partied the evening away in celebration, drinking lots of butterbeer and eggnog, and eating far too many mince pies, before staggering to bed around midnight. Harry lay in bed, feeling the child-like excitement begin to take him over, despite not believing in Santa Claus for years. He drifted off to sleep with thoughts of roast turkey and Christmas crackers in his head.

The next morning, Harry woke blearily and looked at his watch. It was still far too early for anyone else to be awake, although he listened out carefully just in case someone else had woken up early in the excitement of Christmas. When he was sure the coast was clear, Harry carefully slipped out of bed and padded silently across the room, pausing only briefly to snag a bunch of mistletoe from the top of the doorway. Heading up the stairs to the next floor, he opened Sirius's bedroom door as quietly as possible. He slid into the room, tiptoeing over to the bed, and gently shook Sirius awake. The man looked around blearily for a moment, before focusing on Harry.

“What time do you call this?” Sirius asked incredulously, glancing at the clock on his bedside table. Harry ignored him and slipped into bed next to the older man, dangling the mistletoe over his head while leaning close to him and kissing him happily on the lips.

“Merry Christmas, Sirius!” Harry whispered excitedly, and Sirius grinned back at him with his trademark lopsided grin.

“Merry Christmas, Harry,” he whispered back, wrapping a warm arm around Harry's waist and pulling him closer for a cuddle. They stayed like that for a while, neither of them wanting to move, but eventually they had to get up. Harry reluctantly padded back to the bedroom he shared with Ron, after kissing Sirius one last time, and entered to find Ron just waking up.

“Where have you been?” Ron asked confusedly, his voice rough from sleep.
“Just went to say Happy Christmas to Sirius,” Harry said lightly, deciding not to elaborate. Ron raised an eyebrow at him, probably knowing exactly what Harry wasn't telling him, but he chose not to press the matter further, for which Harry was grateful. “Anyway, Happy Christmas,” Harry grinned at him, and Ron returned the sentiment before jumping out of bed.

“Presents!” Ron shouted, hurrying from the room while Harry followed at a more sedate pace, heading downstairs to where everyone had congregated in the living room. There was a huge pile of Christmas presents under the tree, and Harry sat down in a comfy arm chair to watch the present opening with a smile on his face. He didn't expect to receive anything himself as he hadn't been able to get anything for anyone, and he had told everyone specifically not to bother. It seemed no one had actually listened though, because Harry ended up with a knitted jumper and some home-made fudge from Mrs Weasley, a box of chocolate frogs from Ron, a book on advanced defensive magic from Hermione, and a couple more boxes of sweets here and there from other Order members. Harry felt that he really didn't deserve any of this, but everyone told him to shush whenever he brought it up, so he reluctantly accepted his gifts.

It was with a smile on his face that he sat at the kitchen table at lunch, the huge Christmas feast laid out in front of them. Mrs Weasley had really surpassed herself with this meal, and Harry was pretty sure there was enough food here to feed 50 people for several days. They did their best at eating it all, anyway, and several hours later they were still all seated at the kitchen table, having eaten themselves into a stupor, listening to Christmas music on the magical wireless. Harry was sitting next to Sirius and he turned to give him a sleepy smile. Sirius gently grasped Harry's hand under the table and squeezed it, smiling back at him. They intertwined their fingers and stayed that way for a while, drifting in and out of the drowsy conversation.

Christmas Day and Boxing Day passed them by quickly in a haze of alcohol and too much food, and before they knew it, everything started getting back to normal. Harry found himself sitting in the drawing room playing wizard chess with Ron, as Hermione looked on with trepidation. He was just cheering on his knight who was taking out one of Ron's pawns, when Mrs Weasley popped her head around the door.

“Harry, dear, professor Snape is here to see you,” she said, and Harry's heart seemed to stop for a moment.

“Snape?” He said, panicking. “Why does he want to see me?”

“Professor Snape, Harry. He didn't say. He's waiting for you in the kitchen,” she said firmly, and walked back out of the room. Harry sat in stunned silence, his look of horror mirrored on Ron's face.

“What does Snape want with you?” Ron asked in a hushed voice, and Harry gulped.

“I guess I'd better find out,” he answered in a hoarse voice, and walked slowly towards the kitchen. Why did Snape want to see him? Harry wasn't even at Hogwarts any more, what could the dungeon bat possibly want to speak to him about? Walking into the kitchen apprehensively, he was met with the sight of Snape and Sirius sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table, glaring daggers at each other. He awkwardly cleared his throat to announce his arrival, and Snape turned to look at him with a sneer on his face. Sirius narrowed his eyes dangerously.

“Potter, take a seat,” Snape said icily, waving a hand towards the table.
"Excuse me, Snivellus, but I'd prefer it if you didn't tell people what to do in my own house," Sirius said loudly, his expression hardening even further. Harry nervously took a seat, glancing between the two men. He hoped Sirius would keep his composure, although that didn't seem likely at the moment.

“I was supposed to see you alone, Potter, but Black here felt it necessary to stick his nose in,” Snape said silkily, his black eyes narrowed on Sirius's sneering face.

“I'm his godfather,” Sirius said loudly.

Snape ignored him and turned his sour face towards Harry. “I've been sent on Dumbledore's orders to inform you that you are to begin taking Occlumency lessons.”


“Occlumency, Potter. The magical defence of the mind against external penetration.”

Harry's heart began to race. If Dumbledore wanted him to learn to block his mind from external penetration, then that as good as confirmed that he was seeing into Voldemort's mind, and that Voldemort must be able to see into his. He gulped, wondering what this strange link between the two of them was. How was it that their minds had this strange bond? It made Harry feel sick to think his deepest thoughts might be open for Voldemort to view at his own leisure.

“Who's going to be teaching me?” Harry asked, fingers crossed beneath the table.

“I am,” Snape said quietly with contempt, and Harry's heart sunk. He thought he'd escaped from Snape when he left Hogwarts, but it appeared he hadn't been so lucky.

“Why do you have to teach him?” Sirius exclaimed indignantly, “why can't Dumbledore do it himself?” Harry privately agreed with this sentiment.

“Because, Black, Dumbledore has better things to do than teach substandard little children that refuse to use their brains,” Snape said waspishly, and Harry scowled along with Sirius at that. Sirius got to his feet angrily.

“How touching. I suppose you have to try to be useful in some way, seeing as you're too cowardly to actually go outside and help in the real world.” Snape had a horrible smug expression on his face, he knew he had touched a nerve. Sirius strode towards him, pulling out his wand, and Snape pulled his out in retaliation. Harry hurried forwards, he didn't want Sirius doing something he'd regret. He tried to push Sirius aside, but he refused to budge.

“Snivellus, you piece of filth, you're going to live to regret this-” Sirius snarled at Snape, trying to raise his wand while Harry dodged between the two of them, desperately trying to stop them from harming each other.
“Sirius, stop it!” Harry yelled as the older man tried to push him aside. He didn't like the hard, cold look in his godfather's eyes. Just as Harry was giving up hope of managing to stop them, the door opened and Arthur Weasley walked in, stopping in the doorway with a stunned expression on his face as he took in the scene before him. Snape and Sirius were frozen in position, wands pointed at each other's faces, identical expressions of hatred plastered on each. Harry stood between the two of them, a hand stretched to either side, attempting to push them apart.

“What on earth is happening here?” Mr Weasley said, breaking the tense silence. His voice seemed to bring Snape to his senses, and he put his wand away with a sneer on his face. Without speaking a word to anyone, he spun around with a dramatic wave of his cloak and stalked from the room, the front door slamming behind him a moment later. The portrait of Sirius's mother immediately began screaming, and Arthur turned hesitantly to go and help out, deciding it was best to leave Harry and Sirius alone for a moment.

Sirius slowly put his wand away, his face still livid. He sat down stiffly at the kitchen table, staring moodily into the distance. Harry gently sat next to him, hoping he could calm the man down. He knew that Snape's words were still echoing around Sirius's head, and he had to convince him not to take them to heart. Snape had touched a nerve when calling him a coward, Harry knew how much he hated being cooped up in this house, unable to do anything to help the Order.

“Sirius,” Harry said softly, trying to get his attention. Sirius didn't react, Harry wasn't sure if he even heard him speak. He was lost in deep thought. Gently taking Sirius's hand in his, Harry tried again.

“Sirius, listen to me,” he said, louder this time, squeezing his hand. Sirius turned to look at him this time, he smiled but Harry could tell that it was forced.

“It's alright, Harry, the dungeon bat is gone now. Good riddance,” Sirius said stiffly, his eyes still full of cold anger. Harry hated seeing him like this. He raised his hand and cupped Sirius's face, softly running his thumb along his cheekbone. Sirius closed his eyes, letting out an uneven breath. Harry leaned closer, pressed a soft chaste kiss to his lips before pulling back.

“Don't you dare listen to a word that bastard says,” Harry said quietly. “You know he's just trying to piss you off so that you do something stupid. He'd like nothing better than for you to get so annoyed at being stuck here that you go gallivanting off into trouble and get hurt.” Harry spoke earnestly, hoping he could get through Sirius's anger and speak sense into the man. Sirius opened his eyes, and they were softer and warmer now.

“Don't worry, Harry, I won't do anything reckless,” Sirius said tiredly, still frowning slightly. He stood up, and Harry quickly stopped him before he could stalk off somewhere. Reaching up, he buried his hands in Sirius's soft hair and pulled his head down for another quick kiss. Sirius smiled slightly against his lips, and kissed him back, their lips moving gently against each other. They pulled apart quickly, the kitchen too open a place for such a public display of affection, and Harry gave Sirius's hand one last squeeze.

“Just remember, Sirius, I don't think I could live without you if anything ever happened to you,” Harry said quietly, his face expressing the worry he was feeling. Sirius sighed at Harry's words.

“I promise I won't do anything stupid, Harry,” he insisted, and Harry could see the truth in his eyes. “Nothing is ever going to happen to me.” Harry smiled at Sirius's words, placated for now.

The rest of the day had a more sombre feeling to it, not only following Sirius and Snape's
argument, but because the Weasleys were all going to be heading back to school the next day. Harry was of course secretly very pleased about this, but he played his part in looking upset that his friends were going to leave. He enjoyed their presence, of course, but it had been very stressful having to stay away from Sirius for so long. Mr and Mrs Weasley had decided to head back to the Burrow after the children went back to school, although Molly had almost changed her mind after she heard about Sirius’s run-in with Snape. It had taken quite some time to convince her that it was okay to leave Harry alone with Sirius, but she was convinced eventually.

The next day Harry awoke to the sounds of people frantically packing their last belongings and racing around the house to get ready. As always, they seemed to be running late, and Harry was glad to be a spectator only this time around. He walked slowly downstairs to the kitchen, yawning widely. Dodging a frantic Ron who was running down the stairs full speed, not realising that his trunk was actually open and leaking his belongings, Harry managed to make it to the kitchen and sank down on a chair with a yawn. Mrs Weasley promptly placed down a huge plate of full English breakfast in front of him, urging him to eat it all.

“Now make sure you eat properly once I'm gone, Harry, I don't want to see you wasting away,” she said hurriedly, and Harry had to stop her from piling even more sausages onto his plate.

“I'm not going to let him starve, Molly.” Sirius said pointedly as he walked into the room, raising an eyebrow at her. She flushed, bustling back over towards the sink to clean up.

“I wasn't suggesting that at all, Sirius dear,” she said quickly, her back to the room as she used her wand to set the pans and plates scrubbing themselves clean. Sirius decided to drop it and sat down next to Harry at the table, winking at him with a roguish grin on his face. Harry's stomach did a back flip, and he grinned back. Harry's warmth was both comforting and arousing, and he tilted his face upwards in an unmistakeable invitation for Sirius to kiss him.

Finally, Harry and Sirius were left alone in the house. Harry laid down on the bed and Sirius straddled him, hunger evident in his eyes. He began slowly unbuttoning Harry's shirt, leaning forwards and nuzzling the bare skin that he uncovered, placing
gentle kisses that left Harry's skin tingling. Harry reciprocated, carefully extracting Sirius from his clothing, and soon they were both stripped to their underwear. Harry moaned out loud, placing his hands on Sirius's hips and grinding their erections together. It felt simply divine, however it just wasn't enough. Sirius seemed to know exactly what Harry was thinking, and he quickly rid them both of their last remaining items of clothing.

Harry's breath caught in his chest as he took in the beautiful sight of a completely naked Sirius Black stretched out on top of him. His cock twitched at the sight and he moaned, needing more contact between them. It had been so long since they'd had a chance to be properly together, and Harry knew that it was time. He knew what he wanted from Sirius.

“I want you...” he whispered, his voice wavering as he drowned in his feeling of arousal. “I want you to...”

“What do you want me to do, Harry?” Sirius whispered delectably in his ear, the feeling of his hot breath on Harry's skin causing him to writhe on the bed in pleasure. Sirius smiled against his face and left a soft kiss there.

“I want you to fuck me,” Harry breathed, looking directly into Sirius's eyes and smiling seductively. That lustful fire sparked in Sirius's eyes again, and he grinned wider than ever before.

“It would be my pleasure,” he growled roughly, and leaned over to grab something from the bedside cabinet. That something turned out to be a bottle of lubricant, and Harry was very thankful that Sirius was so prepared. Aroused and excited as he was at the anticipation of going the whole way with Sirius, it was still his first time and he was a little nervous. He trusted Sirius, however, and knew that he would do everything he could to make it as painless as possible.

Sirius smiled gently at Harry, and leaned down again to whisper in his ear. “Trust me, Harry,” he spoke softly, “I'm going to take care of you.”

“I know,” Harry smiled back at him, biting his lip in anticipation. Sirius kissed him on his swollen lips, meanwhile his hand was trailing downwards. He moved to Harry's neck, sucking, licking, biting, making Harry writhe and squirm with excitement as he dragged a lubed finger slowly down Harry's erection, and then gently over his entrance. Harry tensed briefly, not used to this feeling, but Sirius gently took Harry's hand in his free one, and squeezed it, letting him know that he was going to be gentle. Harry relaxed, and Sirius used that opportunity to slide his finger inside.

Harry squirmed slightly, getting used to the feeling, and decided that he rather liked it. It was different, but not uncomfortable. When he knew that Harry was comfortable, Sirius began moving his finger in and out, pressing slightly deeper each time, and soon enough he found that little bundle of nerves that he had been searching for. Harry gasped out loud, feeling waves of pleasure radiate over him as Sirius gently stroked his prostate. While Harry was preoccupied, Sirius added a second lubed finger. Again Harry tensed slightly but relaxed as Sirius stroked his prostate, stretching him deliciously and slightly scissoring his fingers to prepare him for what was to come.

After a little while Sirius deemed Harry ready, and slid his fingers out so that he could prepare himself properly. Harry pouted slightly at the loss, but his excitement was reignited as he watched Sirius squirting out lubricant onto his fingers and rubbing it all over his rock hard erection. Sirius looked him in the eyes and winked, and Harry was pretty sure that was the sexiest thing he had ever seen. He gave Harry a quick kiss on the lips.

“Ready?” Sirius asked softly, and Harry nodded, not trusting himself to be able to talk right now.
The older man positioned himself between Harry's legs, spreading them wide so that he could manoeuvre himself between them. With one last reassuring glance at Harry's face, Sirius gently positioned himself at Harry's entrance, pushing slightly so that only the head breached the entrance. Harry hissed slightly at the feeling, but Sirius gently grasped Harry's erection and palmed it slowly, relaxing him, reminding him to focus on the pleasure. It worked perfectly, and Harry relaxed enough for Sirius to slide carefully forwards until his cock was buried inside Harry. The sight of Sirius inside him like that almost made Harry lose it, but he managed to keep it under control. After a couple of minutes adjusting to the feeling, Harry couldn't take the anticipation any more.

“Move, Sirius, please move,” he begged, needing to feel the delicious friction between them, and Sirius was more than happy to oblige. He slowly slid almost all the way out of Harry, before pushing quickly forwards again, burying himself all the way in. Harry cried out as Sirius hit his prostate, and begged him to do it again. Sirius picked up the pace, and Harry couldn't help but cry out loud in pleasure. Every powerful thrust that Sirius delivered sent shock-waves of heat around his body, every part of him seeming to tingle with the mounting arousal.

They were both sweating, panting, from the exertion. Harry's muscles were working overtime, meeting Sirius for every thrust, letting out breathy moans as he was overwhelmed with the beautiful sensations. Soon Harry felt it building to the point of no return, his muscles involuntarily tensing, flocks of butterflies taking flight in his stomach, and with one final push he screamed, riding the waves of the most incredible orgasm he had ever felt. Sirius watched him, moaning with pleasure himself, and a few thrusts later he felt his own release wash over him, and collapsed down next to Harry on the bed.

Harry lay in silence, his chest heaving as he fought to catch his breath, feeling the sweat dry on his body. He could feel Sirius's seed dripping out of him down his leg slightly, and he smiled softly to himself. After a while he came back to reality slightly, and moved over on the bed until he was cuddled up against Sirius's side. Sirius put an arm around him and pulled him close, kissing him softly on the forehead.

“How do you feel, Harry?” Sirius asked him carefully, running a hand up and down his back soothingly.


“I'm glad to hear that,” he replied, and Harry looked up at him to see a peaceful smile on the older man's face.

“I love you,” Harry said seriously. “You're the first and only person I ever want to do that with.”

Sirius smiled widely, and Harry could have sworn his eyes almost seemed slightly watery. “I love you too, Harry. I'm extremely honoured that you would give yourself to me like that. I want you to know that I'm never going to hurt you, and I'm never going to leave you.” Sirius pulled him into a tight hug, his voice slightly wavering as he fought to complete that sentence. Harry felt his own eyes tearing up, and he smiled at how completely sappy they were being.

“Look at us, Sirius, we're being so cheesy.” Harry smiled into Sirius's chest, and he felt Sirius's chest vibrate as he let out a deep rumbling laugh.

“I won't tell if you don't,” Sirius joked, and Harry smiled to himself.
“Deal,” he said drowsily, feeling himself slowly slipping away into sleep. He was gently snoring before he knew it, and Sirius followed him into slumber shortly after. For once Harry’s dreams were uninterrupted by fear, and he slept soundly throughout the entire night.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you're enjoying the story so far! Please let me know by dropping a comment or a kudos, and thank you so much to all those that have been left so far :)
Chapter 19

The doorbell rang. Sirius immediately gritted his teeth, sending a dark look towards the front door. Harry sighed, standing up slowly and trudging towards the door at which he knew the potions master was waiting. He had forcibly banned Sirius from having any interaction with Snape as it would only end in disaster.

The day Harry had been dreading was here, his first occlumency lesson with Snape. He knew it was going to be pretty terrible to endure, and he hoped that it at least would help keep Voldemort out of his head. He opened the front door slowly, a look of apprehension apparent on his face. The door opened to reveal the stony face of professor Snape, his usual scowl fixed firmly in place.

“Are you going to let me in, or are we going to stand around here all day?” Snape said tightly in his most annoyed voice, and Harry gulped, stepping quickly out of the way to let the taller man through. With Snape already in an icy mood it was going to be an interesting lesson.

Harry quickly headed towards the drawing room, where he thought it would be best to have the occlumency lessons. He could practically hear the dramatic sweep of Snape’s cloak as he walked behind Harry, probably looming ominously as he usually did.

“Hello again, Snivellus,” Harry heard Sirius’s voice suddenly bark at them as he entered the room, and he clutched his chest as he tried to fight off heart failure.

“Sirius!” Harry chided, scowling at him as he caught his breath. “I told you it was best to stay upstairs,” he continued, causing a sour expression to form on the older man’s face.

“And I think I have the right to make sure this overgrown bat doesn’t cause you any trouble during this so called lesson”, Sirius growled at him, a dark look in his eyes. Harry sighed. He hated it when Sirius got like this, it became practically impossible to talk any sense into him. As he walked towards Sirius to try to convince him he should stay out of it, a barely audible cough sounded behind them. Harry swiftly spun around; he had almost forgotten that Snape was standing right there.

“If I may- ah, interrupt this little heart-warming moment,” Snape began, a smirk visible on his sallow face, “I must insist that for once in his pitifully erroneous life, Mr Potter is in fact correct. If you could just scurry away and play in the garden so that I can begin this lesson, I won’t have to spend a second too long in this…home of yours.” Snape spun around and walked into the room, not bothering to cast another look Sirius’s way. Sirius looked furious and began stalking towards Snape before Harry caught him by his arm and literally marched him out of the room.

“Just leave it alone,” Harry said firmly, depositing the grumpy man at the bottom of the stairs. “I know he’s a complete dick and he’s going to make this much more irritating than it needs to be, but it will go much quicker and smoother if you just leave him alone and stop antagonising him. If anything is going to make him treat me even worse, then that’s it.” Sirius stared him down for a moment, his jaw set defiantly, until suddenly the fight seemed to go out of him and he slumped his shoulders, turning and heading slowly up the stairs.
“Don’t come running to me when it all goes wrong!” Sirius called back over his shoulder as he disappeared upstairs, and Harry rolled his eyes with a smile on his face at the silly, stubborn dog-like man. The smile was immediately wiped off his face as he entered the drawing room and saw a very impatient Snape sitting at the table, tapping his foot and looking at Harry with a murderous look.

“If you are quite finished,” he said stiffly, standing up and motioning for Harry to come closer. Harry walked towards him cautiously, alarm gripping him as his former teacher reached into his robes and drew his wand. He subconsciously patted his pocket where his own wand was sitting, wondering if he would need to defend himself from Snape. The potions master’s eyes flickered downwards, following the path of Harry’s hand, and a condescending look appeared on his face.

“In these lessons, I will be trying to teach you to build defences in your mind to ward off the dangers of external penetration into the mind. Professor Dumbledore seems to think you are at danger of being manipulated and preyed upon by the Dark Lord, whom by now seems to have realised that the link between your minds exists.”

Harry was silent for a moment, letting this information sink in. “So there’s definitely some kind of connection between my mind and Voldemort’s?” Harry asked quickly, feeling horrified that his vague suspicions were correct. Snape visibly twitched at Voldemort’s name, and his face turned darker.

“That is what professor Dumbledore believes to be correct, yes,” Snape said stiffly. “As proven when you saw into his mind as he attacked Mr Weasley shortly before Christmas. This entry into his mind was powerful enough that he became aware of the connection, and professor Dumbledore is under the impression that he may use this connection to his advantage.”

“So he could potentially make me see things, or do things, by entering my mind?” Harry asked worriedly, already starting to panic. He felt dirty, violated almost. Voldemort could enter his own mind whenever he wished?

“It is possible that the Dark Lord could make you see things that are not real,” Snape confirmed, twirling his wand in his hand with an air of impatience. “Now, in order to build a defence to stop him entering your mind, you must master the art of occlumency. You will be able to use your own mind to build a barrier of sorts, to stop anyone other than yourself accessing your mind.”

Harry nodded, feeling apprehensive. If he could have chosen anyone to be teaching him subtle magic involving his mind, his most private memories and feelings, Snape would be the last person.

“I will be casting on you the spell Legilimens. This is the spell that will allow me to see into your mind. You will try to use your will power to push me out, to stop me seeing in.”

“What?” Harry asked quickly. “You’re going to read my mind?” He nervously rubbed his sweaty hands on his jeans. There was no way he was ready for this. What if Snape saw something he wasn’t meant to see? Immediately his most private memories swam to the front of his mind, kissing Sirius, sleeping next to him, the amazing sex they had last night... Oh Merlin, he couldn’t imagine what would happen if Snape saw something like that in his mind. Cheeks burning red, Harry looked defiantly into Snape’s eyes. The potions master smirked, enjoying Harry’s discomfort.

“If you don’t want me to see those memories that you so clearly want to hide, then you’ll have to put up a very effective barrier to keep me out. Are you ready to begin?”
Harry panicked. Of course he wasn’t ready! “But you haven’t told me how to do it!”

He said anxiously. Snape stared at him with extreme distain.

“It seems you have no common sense whatsoever Potter, a fact which does not astound me. If you want to keep me out of your mind, then rid your mind of the thing you do not wish me to see. Empty your mind, clear it of all thoughts.”

That was something to go on, at least, Harry thought to himself. He closed his eyes, thinking back to the lessons Sirius had given him on turning into an animagus. He had worked hard on being able to empty his mind, and he employed the same techniques here. “On my count, then.” Snape’s voice invaded the peace of Harry’s mind. “Three, two, one. Legilimens!”

Harry immediately felt extreme discomfort, like something sharp and invasive was trying to poke his brain. Vague memories began to swim in front of his eyes despite his best efforts to keep his mind clear. He saw Cedric dying in the graveyard. Voldemort rising from the cauldron, naked and snake-like, eyes blood red and murderous. Sirius walking towards him, a soft, loving expression on his face.

“No!” Harry shouted, using all the force he had to push Snape firmly out of his mind. He felt a sharp pain in his knee and opened his eyes to find himself on the ground, panting with the effort it had taken him. Snape was looking down at him, unimpressed.

“You managed to push me out eventually, Potter, but it took far too long. I saw memories that clearly haunt you, things that you don’t want to think about. You must try harder,” he said, looking down his hooked nose as Harry unsteadily climbed to his feet. He took a deep breath, steadying himself, and before he knew it Snape was casting the spell on him again. This time he managed to last a bit longer before the memories started to flood into his brain again. Flashes of Dudley beating him up with his gang, being chased by Ripper the bulldog, a glimpse of a dark room full of jewels and riches that he had only ever seen in his dreams but he somehow knew in his heart that it was an ancient Gringotts vault. That was the last image Harry saw before he managed to force Snape out of his mind.

“At the end, what was that memory? The dark room?” Snape asked Harry suspiciously. He had a calculating look on his face.

“I don’t know, it’s just some place I’ve dreamt about a few times,” Harry explained vaguely, although something told him there was more to it than that. These dreams he had were persistent and worryingly vivid. Snape said no more, but he gave Harry an odd look before continuing to send a barrage of Legilimency spells his way. After several more attacks on his mind, Harry was on the floor again, his whole body shaking. It really took a lot out of you, having your mind repeatedly violated by someone you hate. Snape eventually seemed to realise it was time for them to stop.

“At the end, what was that memory? The dark room?” Snape asked Harry suspiciously. He had a calculating look on his face.

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“Alright, Potter, get up. The lesson is over. I shall see you here the same time next week.” Without stopping to see if Harry was ok, Snape stepped over him and swiftly exited the room, slamming the front door behind him and awkening the portrait of Sirius’s mother in the hall. Harry scowled, climbing wearily to his feet and staggering out of the hall to silence the bloody annoying portrait.

Feeling completely drained, Harry slowly climbed the stairs to his and Sirius’s bedroom. He hoped Sirius wasn’t annoyed with him still after their little spat earlier. He warily opened the door and peeked into the room, seeing Sirius sitting up in bed reading a book. He glanced up when Harry walked into the room, and gave him a soft smile. Harry let out a sigh of relief, returning the smile tiredly and climbing into bed after pulling off his jeans and t-shirt.
“How did it go?” Sirius asked him, putting away his book and shuffling down in the bed so he could put an arm around Harry and pull him into a hug. Harry smiled and snuggled closer, Sirius’s warmth almost sending him over the edge into sleep.

“Snape’s a bastard,” Harry slurred, already struggling to stay awake. “I didn’t realise occlumency would be so tiring.” Stifling a huge yawn, Harry rolled over and within seconds he was asleep. With an affectionate smile, Sirius waved his wand at the light to turn it off, and settled down next to Harry, following him into sleep.

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Harry tossed and turned, his dreams turning from soft vague shapes into something more sinister. Opening his eyes, he noted that he was pacing up and down a dark room, Nagini close by him as she always was. It was very important to keep her safe, more important than ever. If she were to be harmed… but that wouldn’t happen, he told himself. He had her under the strongest protective spells imaginable, no one but him would ever get close to her.

His diary, on the other hand… A furious snarl almost erupted from his mouth, but he managed to keep himself under control for now. How had he ever let that snotty little kid, Harry Potter, destroy his diary, such an important artefact. It was partly down to Lucius of course; thanks to him the diary had fallen into the wrong hands. Lucius wasn’t to know that he was holding in his hands an item of such extreme value and importance, but it still very much irked him. But no, it wasn’t his fault that the Potter boy had somehow managed to pierce the diary with a basilisk fang of all things. Almost as if he had known…but how could he, he was only twelve at the time and no one knew the significance of the diary, let alone an idiotic child.

Now, if he could just keep the rest of them safe… they were kept in secure locations that no one else would ever guess, and the protective spells on them were strong enough and intricate enough to fool even Dumbledore himself should he go sniffing things out and finding the trail. But not even that old fool could have a clue about what he had done. He, who had gone further than any other in the quest for immortality. The locket was hidden in that far away cave, where he had enjoyed torturing those bullies. The diadem, hidden in the room that only he had managed to discover within Hogwarts, no one else had explored that castle as comprehensively as him, had called it their real home. The ring was in the old Gaunt place; he was almost completely sure that no one knew of his ties to the Gaunts. The cup, safe in the depths of Gringotts protected by dragons and whatever other dark secrets the goblins were hiding. He glanced down at Nagini, observing again her intricate protective spells. Yes, it would be impossible for anything other than his diary to be destroyed. He’d like to see Dumbledore try, especially now. His plan was still going well, and any day now Dumbledore was going to be very busy, very busy indeed, with the resulting carnage.

Harry opened his eyes, gasping for breath. The dream was still so vivid in his mind, as real as the cold sweat drying on his body. Before he had a chance to forget the details, he jumped out of bed and rushed to the desk, grabbing a quill and scribbling down everything he remembered. Voldemort was thinking about important objects, and wasn’t that what Dumbledore had been interested in? Something that could destroy him, an object? Harry almost spilled ink all over the paper in his haste to scribble everything he could remember. The diary, that had been much more important than Harry had realised. There was a locket, a ring, a diadem (whatever that was), and a cup. The cup, Harry quickly realised, which Voldemort had so clearly pictured in a Gringotts vault. Wasn’t that exactly what Harry had been seeing in his dreams? It all suddenly seemed to be coming back to him. Dreams of objects, dreams filled with fear and anxiety. Voldemort must have had these items on his mind constantly, and Harry had been seeing into his mind whenever he went to sleep.

With the ink still drying on the page, Harry looked around the room and saw that Sirius was nowhere to be found. He must’ve slept in. The first thing he had to do, right now, was to speak to professor Dumbledore. He hoped to Merlin that the man was still at Hogwarts at the present. Rushing downstairs, Harry crashed into the kitchen only to see the majority of the Order sitting
around the table in deep discussion. They all ground to a halt and turned to stare at him as he bounded into the room, giving him strange looks. Harry glanced down and blushed when he realised he was still only wearing his underwear. Ignoring this worrying development, Harry turned to Kingsley Shacklebolt who was sitting at the head of the table, his usual place in command whenever Dumbledore was absent from the meeting.

“I need to speak to Dumbledore, right now!” Harry said quickly, surreptitiously holding the sheet of paper in front of him to somewhat cover himself. Kingsley frowned at him.

“What about?” He asked in his slow, calming voice.

“I can’t say but it’s extremely important!” Harry said, getting agitated. “Is he at Hogwarts? Can I speak to him through the floo?”

“Well, he’s probably very busy, Harry.” Molly Weasley said kindly. “I’m sure if you just tell us what you want to talk to him about, he can see to it next time he’s here.”

“No, you don’t understand,” Harry sighed, frustrated. “This is a matter of life and death. I’m being serious!” He said hotly as Tonks started openly laughing at him. Remus gave her a look, and she quietened.

“Dumbledore is at Hogwarts,” Remus said slowly. “All you can do is try to floo his office, but there’s a very high chance you won’t get through to him,” he said carefully. It was all Harry needed.

“Great, I’ll go and try!” Harry turned to run from the room, but before he was out the door he heard Sirius distinctly clearing his throat. Harry turned, raising an eyebrow at his godfather.

“Might want to put some clothes on before you run off to Hogwarts, Harry.” Sirius said dryly with a wry smile on his face. He looked extremely curious beneath the humour, however, and Harry knew he must tell Sirius everything as soon as he’d cleared it with Dumbledore. He quickly rushed from the room, sprinting upstairs to throw some clothes on before racing back down to the drawing room, carefully locking the door behind him and casting a silencing charm for good measure. It wasn’t that he didn’t trust the members of the Order, but you never know where Kreacher might be hanging about.

Grabbing a handful of floo powder from the intricately carved bowl by the fire, Harry threw it into the fireplace and shouted carefully “Professor Albus Dumbledore’s office, Hogwarts school”. He knelt down and put his head in the green flames, feeling dizzy as his head seemed to spin around and around as his knees and body remained firmly on solid ground. Moments later, the green flames gave way to the image of Dumbledore’s office, cluttered as always, the familiar sight of Fawkes sitting on his perch. He looked interestingly at Harry’s face in the fire, then went back to grooming himself.

“Professor Dumbledore?” Harry called loudly, hoping against hope that the elderly headmaster was in his office. “Professor Dumbledore?”

“Harry! What on earth are you doing in my fireplace?” Harry sighed with relief as he heard the unmistakeable voice of Dumbledore coming towards him from the other side of the office.
“Professor! I had a dream and I was inside Voldemort’s mind again and I really need to talk to you about it.” Harry rushed to tell Dumbledore, and before he could finish his sentence Dumbledore’s eyes had lit up and he was ushering Harry to come through the floo. Harry pulled his head out of the fireplace, trying to ignore the dizziness, and then stepped all the way in to Hogwarts for the first time since his last school year.

“Harry, please sit down.” Dumbledore gestured to the chair in front of his desk, walking around to take his own seat. His face didn’t express any surprise, or hint that this was a situation out of the ordinary. They both sat, Dumbledore fixing Harry with his trademark icy blue stare that made Harry feel as if he was being x-rayed. “Why don’t you explain what happened, from the beginning.”

“Well, I just had my first occlumency lesson with Snape and I was completely drained, so I headed to bed early,” Harry started, “in fact I think that might be why I had the dream. If anything this lesson made me even more susceptible to Voldemort because it weakened my defences.” He frowned pointedly at Dumbledore at this, but the old man looked deliberately at a spot above Harry’s right shoulder and ignored him. “Anyway, I went to bed, and I had a dream. Not a normal dream, it was like when I dreamt that I attacked Mr Weasley. I was inside Voldemort’s head.”

Dumbledore’s stare fixated on Harry again, pale blue eyes piercing him above half-moon spectacles. Harry continued. “Voldemort was agitated. I was- he was walking up and down, Nagini was there, he was thinking about how I destroyed his diary, and it was as if it was something incredibly important, more important than just an old memory. Anyway, then he started thinking about other objects, they seemed to have the same significance. I wrote it all down,” Harry said, fishing the piece of paper out of his pocket.

“There was a locket, which he said was in a cave somewhere. There was something about torture? I can’t quite remember. A ring, which was in an old house somewhere, possibly belonging to his ancestors. And there was something called…” Harry glanced at his notes, “a diadem. What is that anyway?”

“It’s a small crown, or tiara. Please continue.” Harry swallowed nervously, suddenly overcome with the realisation that this conversation was one of the most important he would ever have.

“Er, right. The last object he thought about was a cup, and it was in a Gringotts vault. Which reminded me, I’ve been dreaming about a vault for ages. Well, all I’ve seen is a dark room full of gold and jewels but something told me it was in Gringotts, and I must’ve been picking up on Voldemort’s fixation on these items. I’ve dreamt about the diary too, and the crown, and the locket too.” Harry stared at Dumbledore, waiting for him to react in some way. There was clearly a lot of thinking going on behind those pale blue eyes. Harry fidgeted, waiting what seemed like forever.

“Thank you for coming to me with this, Harry. As I’m sure you’re aware, this could very well be the turning point in the war. I told you a while ago that there were items I was searching for that would be of extreme importance in the destruction of Voldemort, and I do believe you’ve found the key.”

Harry stared at Dumbledore open mouthed. He had suspected this to be the truth, of course, but to hear it directly from Dumbledore’s mouth… Could he truly have accidentally found the key to destroying Voldemort simply by having this strange connection to his mind? All he did was witness Voldemort’s frustration and anger towards himself in a dream, and he had been lucky enough to encounter this. It was a lot to process.

“So, what exactly are these objects, professor?” Harry asked eagerly. That was the question that was eating away at him the most. Voldemort had been unbeatable for decades, and yet there was
some kind of way to kill him involving these seemingly unrelated objects?

“Ah, yes. An important question, and yet one which I cannot answer.” Harry’s eyes immediately narrowed. “Not yet, anyway,” Dumbledore added quickly, noting the look in Harry’s eyes. “You must understand that this is extremely important and secret information, and with this link you share with Voldemort, he could very easily access the information if he so desired.”

Harry scowled. It sounded logical, of course, but that didn’t mean he agreed with being sheltered from important information because of something that he couldn’t control.

“You’ll understand then, Harry, why I must insist that you practise extremely hard on your occlumency. If Voldemort were even to know about this conversation…”

“I’ll do my best, professor! Although I don’t think Snape really cares about whether I do well or not. He was supposed to be helping, but then my mind was more open than ever…although I suppose that’s a good thing really, because I heard this information.” It was true, Harry thought. Why should he be practising occlumency when the link between himself and Voldemort had proved so useful? First he had saved Mr Weasley, and now he had recovered extremely important information.

“I can see why you would think that, Harry, however it is extremely important that you close your mind to Voldemort. We have other ways of obtaining information from him. Remember that this connection between you works both ways. He can read your memories, your deepest thoughts, he can put images and thoughts into your mind that aren’t your own. Yes, it is imperative that you work hard on your lessons, Harry.”

With that, Dumbledore stood up and Harry understood that he was dismissed. There were so many more questions that he needed answered, but it was obvious that this was all he was going to get. With a slight sigh, he headed back towards the fireplace.

“Thank you for seeing me, professor,” he said somewhat stiffly.

“That’s quite alright, Harry,” Dumbledore said with a vague smile, his eyes twinkling maddeningly. “Goodbye.”

“Bye, professor,” Harry said, stepping into the floo and whisking himself back to Grimmauld place. He of course fell face first out of the fireplace upon arrival, just about managing to catch himself before face planting the floor. He headed back towards the kitchen in a daze, not really sure what he was doing. All he knew was that the Order would probably want an explanation to why he ran into the room in his underwear, demanded to see Dumbledore and ran off without a word as to why.

As he entered the room, everyone turned to stare at him again. Sheepishly sitting down, Harry coughed nervously, not sure what exactly to say in this situation. Luckily, Kingsley helped him out.

“So, Harry. Would you like to share with us what on earth just happened?” Kingsley raised an eyebrow at him, a small smile on his face. Harry laughed nervously.
“Er, yeah. The thing is, I promised Dumbledore I wouldn’t say anything to anyone. It’s kind of private.” Everyone around the table rolled their eyes in exasperation. “Okay, look. Basically, I had a dream. I looked into Voldemort’s mind again, like when I saw Mr Weasley…” he glanced quickly in Arthur and Molly’s direction, and saw them exchanging an uneasy look. “Well, anyway. I saw something important and Dumbledore thinks it best that I don’t speak about it in case Voldemort were to use this connection to see into my mind.”

People around the table flinched in varying degrees of severity at the mention of Voldemort’s name. Harry suppressed the urge to roll his own eyes at their reactions.

“Okay Harry, we understand why you can’t talk,” Kingsley said after a fashion. Not everyone seemed to agree with him on this, but no one spoke up. Harry looked around the table and noticed for the first time that Arthur and Molly looked tired and strained, as if they were anxious about something. “Let’s continue where we left off, shall we?”

Harry sat back and listened to the Order discussing things. The cause for Arthur and Molly’s discontent became quickly evident. It seemed that Bill, who was supposed to be on guard duty somewhere in London, had gone missing. They had not been able to contact him, and upon sending another guard to the location, he was nowhere to be found. Harry hoped he turned up soon. Bill was a good man, and the Weasley’s really didn’t need any more drama after the attack on Mr Weasley.

As he sat pondering things, Harry came to a realisation. Though the Order discussed many important issues around him, he had noticed a distinct lack of information relating directly to Voldemort. He had simply put it down to a lack of insider information before, however he was realising now how naïve he had been. Dumbledore knew all along that Harry had this connection to Voldemort’s mind. He had obviously told members of the Order not to discuss important things in front of Harry, lest the information fall into the wrong hands. Harry sighed, disgruntled. Even when Dumbledore let Harry think that he was actually letting him in on things, it turned out he was holding him back all along. He really shouldn’t be surprised by this, he supposed. It was just like Dumbledore to do this, and to be honest it did make sense. That didn’t mean he had to be happy about it though.

Soon enough the meeting was over, and everyone dispersed. Harry was sure to tell Mr and Mrs Weasley that he was sure Bill would turn up soon, and it would all be okay. They smiled kindly at him, but it didn’t reach their eyes. They left hand in hand, and Harry sighed, really hoping it was all going to turn out alright. He turned around from the door and saw Sirius standing there, a soft expression on his face. Harry immediately walked towards him as if pulled by a magnet. He threw himself into Sirius’s arms and hugged him tightly, not planning to let go any time soon. It had been a stressful day already and it was only lunch time.

“Are you alright, Harry?” Sirius asked gently, his mouth next to Harry’s ear. He felt the warm breath slightly tickle, and smiled fondly.

“I’m alright, Sirius.” Harry absentmindedly nuzzled closer to Sirius’s chest, seeking the comfort he needed after all the drama. “I know Dumbledore told me not to talk to anyone, but I know you’re dying to hear what happened this morning and I’m dying to talk about it so let’s just get it over with.” He pulled back and looked knowingly at Sirius who did indeed look intensely curious. They headed into the drawing room and sat down together on the couch, where Harry proceeded to fill Sirius in on everything that had happened this morning.

“So, do you have any idea what these objects could be?” Harry asked Sirius, curious as to what his opinion was. Sirius was just as clueless as him, however.

“Yep, no idea. I’ve never heard of any collection of artefacts like that having powers or anything.
It must be some really dark magic that only Voldemort is twisted enough to know about.”

“And Dumbledore,” Harry added with a wry smile. He never was entirely sure if Dumbledore was a completely light wizard, even though he was clearly fighting for the light side. But then, everyone had light and dark inside themselves. With a wizard as powerful as Dumbledore, it was bound to show more clearly.

After a well-deserved lunch, Harry and Sirius pondered over what to do that afternoon. Harry couldn’t stop thinking about the events of the morning, about what Dumbledore was doing, about what Voldemort was planning. Plus, he couldn’t help thinking about if Bill was going to be okay. He hadn’t heard any further news since the meeting, and it was really grating on his mind. It got to the point where Sirius was so fed up with Harry’s fidgeting that he had to do something about it, so he suggested continuing their animagus lessons. Harry had been getting really close last time, and it would be a good exercise to help him focus on emptying his mind.

They sat down and got right down to it. Harry sat on the floor, plenty of space around him in the event that he turned into something large. He found this unlikely, however, as he was sure he’d felt like he was shrinking last time he’d attempted the transformation. Sitting on the floor, Harry closed his eyes and quickly cleared his mind, finding it easier now after practising so often. He sat that way for a while, not trying to rush things, feeling the warmth of his magical core getting stronger and stronger as he connected with it.

Before long, he felt his body begin to change. Bones changed shape, began to shrink, his skin burned as something grew out of it. This time, Harry completely relaxed and let the changes take place. It didn’t hurt, per se, but it felt extremely uncomfortable. Luckily, after what had felt like a lifetime but was only a few seconds, the discomfort ended and the transformation was complete.

Harry opened his eyes warily. He was very close to the ground. As he went to move forwards towards the mirror at the side of the room, he felt that his instincts told him to hop. He moved his arms experimentally, and suddenly realised that they were a completely different shape. In fact, yes, they were wings! He spread them out, giving them a tentative flap. It felt so strange, but as the minutes went by it felt more and more natural. Eventually he made it to the mirror and looked in, his beak opening slightly in surprise as he looked at himself in his animagus form for the first time.

He was a large type of crow, probably a raven. He was jet black, with glossy feathers which almost looked green or blue when the light shone on them. There was a small white mark on his forehead where his scar would be if he were in his human form. Of course it had to be the scar, Harry thought with a sigh. At least he didn’t have spectacles around his eyes, however. He spread his wings again and flapped them, enjoying how majestic he looked. He could get used to this. Now that he was more acquainted with his appearance, he turned to look at Sirius to gauge his reaction. Sirius grinned at him, looking proud and impressed.

“Wow, you look great!” Sirius smiled encouragingly at him. “And it only took you a few lessons. To think it took me an entire school year of practising to turn into mine,” he added enviously.

Harry went to reply, forgetting for a moment that ravens can’t actually talk. He let out a loud caw, surprised himself and flapped his wings erratically as he tried to get used to how his body moved. Sirius guffawed at how stupid he looked, and Harry cuffed him on the arm with one of his large wings.

“Ow! I’m going to have to be careful around you with those things,” Sirius said, rubbing his arm gingerly. Harry looked as smug as he could with a beak, and hopped around the room a bit more, getting used to how it felt. He wished he could fly, but there really wasn’t enough space in this place for a bird with a four-foot wing span to spread out. He flapped his wings, feeling how powerful they were, and managed to lift himself off the ground a bit. It felt exhilarating just to do that, but he was forced to land again a moment later. He turned to Sirius, who seemed to know exactly what he was thinking.
“You want to fly, don’t you? It would be ridiculous to deny you the chance to learn to fly now that we know your animagus form is a bird! What do you say to another trip outside?” Sirius looked at him mischievously, and Harry nodded his head earnestly. He couldn’t care less if someone came in and found them missing, he wanted to fly! Flying on his broomstick was his favourite thing to do, the moment when he felt freest. The only thing he could imagine that felt even better was flying with wings, with nothing to keep him in the air other than his own momentum. He flapped his wings and jumped upwards, after a bit of practise and slapping Sirius repeatedly in the face with his wings, he managed to land on the man’s shoulder.

“Be careful where you stick those talons!” Sirius warned him, and Harry suddenly realised how sharp they must be. He loosened his hold again, using his wings to balance on Sirius’s shoulder as he walked towards the front door. They went outside, Sirius walking the same way that they’d gone when Harry had snuck Sirius out in his animagus form not long after he’d first moved in. That had been the first time Harry had started to realise his feelings towards Sirius were changing… He happily reminisced about the fun they’d had in the park while Sirius walked them there, getting a very strange look from a muggle who walked past, wondering why a man was walking around London with a large raven on his shoulder. Luckily, London was a strange place anyway and it wasn’t so odd to see someone with an exotic pet.

After walking for a few minutes they arrived at the park, which was luckily deserted. It was a rather chilly day, and no one else had braved the cold to walk in the park. Sirius stopped by some trees, and gently placed Harry on the ground so that he didn’t run the risk of ripping his shoulder to shreds or slapping him in the face again as he took off. Harry flapped his wings a couple of times, getting a feel for it. This was it. The moment of truth. He hopped forwards, flapping his wings, and jumped. He immediately took flight, his body doing what it was naturally trained to do, and Harry followed his instincts. He soared around the park several times, only having to flap his wings once or twice to keep the momentum going.

After a little while Harry soared back towards Sirius, flying within a couple of inches of him and watching with amusement as he jumped backwards out of the way. He landed on the ground next to his godfather, and tried to connect with his magical core so he could turn back into his normal form. It came quite easily to him, and before he knew it he was sitting on the ground, whole and intact and completely human.

“Sirius, that was incredible!” Harry said excitedly as he climbed to his feet. He staggered a bit, feeling slightly out of sorts after being a bird for a while. It would take some getting used to, before he could change into his animagus form and back again as easily as Sirius did.

“It looked pretty impressive, flying around like that. Almost makes me wish I had a bird as my animagus form. I’m pretty attached to this one, though,” he grinned, and a second later a large shaggy black dog stood where his godfather had been a moment ago. Harry closed his eyes, taking a couple of minutes to make the change himself, but now that he’d done it once it came much more naturally to him. He took to the air and flew after Padfoot who was running through the grass chasing pigeons and looking happier and freer that he had in weeks. They soared around the park together for a while, chasing each other and scaring other wildlife, until they both tired. Turning back into their human forms, the two men lay next to each other on the ground for a while, catching their breath and enjoying the fresh air. It felt so wonderful to breath in the air after being cooped up in Grimmauld place constantly.

Even this wonderful afternoon had to come to an end eventually, however. They trudged back to Grimmauld place, hoping that no one from the Order had popped in and found them missing. Harry had almost been sent home last time that had happened. Luckily, they got home and found themselves alone, but not for long. Only a few minutes could have passed before the door opened and suddenly the entire Order seemed to be pouring in through the door. Harry and Sirius were summoned into the kitchen by a very grave looking Kingsley, and everyone filed into the room and took their seats around the table. Molly and Arthur were notably absent from the meeting.
“What is it, Kingsley? What did Dumbledore say?” Remus asked urgently, and Harry realised that he wasn’t the only one that was clueless. It seemed everyone else had been summoned here to a meeting without any knowledge as to why.

“There had been a mass break-out from Azkaban,” Kingsley said seriously. Harry gasped, and there was a murmur around the room. “Ten of Voldemort’s most loyal death eaters are now on the loose.”

Harry was in shock. He thought back to his dream, where Voldemort had mentioned something about a plan, and that Dumbledore would be kept busy in the aftermath. In all the excitement about the objects, he had completely forgotten that part. This must be what he was talking about! Kingsley read out the names, amongst them were Augustus Rookwood, Antonin Dolohov and Bellatrix Lestrange. Sirius took in a sharp intake of breath at Bellatrix’s name, and Harry realised she was Sirius’s cousin. He gently took Sirius’s hand under the table and squeezed it, feeling slightly better when Sirius squeezed back.

The news of this break-out was certainly grave. With this many powerful, loyal followers back under Voldemort’s command, how were they to hold him back? It was so daunting. Harry suddenly heard mention of a name he recognised and zoned back into the conversation. Kingsley was reminding everyone what the death eaters had been sent to Azkaban for, and he was talking about Bellatrix.

“Lestrange is a name well known to all of us. She was of course the leader of the group of death eaters that tortured Frank and Alice Longbottom into insanity, while trying to get information from them.”

Harry’s mouth fell open. He knew Neville had been raised by his grandmother, but no one had wanted to ask him about his parents because they assumed they had passed away. The news that they had been tortured by death eaters until they lost their minds was shocking to hear. He really felt for Neville. It was one thing to lose your parents, but to have them alive and yet no longer here? It was terrible. Harry vowed that he was going to kill that bitch, the first chance he got.

The Order were midway through discussing the break-out when the door opened and Arthur and Molly walked in. Harry could tell as soon as he saw them that something terrible had happened, something even more terrible than the Azkaban break-out. His mouth went dry, and he swallowed, hoping and praying that it wasn’t the news he was dreading. Molly tried to speak, but her already red eyes welled up and she covered her face with her hands, shaking. Arthur put an arm around her and pulled her close, trying to pull himself together enough to speak. Finally, he managed to get a sentence out.

“It’s Bill. The death eaters got to him, just before we managed to find him. He’s…he’s dead.”

Chapter End Notes

I’M SO SORRY but I hope you enjoyed it, only 2 chapters to go! Please leave a comment or a kudos :)}
Harry sat at his desk, looking wearily down at the paper in front of him. He needed something, anything to occupy his mind instead of the constant thoughts of Bill. Order members had taken to hanging around in Grimmauld place more often these days, taking solace in each other’s company while trying to come to terms with their grief. Harry had taken to hiding away in his room, the blank empty expressions on the faces of Arthur and Molly making him feel sick to his stomach. What had happened to them, to their son, was devastating, tragic. Bill was so strong, so young, and what had been just a simple shift at work for the Order had ended in the most horrific way. No one could have expected it, however it was plain to see that Arthur and Molly felt responsible. There was nothing they could’ve done, however. Bill was an adult, and they couldn’t keep him safe from everything, not when he had given his life to serve the Order of the Phoenix.

Ten Death Eaters had descended at once on an unsuspecting Bill, who had simply been staking out a place off the coast from Azkaban to listen out for news. Harry hadn’t even known that Order members were so far out listening for information but he supposed it made sense to be on the lookout for danger. Word spreads, and even Dementors can’t keep prison rumours inside their walls. Sadly, Voldemort had been quiet enough, stealthy enough to break his way in there without word reaching Bill first. Clearly the Order had suspected that a breakout was going to happen, or they wouldn’t have stationed someone there. Harry assumed he had not been told this rather important information for fear of Voldemort seeing it in his mind and knowing the Order had knowledge of his plans.

It made Harry wonder just how much other vital information he had been missing out on, because of this stupid connection with Voldemort that he had no control over. Dumbledore had let him become a member of the Order in name, but when it came to actually participating? All he could do was sit here in this house, doing nothing, attending Order meetings where the same tired discussions happened again and again. Of course they’d been holding back, there was so much more to it than this. It was of course unlikely that Harry would ever get to hear the important information, not while Voldemort still lived, while he still had access to Harry’s thoughts and feelings.

It hadn’t helped, though, had it. All this knowledge and secrecy the Order had and yet Bill was still dead, Arthur and Molly had lost their eldest son. Ron and his brothers had lost their oldest brother. None of the other Weasley children had even known a life without Bill in it. Ron was home from Hogwarts for a week or two to deal with his grief, along with Ginny, however Harry never saw either of them. They didn’t appear for meals, or even leave their rooms it seemed. Once or twice Harry had knocked on the door and tried to speak to Ron, he knew what it was like to live with the death of family members after all. However, Ron never answered and he didn’t want to impose, not at a time like this.

Harry had helpfully offered to sleep ‘on the couch’ in Sirius’s room to give Ron space, but he hadn’t used this opportunity to be physically close with Sirius. They were too devastated, too shocked to even think about anything like that. Sirius simply held Harry close every night and whispered that he loved him, and that nothing was going to happen to either of them. The words had a bitter edge to them, they both knew that nothing could get to them while they stayed hidden in Grimmauld place, away from the action. There was an unspoken agreement that they both wished they were out there spying for the Order, despite the risks. Better to die on the job than to waste away, hidden away from life.

Harry glanced back down at the paper he held in his shaking hands, the words blurring in front of his tired eyes, but a phrase suddenly caught his attention. ‘Riddle’s Diary’. He read it again, and then read the whole piece of paper over. It was the list he had scribbled down in haste after his
dream, the one he had run to Dumbledore about, nearly forgetting to put on clothes because he was so eager. The list of items Voldemort had been thinking about, with some sort of significance to destroying him. Harry had pored over and over this list trying to work out how exactly these items could come together to destroy Voldemort, but his ideas had come to nothing. There didn’t seem to be any link between a diary, a locket, a cup, a tiara, and a ring.

Harry frowned. The diary. In his dream, Voldemort had been thinking about the diary being destroyed, and he was furious about it. He was thinking that he was glad the other items were safe and that no one could get to them. What if…what if that meant that the significance of the objects wasn’t to unite them, but to destroy them? Harry had accidentally destroyed one of them in his second year of Hogwarts, and the rest… Dumbledore! That’s what he was up to, he was destroying them! The blackened hand that Dumbledore had suffered, it must have come about from trying to destroy these objects. He had taken to wearing a ring with a crack down the middle, as if something had broken it… and wasn’t one of the items a ring?

Hands shaking even more, Harry’s mind raced. Whenever Dumbledore had been absent from Hogwarts for a while, he must’ve been searching for these items, he imagined years of research were behind this. Dumbledore was probably at this very moment trying to track down these items and destroy them all. How many were left? The diary, Harry already knew was destroyed. The ring it appeared was already destroyed also. Harry glanced at the list. A locket… Harry’s eyes widened. A locket! He thought back to that day when they were busy tidying Grimmauld place and they had found a heavy locket that no one could open. Dumbledore looked at it with interest and took it away without telling anyone anything about it.

So that meant at least three objects were potentially gone! A cup remained, which Dumbledore now knew was in a Gringotts vault. Leaving just the diadem, the tiara thing. He wondered how Dumbledore would know where to find it, would it be like a needle in a haystack or did Dumbledore have knowledge that Harry was unaware of? But then, it came to him. It had been a while since this conversation had taken place, but Harry vividly remembered Dumbledore asking him with a serious look in his pale blue eyes whether he could think of somewhere Voldemort would hide something important to him. Harry had answered Hogwarts, and Dumbledore had been sceptical until Dobby of all people had mentioned the Room of Requirement and Dumbledore had run off immediately. That must mean that the last item, the diadem, must’ve been hidden in the Room of Requirement! It all made sense now. He bet Dumbledore was out searching right now for clues as to who’s Gringotts vault the final item was in. Unfortunately, even Dumbledore couldn’t just break into Gringotts, so Harry imagined it would take some serious research and planning to get into the vault of someone who was probably one of Voldemort’s closest Death Eaters.

Even so, it seemed like Dumbledore was edging closer and closer to defeating Voldemort, and Harry couldn’t help but feel a small flame of hope ignite inside him. It kept him going over the next few days, through the hushed and downcast Order meetings that usually brought the news of another important witch or wizard having been taken captive and tortured or murdered by Death Eaters. Through the tears at Bill’s funeral, which Harry was originally not allowed to attend, until he turned into his animagus form and refused to let them leave him behind. He sat on a gnarled tree branch and watched with anger and grief as Bill’s coffin was laid to rest in the gardens of the Burrow. Hermione created a beautiful archway covered in flowers to stand above the grave, with spells weaved through it to stop the flowers from ever wilting, or the grass to become overgrown.

Order members began visiting less and less, as the shock of Bill’s death began to recede and the grief sank to a dull pain inside Harry instead of a sharp stab every time he took a breath. He took to flying at night to escape from the world, forgetting his fears and his depression when he took to the skies in his raven animagus form. He felt free, out in the cold winter air with nothing but his own wings to keep him in the sky. The stars seemed to surround him, the trees and buildings below seeming insignificant in their tiny size. He was sure Sirius could tell he was out flying half the night instead of sleeping but he didn’t say anything, for which Harry was grateful.

As the days went by without any news from Dumbledore, and with more and more dark news of magical kidnappings and muggle tortures, Harry’s hope seemed to die. He didn’t know what to believe anymore, he was sick of living in this state of constant anxiety, not knowing what was
happening out there apart from death and destruction. Not even his friends at Hogwarts could help, Ron being withdrawn and depressed himself, and Hermione preoccupied with trying to help him. Harry couldn’t blame them for not answering when he called.

It was Sirius that pulled Harry out of his depression. Sirius, with his concerned smiles, his warm touch, the fire he ignited inside Harry just by being himself. Harry was more aware than ever that he loved Sirius with such a raw passion that it sometimes overwhelmed him. As time passed, they became closer physically again, desperate for each other’s touch after several weeks of abstinence. Most nights Harry writhed beneath Sirius’s touch, their bodies becoming one as they healed each other and became closer than ever before. Harry wasn’t sure he’d even be able to survive in the event of Sirius one day being cleared of his charges and being able to leave the house. What was his life even like before he started living here with Sirius? It was often difficult to remember. Separation did not seem like an option, now.

Reality came crashing back down around Harry with the arrival of Severus Snape on his doorstep. It seemed Dumbledore had advised the grouchy potions master not to disturb Harry with lessons for a few weeks to give him time to grieve, but now he was back with a vengeance. Harry sent Sirius upstairs and invited Snape reluctantly into the drawing room to continue their Occlumency lessons.

“I trust you’ve probably forgotten everything you learnt in our previous lesson, so let us assume that we are starting from square one,” Snape said snidely, looking at Harry as if he was a piece of dirt on the floor. Harry glared back, angry because he knew it was true. Occlumency had been far from his mind over the past few weeks, his mind far from empty. It was instead full of overwhelming thoughts of Bill, of the muggle tortures in the news, of his love for Sirius. This was all going to be an issue, his thoughts of Sirius especially. He gulped, trying desperately not to think about his relationship with Sirius, and in the process pushing it to the front of his mind.

Snape squared up in front of him, wand at the ready. Harry nervously placed his hand on his own wand in his pocket, willing to do anything to stop Snape from seeing anything he shouldn’t.

“Legilmens”, Snape spoke in his smooth, dangerous voice, black eyes piercing into Harry’s anxious green ones. Immediately Harry’s surroundings changed from the drawing room to the kitchen where he was sitting, being told that Bill had died. The scene changed, it was night, he was flying, he spotted a mouse running on the ground and swept into a dive, catching the mouse and swallowing it down in one gulp. Now he was back at Grimmauld place, and Sirius was standing in front of him, his trademark sexy smile on his face. They walked closer together, embracing, Sirius’ mouth getting closer and closer to his own…

“NO!” Harry shouted, feeling his wand in his hand, and before he knew it he’d cast a shield charm instinctively. Suddenly, it wasn’t his own memories he was seeing. A young boy with greasy black hair sat in the corner of a dank room as his parents fought, his father striking his mother in the face. Now, the boy was older, a teenager, Harry recognised the setting as a tree by the lake at Hogwarts. Two boys were ganging up on him, while others hung back, calling him ‘Snivellus’. Harry knew exactly who they were without having to hear their names. One looked eerily like him, except with hazel eyes instead of bright green. The other, a much younger version of his beloved Sirius.

Harry frowned as he saw them terrorising Snape, calling him names, hanging him upside down and making him show his underwear. They weren’t just pulling a harmless prank, this was bullying. He knew bullying when he saw it, having been the victim of it all his years before he went to Hogwarts and escaped his evil cousin and his friends. Harry gasped as his mother came to the rescue, then the anger hit as Snape called her a Mudblood. Harry began to shake, when suddenly he was pulled out of the memory and back into the real world, face to face with a livid Severus Snape. Harry opened his mouth to apologise, but he didn’t have time to get any words out before Snape’s fist connected with his jaw. Harry fell to the floor, too surprised to defend himself.
“These lessons are over, Potter,” Snape spat at him, stepping over him towards the door. Harry scrambled to his feet, but before he could even get out of the room he heard the front door slam shut, the portrait of Mrs Black screaming to life, Sirius’s steps immediately thundering down the stairs as he raced down to see what had happened. Harry stood by the bottom of the stairs in a daze, trying to process what the hell had just happened. Sirius quickly shut up the portrait of his mother before turning to Harry, eyes widening as he saw the blossoming bruise on his right eye.

“Harry, what the hell was that? What happened to your face?” Sirius asked quickly, walking nearer to Harry, who blinked and stepped backwards away from him. Sirius stopped, looking concerned. “Harry?” He asked tentatively, as Harry narrowed his eyes at him.

“I just saw an interesting memory from our beloved potions master,” Harry started, staring down Sirius. He could feel anger building inside him, he couldn’t control it, hearing glasses start to rattle in the cabinets next to him. “When he was at school, you…you and my dad….” Harry said, struggling to get the words out. “You bullied him. You made his life hell. Why? Why would you do that? I know he’s a slimy little rat but that’s no excuse.”

Sirius looked confused, and a little scared. “You’re angry about something I did at school? That was years ago Harry, I don’t understand. Why does it matter?”

“Why does it matter?” Harry said, his voice raising, “it matters because I thought you were a good person but apparently I was wrong! You’re nothing but a bully!”

“Don’t talk about things you don’t understand, Harry!” Sirius glared angrily at him, “You don’t know what he was like back then, he was hanging around with Death Eaters, he was— “

“It doesn’t matter what he was like! It doesn’t make any difference, you still bullied him! You were such a…”

“A what, Harry? Go on, say it!” Sirius goaded him, stepping into his personal space, their faces inches apart. Harry felt no desire to kiss the man, however. He only felt raw anger and disappointment.

“You were a dick! You were an arrogant dick! Merlin, I hate you!” Harry shouted, running past Sirius up the stairs to his old bedroom, the one he had occupied before he became close to Sirius. He slammed the door, cast as many locking charms as he knew on it and flung himself down on his bed, fuming. He distantly heard the stomping footsteps of Sirius walking past his room and up the stairs to his own bedroom on the floor above.

He couldn’t believe how arrogant and irritating his father and Sirius had been in school. Snape had always said it, and Harry had vehemently disagreed. After all, didn’t everyone always tell Harry how great his father was? And yet, it seemed that Snape was right all along. Harry would always be the first to admit that Snape was a deeply unpleasant person, but that didn’t give James and Sirius the right to treat him like that. Harry himself knew what it was like to be bullied like that, how it felt to have everyone hate him, and he wouldn’t wish it on anyone.

Harry knew Sirius hated Snape but he had no idea it went so far back, and the way he still spoke to Snape it was as if he hadn’t grown up at all. The scene they had made in the kitchen, the day Snape came to tell Harry about his Occlumency lessons, made so much more sense now. There was all that bad blood between them because of the actions of James and Sirius in school. Harry sighed in frustration.
They both stayed away from each other for the remainder of the day, Harry sneaking downstairs to the kitchen for some dinner when he was sure the coast was clear, running back upstairs with his food and eating it in his bedroom with the door locked again. He couldn’t believe Sirius had been such a bastard when he was at school. The way they had ganged up on Snape, called him names, it just hit so close to home. And Sirius didn’t seem to have any remorse, he was still the arrogant prick he had been as a teenager. Yes, he knew perfectly well that Snape had grown up to be a Death Eater and Sirius had every right to hate him, Harry hated him just as much himself. But it was so cruel, so close to what he had experienced himself that Harry just found himself unable to get over this at the moment.

His head pounding, Harry finally climbed wearily into bed, not even bothering to try to empty his mind. He knew perfectly well that it wasn’t going to work, not tonight. He fell into a fitful sleep, with vague dreams of conflict and anger, tossing and turning in his sheets. Suddenly, the dream turned into something else. It was vivid, clear, and he knew that he wasn’t in his own mind any more. Looking around, Harry saw that he was standing in the Department of Mysteries in the Ministry of Magic, the same place where he had been having his dreams. He was in the large hall that was full of glass balls, thousands of them on shelves around him. He looked to the ground and saw two figures huddled together, cowering beneath him and he pointed his wand in their direction.

Speaking in a high, cold voice, Harry spoke. “Crucio”, he said, a smile on his face, as he watched the girl scream in agony, writhing on the ground, the redheaded boy shouting in fear and anger, screaming her name, tears in his eyes. Harry laughed, turning his wand on the boy instead, enjoying the pain on his freckled face.

Harry suddenly sat up in bed, shaking, covered in a cold sweat. He scrambled out of bed, doubling over and retching, vomiting on the floor. He sank to his knees, unable to stand. Voldemort had Ron and Hermione at the Ministry of Magic, he was torturing them. He didn’t know why, or what he was going to do, but he automatically strode towards the wardrobe and threw on a pair of jeans and a t-shirt, and his trainers. He picked up his wand and strode towards the door, grabbing some muggle money as an afterthought, before running quietly down the stairs and towards the front door.

He had a vague plan to get the tube to the visitor’s entrance to the Ministry of Magic, he still remembered where it was from when he had visited for his trial. Waking Sirius was the last thing he wanted to do, there was no way he was getting him into such a dangerous situation. As an afterthought, he hastily scribbled a note and left it in the kitchen for Sirius to find in the morning. He would be long gone by then, and hopefully would’ve found Ron and Hermione. He didn’t have a plan further than that, but that wasn’t his priority at the moment. All he could think about was the fact that his two best friends were being tortured and he had to get there before Voldemort murdered them. There was a pounding in his head, his heart was racing, and his chest felt constricted as if he couldn’t breathe. Rational thought was impossible right now, Harry just tried to focus on getting where he needed to be, to save his friends.

Running down the street, Harry headed towards the nearest tube station, glad there weren’t many people around at this time of night. He got onto the next tube, sitting down and tapping his foot, unable to stop fidgeting. He couldn’t believe this was happening. Thank Merlin Snape had weakened his mind with his stupid Occlumency lessons or Harry would’ve never seen the vision, and then…well, that didn’t bear thinking about. He stood up, pacing restlessly up and down the tube car. The only other occupant of this carriage looked at him oddly, a drunk-looking young woman who was swigging from a bottle of vodka every now and then. Harry ignored her, sprinting from the tube the second it arrived at the correct station.

London had an eerie quality to it at night, it was strange seeing it when the streets weren’t packed with commuters and tourists. It felt like a ghost town, and the strange atmosphere only added to the tendrils of fear that were wrapping themselves around Harry’s chest as he tried to keep his breathing even. He raced down the dark streets, only briefly hesitating to make sure he didn’t run in the wrong direction. London could be confusing at the best of times and everything looked different in the dark. Before too long, however, he was running towards the telephone box that
was the visitor’s entrance to the Ministry of Magic. He got in and dialled the number 62442, easy
to remember because it spelled out the word magic.

“Welcome to the Ministry of Magic. Please state your name and business”. The cool female voice
spoke, unaware of Harry’s urgency.

“Harry Potter, I’m here to save my best friends!” Harry shouted angrily at the receiver, slamming
it down and anxiously waiting for the lift to move. “Come on, hurry up!” he shouted, turning at
the sound of something dropping from the telephone receiver. He picked up the badge it printed,
which read ‘Harry Potter – Rescue Mission’, and sighed. After what seemed an age, the telephone
box finally began to descend into the ground, at what felt to Harry like the slowest pace he had
ever moved.

The lift finally reached the Atrium and Harry sprinted out, towards the lifts that would take him to
the deepest depths of the Ministry of Magic. He crashed his way into the lift, slamming his finger
repeatedly into the number nine button until the doors closed and it began to move downwards,
Harry nervously aware of how loud the lift was. He was sure he should’ve seen a security guard
or something by now, which was rather ominous. It seemed Voldemort had effectively rid the
Ministry of anyone that would oppose him.

Finally, the lift reached floor number nine and he impatiently pushed out of the lift as soon as the
doors opened, running down the corridor past the flickering torches towards the black door,
feeling as if he was back in his dream. It felt like he had been here so many times before, but in
reality he had never stepped through that door. Now, the time had come.

Harry pushed the door and it opened easily, just as it had in his dream. Running forwards, he saw
that he was in the round room full of doors, and sprinted forwards through the door directly in
front of him, coming into the room that glittered. It was full of a mechanical ticking noise, and he
realised as he ran through that there were thousands of clocks that were shining all over the room.
He didn’t have time to remark on the strangeness as he reached the end of the long room and
encountered another door. Luckily, this one opened as easily as the first, just as it had in his
dream. It really shouldn’t be this easy for someone to just walk into the Department of Mysteries,
Harry thought to himself. Something here was not right. He walked through the door, and his eyes
widened.

This was it. The room where Voldemort had Ron and Hermione. The ceiling was as high as a
church, and wall to ceiling all around the room were hundreds of shelves full of thousands and
thousands of small glass balls, each with a small inscription underneath. Harry ran into the room,
remembering that Voldemort had been near row number 97. He rushed forwards, getting closer
and closer, number 40, number 50, he couldn’t see anything yet. 94, 95, 96…97. He was here, but
no one else was. There was no sign of a struggle, nothing to suggest anyone had been there. This
aisle looked just like the rest of them, not a single mark was visible on the dusty floor. Looking
around in confusion for clues, one of the inscriptions on the shelf caught his eye.

“My name…” Harry murmured, stepping forwards to read the whole inscription. ‘SPT to
APWBD. Dark Lord and (??) Harry Potter’. He had no idea what that meant, but he was intrigued.
Would anything terrible happen if he picked up the glass ball? Carefully, Harry raised his hand
upwards and lightly touched the sphere with the tips of his fingers. When nothing happened, he
threw caution to the wind and picked up the glass ball, looking interestingly at it. It felt warm to the
touch, as though it had been sitting in the sun, and it almost seemed to glow from within. He was
just about to pocket it and continue on with his quest to find Ron and Hermione when he heard
the swish of a cloak behind him and a silky voice spoke his name.

“Ah, Harry Potter, you made it just in time. It turns out the Dark Lord was correct, you really are
that naïve,” the voice of Lucius Malfoy spoke smugly from behind an elaborate Death Eater’s
mask. He was standing at the end of the row of spheres, blocking Harry’s path with several other
masked and cloaked figures. Harry counted quickly, it seemed there were at least nine or ten of them. He gulped, trying to work out his options and drew a blank. His only option was to stall for time until an opportunity for escape became apparent.

“What do you mean?” Harry asked quickly, although he already had an idea. How could he have been so stupid? Dumbledore had told him, and Snape had told him that Voldemort could put thoughts in Harry’s mind that weren’t his own. But when it happened, he had been so quick to become the hero and save his friends that he hadn’t thought twice about whether the vision had been real or not. Why would Voldemort have had Ron and Hermione in the Department of Mysteries anyway? How would he have abducted them out of Hogwarts? It made no sense, and Harry knew it. He gulped, trying to assess the situation. If Voldemort had wanted to lure him here, but he hasn’t here himself, then what did he want? If he wanted to kill him then he wouldn’t have gone to the trouble of luring Harry into the bowels of the Ministry of Magic with all of his best Death Eaters. Lucius Malfoy’s irritating voice interrupted his panicked thoughts.

“I think you know what I mean, Potter,” Lucius spoke smoothly, and Harry could almost hear the smirk on his face beneath that stupid mask. “Our Dark Lord needed you here, so he lured you with a vision of your stupid little friends being tortured. Some of us were sceptical that you would manage to get here, but of course the Dark Lord knows you well. You would do anything, no matter how stupid or impossible, to run to the rescue of your little friends. How touching,” Lucius said, stalking towards Harry. He removed the mask from his face, in a move that would have been a lot more dramatic if Harry didn’t already know exactly who he was. The other Death Eaters followed suit and Harry glanced at them, recognising Bellatrix Lestrange amongst the rabble of somewhat unpleasant looking robed figures surrounding him.

“Well, what does Voldemort want with me?” Harry asked, smiling when the Death Eaters all responded with anger to the name of their master being so blatantly spoken in front of them. It probably wasn’t a good idea to antagonise a bunch of Death Eaters when you were outnumbered ten to one, but at this point Harry didn’t much care. It seemed there was almost no way he was going to survive this encounter anyway.

“How dare you speak his name?” Bellatrix screeched at Harry, sounding much like a tortured cat. It reminded Harry somewhat of the portrait of Mrs Black back at Grimmauld place. It certainly seemed that Bellatrix had inherited the crazy Black family genes.

“Calm down, Bellatrix,” Lucius said quietly, causing her face to scrunch up with rage. Harry could tell he was enjoying being in charge here, it sickened him. “Just hand over the prophecy, Potter, and you won’t even get hurt.” Harry looked into Lucius’s silver eyes, his own eyes narrowing slightly. He didn’t care for Lucius’s bullshit lies, of course they would hurt him. He was more interested in what Lucius had called the little glass sphere.

“How dare you speak his name?” Bellatrix screeched at Harry, sounding much like a tortured cat. It reminded Harry somewhat of the portrait of Mrs Black back at Grimmauld place. It certainly seemed that Bellatrix had inherited the crazy Black family genes.

“Hand over the what?”

“He doesn’t know what it is!” Bellatrix cackled loudly, and Harry was even more confused. This little glass ball was a prophecy? What did that even mean?

“My, my, Potter, it seems Dumbledore really hasn’t told you anything. How touching, did he want to protect you? Or does he really not care at all?” Lucius smiled coldly, obviously trying to goad Harry into wanting answers. Annoyingly, it was working.

“Tell me what you mean, or I’ll smash it,” Harry said, and that wiped the smirk off of Malfoy’s face.

“You dare, Potter…” Bellatrix whispered, several of the other Death Eaters shifting nervously.
Excellent, Harry thought, I have their attention now.

“You will do no such thing, Potter, or I will kill you right here, right now. Hand it over.”


Lucius looked at him incredulously. “Dumbledore really didn’t tell you? Did you never wonder how you got that scar, what happened to your parents all those years ago?”

Harry gaped at him, not even thinking about stalling anymore. There was a prophecy hidden deep in the depths of the Ministry of Magic that held the answers to why Voldemort had tried to kill him? And Dumbledore knew about it? That part didn’t surprise Harry, however. Dumbledore never told him anything. He scowled at Lucius. “Just tell me what the prophecy is about, Malfoy. Unless you don’t know either? I bet you’re just bluffing so that I hand it over, trying to make me think you know all the answers. If Voldemort already knows what it says, then why does he want it so much?” Harry smirked, seeing the laughter on Lucius’s face quickly disappear.

“Enough games, Potter. Hand it over, now,” Lucius hissed, stalking closer to Harry until he had his wand gently resting directly on Harry’s scar. He held out his hand impatiently, glaring into Harry’s eyes as he waited for him to hand over the precious glass sphere. Harry gulped, unwilling to hand over the prophecy now that he knew what answers it held. Unless Lucius was lying about the whole thing, but Harry had a strange feeling that it was the truth. The inscription had said something about the Dark Lord and Harry Potter, hadn’t it? This prophecy could tell him why his parents died on Halloween all those years ago. Why had Voldemort chosen them? Why had they tried to kill him, an innocent baby? He just had to find a way to get away from here, away from the Death Eaters so he could listen to it. Easier said than done.

Harry gritted his teeth, and prepared to do something extremely stupid. Maybe if he created a distraction… A distraction that didn’t end in Lucius shooting a killing curse directly into his head, anyway. The main weapon he had at his disposal was the thousands of shelves all around them. If he could just break some of them down… He drew in a deep breath, discreetly pointing his wand at the nearest shelf of prophecies and shouted with as much force as he could muster “REDUCTO!”

The shelving smashed into millions of pieces, glass balls fell to the ground all around him and shattered, spraying broken glass in every direction. Harry immediately sprinted off in the opposite direction from the Death Eaters while they shielded their faces from shards of glass and recovered from the shock. He had a brief moment to notice the hundreds of pale figures of Seers rising from the glass and sombrely reciting their prophecies, before he reached the end of the aisle and turned, running as fast as he could towards the door. He could hear footsteps behind him, but luckily his distraction had given him the few seconds he needed to pull into the lead.

Harry sprinted back the way he had entered, the aisle numbers getting closer and closer to number one as he reached the door. If he could just get back out of the Department of Mysteries and into the Atrium where he had arrived…but what exactly did he plan to do after that? There was no way he could outrun a mob of ten or more Death Eaters, all of whom needed the prophecy from him to placate their Lord. ‘I’ll cross that bridge when I come to it’, Harry thought grimly to himself, focusing on the door that he was rapidly approaching. He shoved it open and fell through, slamming it shut behind him with as much force as he could muster. The door almost opened as the heavy thuds of angry Death Eaters pounded into it from the other side, but Harry just about managed to hold on long enough to remember the locking charm Hermione had taught him.

“Colloportus!” He shouted, pointing his wand at the door and hoping it would hold. He gingerly let go, and when the door didn’t immediately burst inwards he quickly turned and ran through the room that was full of Time. Clocks of all shapes and sizes glittered and ticked all around him, and
he spied an entire cabinet full of Time Turners like the one Hermione had been entrusted in their third year at Hogwarts. Harry didn’t have time to stop and stare at the wonders that this room held, although he halted slightly as the sound of thousands of clocks all chiming at once suddenly filled the room. Catching his breath, he quickly reached the other end of the Time room just as the Death Eaters managed to slam their way into the room from the other side.

Emerging into the dark, circular room he had entered through, Harry quickly closed the door behind him and immediately regretted it as the light shut out and a distant rumbling started to sound around him. The doors all around the room began spinning around, or was it the floor that was spinning? Harry looked around him in confusion, feeling disorientated, and watched the doors all slowing down and coming to a stop. The building obviously wanted to confuse him, and it was doing a very good job of it. Harry sighed and jogged towards the nearest door, hoping to Merlin that he’d open up the door he’d just left that the Death Eaters were running towards. He eased the door open with trepidation and looked in. It wasn’t the Time room, but it wasn’t the way out either. As he was about to close the door and try again, he suddenly heard the unmistakeable sound of Bellatrix screeching behind him as the Death Eaters entered the round room, and he had no choice but to sprint forwards into the room ahead of him to escape being captured.

The floor immediately disappeared beneath him, Harry tumbled down countless steps all the way down to the bottom of what appeared to be an amphitheatre of sorts, as he looked around blearily from his position on the floor. Stone steps rose all around him, leading down towards a raised platform that he had rolled next to. Harry stood shakily to his feet, automatically patting his pocket and finding the prophecy miraculously intact. He turned to look closer at the platform behind him, and saw an old, crumbling archway with a black veil hanging from it. The veil softly moved as if in a breeze, although there was no wind whatsoever in that strange stone room. As Harry inched nearer to the dais, he could swear he heard voices whispering behind the veil. Quickly running around to the other side, Harry expected to see someone hiding but there was no one there, just the other side of the eerie black veil, softly blowing in the imaginary wind. Something about it drew him in, he moved forwards in an almost trance-like state as he neared the veil.

A loud cackle from behind him pulled Harry out of his thoughts, jolting back into the real world. There was something strange about that veil, but he did not have the time to dwell on it at the moment. Death Eaters were descending on him from all angles, a quick count told Harry there were thirteen of them in total. He recognised Lucius and Bellatrix of course, and one or two others that he’d seen photos of after the mass breakout from Azkaban. Dolohov, Mulciber, and others that Harry was fairly certain were parents of Hogwarts students. Crabbe and Goyle were there, looking just as stupid as their sons frequently did, Nott, and the unsavoury Macnair that had beheaded Buckbeak back in third year.

Harry gulped, looking around himself in trepidation. This was it, he was trapped in this stone room, which might as well be his coffin, outnumbered thirteen to one. He held the prophecy in his trembling hand, gazing up at the smug Lucius Malfoy who stood nearest to him, Bellatrix one step behind him to his right, a crazed expression of joy and exhilaration on her once beautiful face.

“Give it up, Potter. The game is over, you’ve lost. Hand me the prophecy and you won’t get hurt.” Malfoy spoke calmly, but there was anger behind his eyes. Good, Harry thought to himself. At least I made him angry, if I could do nothing else. He knew, of course, that Lucius Malfoy would never let him go unharmed. The man’s lies were useless. All Harry knew was that the prophecy was somehow needed by Voldemort, and if he couldn’t get out of this situation alive then he was going to die destroying the prophecy so no one could hear it. How, was the only question remaining. If he just smashed it right now, in front of all the Death Eaters, then they would all hear the prophecy as the Seer’s ghostly form rose out of the glass sphere and recited their prophetic words, and then he would die for nothing.

“It seems Potter is not going to play nicely,” Malfoy sneered. “Bellatrix, bring him here. Carefully,” he emphasised, and Bellatrix stalked towards Harry with a spring in her step. She grabbed him forcefully by the arm, dragging him forwards towards Lucius Malfoy, who looked at him with derision. Sharp, unruly nails dug into Harry’s arm as Bellatrix threw him to the ground, laughing maniacally as Lucius growled at her, “I said carefully!”
Harry lay on the ground, winded, waiting for death to come to him, when a sudden bang at the top of the room made him scramble upwards to see what was happening. All of the Death Eaters had turned to look upwards at the same time, giving Harry time to stagger to his feet and carefully place the prophecy back in his pocket. His mouth opened in shock as he saw what must’ve been a dream. Sirius burst into the room, closely followed by Remus, Tonks, Kingsley and Mad Eye Moody. Harry gazed at Sirius, his heart feeling like it could burst as he saw the fury on the older man’s face. Their eyes sought each other out across the room, and Harry tried to silently apologise as best he could. The Order were only here because he was stupid enough to have fallen for Voldemort’s tricks, and if anyone died at the hands of the Death Eaters tonight it would be entirely his fault.

Harry had the good sense to duck just as all hell broke loose. Sirius fired the first spell, shooting directly at Bellatrix who dodged it and laughed maniacally, pulling her own wand free and shooting emerald green spells at him, which Harry knew must be the killing curse. Everyone joined in at this point, the Order outnumbered but fighting hard nonetheless. A stunning spell missed Harry by inches as he ran forwards, determined to join in the fight. Running up several steps, Harry aimed an expelliarmus at a masked Death Eater who was busy duelling Mad Eye Moody. Wand flying from his hand, the Death Eater turned in frustration, giving Moody an opening to stun him straight in the face. Dodging the unconscious body that toppled past him, Harry turned and narrowly missed being hit by Bellatrix as she ran towards Sirius, seemingly determined to kill him.

Harry angrily shot several spells at her in quick succession, however none of them hit their mark through the mass of people, and the dust that was in the air. A purple spell suddenly came right at Harry who cast a hasty Protego just in time, the spell still hitting him and knocking him to the ground. The shield charm luckily took the brunt of it, but he felt like it had bruised several of his ribs. Looking around, Harry saw Kingsley Shacklebolt furiously duelling with three unknown Death Eaters, somehow managing to hold them all off. It would’ve been fascinating to watch, however some kind of explosive spell hit the ground inches from Harry’s feet and he had to duck quickly to avoid being hit in the face with the flying shards of stone. One of the pieces hit the back of his head, and Harry gingerly touched it to see the damage. It was tender, and as he pulled his hand away he saw blood.

Harry didn’t have time to feel the pain, within moments he was up and running along the stone step towards Tonks who was being attacked by two Death Eaters, one of whom appeared to be the executioner Macnair. Before Harry could get there, Tonks was knocked unconscious and fell to the ground, rolling down the steps and coming to a stop in a heap next to the stone dais. Harry’s heart skipped a beat and he hoped to god that she was just knocked out. A quick glance around told Harry that there were approximately four or five Death Eaters out of action, but so far all members of the Order were up and fighting still, apart from Tonks. Remus was duelling with Lucius Malfoy, a large open wound on his face dripping blood as he shot curses at Malfoy with a furious gleam in his eye. Sirius was advancing on Dolohov, and Harry saw a well-timed Stupefy hit the Death Eater square in the chest, knocking him out cold.

Sirius saw Harry and ran over to him, grabbing him by the head and dragging them to the ground quickly to duck a killing curse aimed at them by the ever present Bellatrix.

“Harry!” Sirius panted, pulling him into a hug as they briefly hid on the ground behind the unconscious bodies of a couple of Death Eaters. “Thank Merlin you’re ok. You need to get out of here,” he said loudly over the sounds of battle around them.

“No way!” Harry replied angrily, “it’s my fault everyone is here risking their lives! I’m not going to run away and hide like a child, I’m going to stay and fight!”
He looked fiercely into Sirius’s eyes, challenging him to disagree. There was no way he was running away like a coward while other people fought for him. Sirius closed his eyes and sighed heavily, he already knew it was a lost cause trying to get Harry to leave. Without a second glance at who could be watching, Sirius pulled Harry into a kiss, wrapping his battle-stained hands around his face and gazing into his eyes. “Be careful,” Sirius whispered. Harry flushed and smiled, then cried out as a spell hit the ground inches from where his hand had just been. The sweet moment over, they both jumped to their feet and re-joined the fray.

Harry was beginning to tire, but adrenaline kept his body moving. He shot spell after spell at the Death Eaters, hitting a couple more of them with stunners, adding to the pile of unconscious Death Eaters on the floor. He looked around and saw Moody crawling along the ground, his head bleeding and his eye missing. Reaching the lifeless form of Tonks, he began trying to revive her.

As Lucius Malfoy advanced on Kingsley and Remus, Harry ran forwards to help when he tripped, his foot catching on the outspread arm of Macnair, who was lying unconscious or dead. Harry toppled and fell down the steps, hearing a sickening crunch underneath him as he fell. It became apparent that he hadn’t broken a body part when the pale ghostly form of a young woman rose from the shattered remains of the prophecy and began speaking in a quiet voice that was impossible to hear above the racket that everyone was making. Harry ground his teeth in frustration that he wouldn’t ever know what the prophecy had said, although at least he could be sure that Voldemort wouldn’t hear it either.

Scrambling to his feet, Harry idly noticed that his leg was pouring blood where the prophecy had shattered beneath him and cut into his skin. He ran painfully, putting weight on his good leg, aiming spells towards Lucius Malfoy who dodged them all, but opened himself to get hit by a well-placed blasting spell by Remus. Malfoy fell backwards, cracking his head on the stone and shouting out in pain. Harry turned and saw Bellatrix and Sirius duelling on the dais in the centre of the room, and he got a bad feeling deep in his gut. There was something creepily wrong with that veil.

Harry saw Sirius duck Bellatrix’s jet of red light, laughing at her. “You can do better than that!” he shouted, goading her. The second spell hit him directly in the chest, and time seemed to stand still. Harry was running down the steps but he didn’t remember deciding to move. Sirius seemed to fall backwards in slow motion, the laughter on his face turning to a look of fear and confusion as he staggered backwards towards the eerie black veil behind him. Harry saw the triumphant expression on Bellatrix’s face as she screamed with laughter, eyes alight with crazed joy. The room seemed deadly silent, apart from the strange whispering voices coming from behind the veil, they seemed louder than before as though calling Sirius to join them. Harry suddenly realised what the veil was. They were in the chamber of Death.

Chapter End Notes

Don’t hate me too much! Stay tuned for the final chapter in the next few days or so, and please let me know what you think in the comments :)
Harry sprinted forwards, jumping the last few steps and launching upwards onto the dais in the middle of the room, paying no attention to the fighting all around him, or to the fact that Bellatrix was still standing on the platform, wand pointed directly at Sirius’s chest. He dived towards Sirius, and with all of his strength slammed the two of them down on to the ground. The sounds of the battle around him faded into insignificance. Sitting on top of Sirius’s lifeless body, Harry shook him, but he was unresponsive.

“SIRIUS!” Harry shouted, distantly hearing laughter in the background from Bellatrix but he ignored everything around him. His breath caught in his throat, lungs burning, he couldn’t breathe. A cold sweat dripped down his forehead and into his eyes, Harry absentmindedly wiping it away so he could see Sirius’s face. Harry eventually remembered that he knew how to wake up someone who had been stunned, and he took out his wand, his hand trembling badly. He tried his best to calm himself, and pointed his wand at Sirius, terrified that it wouldn’t work, that Bellatrix had hit Sirius with some kind of dark magic that he wouldn’t recover from. “Enervate,” he said shakily, distractedly wiping away the tears that were blurring his vision. Sirius blinked groggily, confusion written on his face as he opened his eyes properly and focused on Harry who was still sitting on top of him. Harry let out a sob and buried his face in Sirius’s chest.

“Oh Merlin, Sirius, you’re okay, you’re okay,” Harry whispered, trying to control his breathing as he felt his heart still hammering in his chest. For a moment there, he had thought that he had lost Sirius. Harry just knew that if Sirius had stumbled backwards through the ominous veil, he wouldn’t have appeared on the other side. The dead were waiting in there, somehow, and they would’ve taken him. The thought made Harry feel sick to his stomach, and he became suddenly aware of how much he was shaking. Harry couldn’t live without Sirius, that much was painfully obvious to him.

“What the hell happened? Harry? Why are you on top of me?” Sirius asked gruffly, gently raising a hand and burying it in Harry’s hair to help calm him down. Harry sniffed and smiled at him. He was about to explain about the veil, when suddenly a hand reached down and grabbed him by the scruff of his neck, pulling him off of Sirius. Sharp claw-like nails dug into him, and he knew it was Bellatrix. She hung onto his neck, holding him up next to her like a puppet and laughing with maniacal glee.

“Look at that! Little hero Potter saves the day again. Well, I might not have killed your pathetic godfather but now I have you, and I’m going to call my Master so he can come and deal with you himself, I know he’ll be delighted!” Bellatrix giggled madly, throwing Harry to the ground and holding him down with her foot. The spiked heel dug into his chest and Harry wriggled uncomfortably, trying to get loose. Swiftly casting a petrificus totalus on Harry to stop him struggling, Bellatrix then rolled up her sleeve, clearly about to touch her Dark Mark to summon Voldemort.

“NO!” Harry wanted to shout, but he couldn’t move. Luckily, Sirius had now had time to regain his senses and stagger to his feet, and he tackled Bellatrix to the ground before she could get to her Dark Mark. Screaming in anger, she managed to wriggle out from underneath him and pulled out her wand, and before Harry had time to process what had happened the two of them were duelling again. Harry wanted to scream at Sirius to get away from the veil, he hadn’t had a chance to tell Sirius how dangerous it was. The two of them danced around the stone archway, shooting spells at each other and expertly dodging the other’s attacks. Sirius seemed to be getting the upper hand, until suddenly Bellatrix hit him with a disarming spell and his wand soared out of his hand and through the air, clattering down to the ground next to Harry’s head. If he could only move… but try as he might, there was nothing Harry could do to break the full body bind.
Just as Bellatrix was advancing upon a chalky faced, unarmed Sirius, there was a bang at the top of the steps as someone smashed their way into the room. Harry couldn’t turn his head to see, but luckily Bellatrix shouted it out for everyone to hear.

“Severus Snape! What time do you call this? We almost thought you weren’t going to bother showing your face,” she shouted at him, derision on her face. “The Dark Lord is going to be very interested to hear how you didn’t care to join us for his most important task.”

“You know full well of my instructions, Bellatrix, I’m not to take sides unless absolutely necessary.” Snape looked at her with utter contempt. “Did you get it? Where is the prophecy?” He asked icily, stalking down the steps towards the dais where Bellatrix was still standing with her wand pointed at Sirius’s chest, breathing heavily.

“The Potter boy has it,” she said, gesturing towards where Harry lay immobilised on the ground at the other side of the dais. “Check his pockets, it’s in there.”

“So you didn’t even go to the trouble of removing the prophecy from Potter’s person? My my, we are getting lazy,” Severus smirked, reaching the bottom of the steps and climbing up onto the dais. Harry held his breath, waiting for the unwanted touch of Snape searching him for the prophecy that wasn’t there. However, the search never came. Snape stood next to him, facing towards Bellatrix and Sirius. Raising his wand, the potions master pointed it in the direction of Sirius and Bellatrix, and Harry felt sick to his stomach. Snape had always hated Sirius, and now was his chance to end it once and for all. How could Harry have thought that Snape would’ve just let Bellatrix deal with him by herself?

Their stand-off had garnered the attention of the other people in the room. Lucius was still duelling with Remus, however Moody had managed to revive Tonks and the two were recuperating, watching the scene unfold with trepidation but not wanting to intervene. The remaining Death Eaters were all out for the count, and Kingsley was standing watching Snape with an inscrutable expression on his face. With a glance towards Harry, he silently cast the counter to the full body bind, and Harry felt the feeling return to his limbs. Trying not to draw attention to himself, Harry slowly turned his head to the side to look at Sirius and Bellatrix, wishing there was something he could do. Harry couldn’t move without the risk of Sirius or himself getting killed.

“What are you doing?” Bellatrix asked Snape, a sneer on her face, “Black is mine to kill. Get the prophecy!” she screeched, but Snape just walked closer to them. As he drew nearer, Harry could swear that it wasn’t Sirius he was pointing his wand at… Bellatrix seemed to come to the same conclusion, turning to point her wand at Snape instead of Sirius but it was too late. Snape’s spell hit her in the chest and she fell backwards this time it was her falling towards the black veil instead of Sirius and there was no one there to stop it. She disappeared backwards through the archway, an expression of disbelieving horror on her face, and she did not reappear on the other side. The strange whispers became louder for a moment, and then quieted down again until they were indecipherable from the background noise. After a brief moment of shock as Voldemort’s best lieutenant died, Harry came to his senses and rolled over, grabbing Sirius’s wand, and throwing it to the older wizard who caught it expertly.

Harry scrambled to his feet, breathing heavily and trying to process what had just happened. If he ever needed definitive proof that Snape was on their side, that was it. He had just killed Bellatrix in front of all of the remaining Death Eaters, passing up the perfect opportunity to kill Sirius. Harry almost felt guilty about all the hate he felt towards Snape, but then he remembered what a complete arse the man was and he felt better. No matter what his allegiance was, the man was a bastard and that was that. He did still feel waves of gratitude towards Snape for saving Sirius, however. Sirius had been defenceless at Bellatrix’s mercy and Snape had come to the rescue, begrudgingly or not.
As Harry got his bearings, he heard another noise from the top of the room. Who could it be this time, he asked himself, looking up towards the door and gasping as he saw Dumbledore striding purposefully down the stone steps towards the members of the Order. He had a fire burning in his pale blue eyes, and he looked furiously around at the scene in front of him. He scanned the room and Harry saw the glint in his eye as he saw that Harry and all of the Order members appeared to be alive and intact.

All of the Death Eaters apart from Lucius Malfoy were unconscious or dead, all lying on the floor around the room. Lucius Malfoy was trying desperately to hold off Kingsley Shacklebolt and Remus Lupin, while Moody sat with a frail Tonks who looked disorientated from her fall. As Harry looked on, Moody stood up and focused his wand on Malfoy as well, and Sirius strode forwards from his place next to Harry to join in, followed by Snape. Lucius looked at the Order members surrounding him, saw Dumbledore silently watching from the side, and scowled in defeat.

Dropping his wand to the ground, Malfoy made as if to raise his arms in surrender. However, before anyone had the chance to stop him, he yanked back the sleeve of his left arm and pressed his fingertip to his jet black Dark Mark, summoning Lord Voldemort. There was a look of sick satisfaction on his face as he watched the horror appear on the faces of the Order. Someone cried out in rage, Harry wasn’t sure who, and several stunning spells hit Malfoy at once. He went down with a cruel grin on his face, and the Order all turned to each other with pale expressions on their faces. They outnumbered Voldemort massively, however most of them were injured and none of them were any match for the Dark Lord himself. None save perhaps Dumbledore.

Kingsley quickly hastened to tell Dumbledore in on what had happened, Dumbledore’s expression grim as he listened. Harry listened intently, glad no one seemed to be telling Dumbledore why they were all here in the first place. When the time was right, he would mention how it was his fault they had all come to the Ministry to be ambushed by Death Eaters. That moment could wait forever if he had anything to do with it. When Kingsley was finished explaining, Dumbledore sent him and the other Order members to collect together all of the Death Eaters and chain them, so that they could not intervene should they awake. Harry was about to lend a hand, but Dumbledore seemed to have other ideas.

“With me, please, Harry,” Dumbledore said calmly, and walked briskly up the steps. Harry looked anxiously at Sirius, who smiled gently at him, but the smile didn’t quite reach his eyes. He looked suspiciously at Dumbledore’s retreating form, seemingly unwilling to have Harry taken out of his sight. Harry had no option but to follow Dumbledore and see what he wanted. He had questions that needed answering anyway, although he doubted that he would actually get any solid answers. They strode quickly through the Time chamber, through the circle room full of doors and back into the corridor that led to the lift. It seemed a lifetime ago that Harry had run down here, looking to save Ron and Hermione. He cringed again at how stupid he had been to believe the vision Voldemort had planted in his mind.

The lift clanged and clattered as it brought them back up from the depths of the Ministry and they emerged into the sudden brightness of the atrium. Dumbledore led Harry over to stand next to the fountain of magical brethren in the centre of the room, and turned to him with a serious expression on his face.

“Harry,” he began wearily, for once seeming old and tired as if he had nothing more to give. “There is a lot you don’t know, that you deserve to be told. Let us sit.” They both sat down on a bench next to the fountain, and Dumbledore began to speak. “We don’t have much time, Voldemort is on his way as we speak, so please try not to interrupt if possible. I will tell you everything, as much as I can.” Harry nodded, unable to speak even if he’d wanted to. There was a lump in his throat, and his chest felt constricted. He had a feeling this was going to be the most important conversation of his life.

“As I’m sure you know; Voldemort only fears one thing. Death. His fear of death is what has
shaped his life and made him become the twisted, evil shell of a man that he is today, barely human, yet hanging on to life. To him, as long as he isn’t dead, it’s all worth it. He has no feelings of love or compassion, only a need to cling on to life no matter the cost. It was because of this that Tom Riddle, as he was known back in his early days, decided to take the first horrific step towards immortality.” Harry gasped slightly, but he didn’t interrupt, he was too interested in Dumbledore’s words. So there really was a way to prevent death, and Voldemort had discovered it? A chill ran down Harry’s spine as he considered the horrific, unnatural methods the dark wizard must’ve used.

“I’m sad to say that it was deep in the depths of the Restricted section of Hogwarts library that Riddle found the answers he had been seeking. Those books have long since been confiscated by myself, however it was too little too late. Riddle learnt of the existence of horcruxes. To create a horcrux is to tie your soul to life, but at a terrible cost. You choose an object, usually of significant sentimental value to yourself, and you extract a piece of your soul, sending it to reside inside this object. While the piece of soul lives inside the object, no matter what happens to your body, your soul lives on, and certain magical rituals can be made to bring your body back to life using the piece soul.

“To split your soul is a dreadful, unnatural thing to do. The only way to split your soul is to commit the most terrible crime; to commit murder. The act of murder tears the soul in two, and some evil, twisted magic is used to move the broken piece of soul into the object of your choosing.” Harry’s breath quickened as he listened to the horrible tale. He could tell where this was going, he knew that Dumbledore had been destroying several objects. So did that mean…

“He split his soul more than once?” Harry asked with horror, then realised he wasn’t supposed to interrupt and fell quiet. Dumbledore nodded grimly at him.

“That is correct, Harry. Believing it to be a magical number, Riddle was obsessed with the number seven. He felt that to split his soul into seven pieces, creating six horcruxes, was the ultimate way to achieve immortality. The diary, the locket, the ring, the diadem, the cup, and I am almost certain that the last is his snake, Nagini. If one of his horcruxes were to be destroyed, no matter, he would still be perfectly fine. He did not realise just how much of his humanity he would lose on the way to achieving this terrible goal, however. You saw him, before he took your blood to restore his body in your fourth year at Hogwarts. How he could believe that to exist like that was better than death, you and I will never be able to understand. Every time he split his soul, he made himself less humane, he weakened his soul beyond repair.

“The night Voldemort tried to kill you, Harry, that was when it all went wrong for him. His soul already weakened, when he committed the horrific act of trying to kill an innocent child, his soul was shattered. A shard of his soul escaped from the whole, and latched onto the only other living body in the area. You, Harry,” Dumbledore said softly, and dark spots seemed to appear in Harry’s vision. His heart raced as he tried desperately to understand. There was a piece of Voldemort’s soul inside him, this was why he had always had a weird connection to Voldemort’s mind. He felt sick, unclean. The visions, the flashes of Voldemort’s emotions. It was all because of that shard of soul inside him. He felt violated, physically sick.

“How do you destroy them? The horcruxes,” Harry asked faintly. He had an idea, but he needed to know. He needed this piece of Voldemort out of him. Dumbledore looked at Harry with a pained expression.

“To kill a horcrux you must completely destroy the vessel in which the soul resides. There are few ways to do this, because most things can be repaired with magic. Some things, however cannot be repaired. Basilisk venom, for example, is so destructive— “

“The diary!” Harry interrupted, suddenly realising, “it was a horcrux! I destroyed it by stabbing it with a basilisk fang!”
“That is correct, Harry,” Dumbledore spoke softly. “The only cure for basilisk venom is phoenix tears, and as they are so rare, it is the perfect weapon with which to kill a horcrux.”

“So is that how you killed the other horcruxes? With basilisk venom?”

“In a way. The sword of Gryffindor, which you so bravely pulled from the sorting hat and used to stab the basilisk to death. It is Goblin made, and therefore imbibes that which makes it stronger. When you used it to kill the basilisk, it imbibed the venom of the basilisk, and now, it has the power to destroy horcruxes.”

Shocked, Harry let that information sink in. He had had no idea when he was twelve just how important that battle in the Chamber of Secrets had been. If he had never gone down into the Chamber of Secrets to save Ginny Weasley back when he was in his second year, then they wouldn’t have had an extremely powerful horcrux killing weapon. It was strange how the world worked.

“As bringing the sword of Gryffindor here was impossible, I took the liberty of extracting some fangs from our old basilisk friend, just in case. I feel that you should take a couple of these, Harry.”

Dumbledore reached into his robes, and pulled out two giant fangs from his pocket. Harry gaped at them in shock. Dumbledore had been walking around with basilisk fangs in his robes, just in case? And what exactly was Dumbledore proposing Harry did with them? “Me? Why do I need them?” he asked, taking them with a shaking hand. “If what you say is true, and I must die…”

“I think it would be beneficial to you. Help a tired old man out and assuage my fears?”

Harry sighed and placed the fangs carefully in his pocket. As usual, he was sure Dumbledore knew something he was not letting onto, however Harry decided to let it go for now. With a deep, shaky breath, Harry tried to compose himself. There was an important question he still needed to ask Dumbledore.

“The prophecy…” he whispered softly. “You know what it says, don’t you? You know why he tried to kill me in when I was a baby.”

Dumbledore looked at Harry over his half-moon spectacles, his eyes moist with unshed tears. “Yes. The prophecy was made to me by Professor Trelawney, on the day I interviewed her for her position at Hogwarts.”

“Trelawney?” Harry asked, incredulous. “You mean she actually made a real prediction?” Harry asked, amazed and briefly distracted.

“She did,” Dumbledore smiled briefly. “One of only two real predictions she appears to have made in her lifetime. The second, you witnessed yourself at school, when she predicted the escape of Peter Pettigrew.” Harry screwed his nose up at that, not willing to remember the moments that led to Sirius being cooped up in Grimmauld place as a dangerous escaped criminal when he could’ve been a free man if Pettigrew hadn’t escaped back to his master.
“Can you tell me the prophecy?” Harry asked quietly, after a brief pause. He had to know. Dumbledore closed his eyes fleetingly, and then he fixed his pale blue stare on Harry once more.

“The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches… born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies… and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not… and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives… the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies…”

The silence in the Atrium was absolute. Harry sat completely still, trying to work out the words that Dumbledore had spoken. Presumably, he was the baby born as the seventh month died. *The Dark Lord will mark him as his equal*…the scar was the literal marking. Voldemort had marked him as his equal by accidentally putting a piece of his own soul into Harry. *Either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives.* It was painfully clear what that meant. Especially now he knew about the soul inside him. To kill Voldemort, all the horcruxes must be destroyed. Harry was, accidentally or not, one of Voldemort’s horcruxes now. To destroy the piece of soul inside him… Harry would have to let himself be killed. Harry’s body seemed to go into shock as he thought about this. Shakes wracked his body, his lungs on fire as he forgot to breathe. Dumbledore had known all along, had kept Harry alive so that he could die at the correct moment. He had never intended for Harry to survive this.

“Neither can live while the other survives…” he whispered, partly to himself. “The piece of soul inside me… it has to be destroyed. So I must die?” His words sounded hollow in his own ears, echoing strangely. He spoke to Dumbledore, posing his words as a question but it was more of a statement. One look at Dumbledore confirmed his fears anyway. The old man had tears streaming down his face, and he looked pained. As he opened his mouth to say something to Harry, there was a flash of light behind them and they spun around, Harry’s eyes widening in horror as he saw the tall, skeletal figure of Lord Voldemort appear in the Atrium in front of them. Dumbledore quickly threw Harry behind him, hiding him behind the fountain, and strode forwards to meet Voldemort head on.

Harry gasped silently, watching through a small gap in the fountain. Dumbledore was standing opposite Voldemort as they sized each other up. Nagini was floating next to him in what looked like a sphere of magical protection. It was clear now that Nagini must be the last horcrux, this was why Voldemort had her so well protected. How on earth were they supposed to kill her?

“Dumbledore…” Voldemort hissed in his high, cold, snakelike voice. “What a pleasant surprise.”

“Hello, Tom,” Dumbledore said almost pleasantly, if it wasn’t for the ice cold undercurrent to his voice.

“So,” Voldemort breathed, “here you are again attempting to thwart me, Dumbledore. I should not be surprised. You have always possessed that infuriating quality.” Harry watched from behind the statue, breathing as quietly as possible. His heart raced, and he felt as though he could pass out at any moment. There was an almost tangible aura of magic around the powerfully evil wizard, the very air around him seemed to crackle.

“I aim to please,” Dumbledore smiled blandly at Voldemort who narrowed his eyes perceptibly.

“My Death Eaters?”

“In the Death chamber, chained up and under the careful watch of the Order of the Phoenix.”
Voldemort hissed angrily, lightning crackling in the air around him, scorching the marble floor where it touched it. “And the prophecy?”

“Destroyed in the battle. Perhaps you should have taken matters into your own hands, rather than put your trust in those who are unworthy of it. Bellatrix, by the way, is dead.”

A cry of rage erupted from Voldemort, as he waved his wand and an inferno of fire erupted around him. Harry could feel the heat from where he stood behind the fountain. With a practised movement, Voldemort threw the fire at Dumbledore who calmly summoned the water from the fountain towards him in a tidal wave and crashed it upon the fire, putting it out in an instant. Harry’s mouth fell open, astounded at the magic he was witnessing.

“And what of the Potter boy? I know he’s around here somewhere,” Voldemort screeched at Dumbledore, walking purposely forwards. As he neared the fountain where Harry stood, heart in his mouth, Dumbledore moved to stand in front of him, using some kind of magical shield to stop Voldemort walking any further.

Harry sighed and closed his eyes, praying to any god that would hear him to give him strength. Dumbledore was protecting him even now, when they both knew that the only way for Voldemort to die was for Harry to die too. Even now, he was giving Harry the choice to save himself. He opened his eyes and stood up straight, squaring his shoulders. He knew what had to be done, and putting off the inevitable would only make it harder in the long run. Picturing his loved ones around him, James, Lily, Sirius, all giving him strength, Harry took one last shaky breath and stepped out from his hiding place. It took all of his strength not to stumble and fall in front of Voldemort.

“I’m here,” he said loudly and clearly. He did not want to look weak, not now. Voldemort turned towards him, a triumphant expression on his face. Dumbledore looked weary, drained. He met Harry’s eyes one last time, a knowing glance passing between the two of them. He lowered his blackened wand hand, and with a sweep of Voldemort’s arm was thrown to the ground seemingly unconscious, leaving no protection between Voldemort and Harry. They stood several metres apart, looking into each other’s eyes. It was a mark of Voldemort’s arrogance that he simply accepted his defeat over Dumbledore as if it would’ve been possible if Dumbledore hadn’t wished it to happen.

“Harry Potter…” Voldemort spoke quietly, but his words sounded loud in the deathly silence surrounding them. “We meet again. And it seems, yet again, you have managed to ruin my plans.”

“With pleasure,” Harry said in an almost serenely calm voice. He had nothing to fear now. He had accepted his death, and now all he must do was let Voldemort fulfil the prophecy. *Either must die at the hand of the other.*

“It won’t happen again. Damn the prophecy. I have you here now, at my mercy. No Dumbledore to help you, no Order of the Phoenix to run to the rescue. Just you and me, and I don’t intend to let this chance slip away.” Voldemort smirked at him and raised his wand almost lazily, pointing it directly at Harry’s heart. It was beating far too quickly, as if it knew that soon it would beat no more. Harry took his wand in his shaky, sweaty hand, and threw it to the ground. He wished he could see Sirius’s face one more time before he died. Voldemort looked at him with a surprised, somewhat arrogant expression on his face.

“So you won’t even fight me? You die a coward, as I suspected.”
“Do it.” Harry said softly, fire behind his words. He looked Voldemort directly in the eye, emerald green against fiery red. The evil wizard took a moment longer to consider the man standing before him, and then spoke the words.

“AVADA KEDAVRA!” Voldemort shouted with glee, and as Harry accepted his fate, he saw a movement in his peripheral vision. The gods had taken some kind of sick pleasure in his last wish. The last thing Harry saw was the tortured expression on Sirius’s face as he ran towards him from the lift, then the green spell hit Harry’s chest and everything turned black.

Harry lay face down on the ground. A palpable silence surrounded him, almost deafening. Something told him that he was completely alone, there was no one else here. Wherever here was. Harry became aware that the surface he was lying on was cold and flat, and as he noticed that he realised he was naked. Blinking slowly, he opened his eyes and tried to make sense of his surroundings. He appeared to be floating in some kind of strange mist, but as he watched the mist began to form a high glass ceiling, and a vast open space. It looked almost like Kings Cross station.

Sitting up slowly, Harry thought very carefully about what was happening. Was he dead? He didn’t feel very dead. And yet, this place certainly didn’t appear to be of the living world. It was almost like it was a place that didn’t exist until Harry appeared there and made it exist, even now the edges of the building still appeared to be made of some strange white mist. As Harry puzzled over his existence, he heard a strange noise and he turned abruptly towards the source of it.

Underneath a white bench, some kind of twisted, dying creature was lying curled in the foetal position. Its skin was pink and raw, like the flesh had been torn from its body. The sound appeared to be the sick creature crying, it was clearly in distress. Harry walked cautiously closer to it, wishing now that he wasn’t naked. Robes immediately appeared on his body, and he was grateful for them. Something about the creature frightened him, although it was clearly defenceless. The thing looked helpless, abandoned. Harry felt that he should help it somehow, but he was too repulsed to touch it. On the whole, he figured it would be best to leave the creature alone. It seemed beyond his help.

Harry turned and saw some other empty benches a small distance away, and he walked over to take a seat. He had some serious thinking to do. First of all, where was he, and why was he here? This place was eerie, silent, and didn’t seem quite real. If Voldemort had killed him, then was this some kind of afterlife? It didn’t seem like a heaven or a hell. A word came to him, and he thought about it for a moment. Limbo. Perhaps he was balancing somewhere between life and death, not able to travel onwards but not able to go back either. That seemed like the most likely explanation for where he was.

So then, why was he here? Voldemort had killed him. Harry sacrificed himself, he walked to his death, he let Voldemort kill him. So shouldn’t he have gone on? Perhaps there was something he had to work out before he could go in either direction. But what? He needed to think back to what happened before he died. Dumbledore told him about the piece of soul that was trapped inside him. Harry shuddered slightly, still not comfortable with the fact that a piece of Voldemort had been inside his head for almost his entire life. He subconsciously raised his hand to touch the lightning bolt scar where presumably, the soul had entered. Strangely, it wasn’t there. This puzzled him even further. So did that mean the soul was definitely gone from his body? He did feel different, almost lighter perhaps. Yes, Harry thought, the soul is gone. He knew it as completely as he knew he was in love with Sirius Black. Harry felt his heart sink as he remembered the expression on Sirius’s face as he saw Harry killed by Voldemort. But it would do him no good to dwell on that now.
With this piece of Voldemort’s soul destroyed, that meant that back in the real world, Voldemort could now be killed. Well, as long as someone killed the snake. Nagini was now the last piece of the puzzle, the final obstacle between Voldemort and death. That much was clear. Now, if he could only work out why he was here in the first place. He felt like it had something to do with Voldemort. It had to. Everything in his life seemed to have something to do with Voldemort. The two of them and been inexorably linked ever since he was a baby. He thought carefully, trying to remember everything Dumbledore had told him in the Ministry before Voldemort had turned up. Perhaps there was a clue there.

Dumbledore had spoken of the horcruxes, of how Voldemort had gone further than any other person on the journey to immortality. He had mentioned the prophecy… and the regeneration of Voldemort’s body. Harry shuddered and thought back to that night, remembering the weird ritual that was performed. He now knew that Voldemort had been performing the ritual to bring someone back who had made a horcrux. He had taken the bones of his father, flesh of the servant… and blood of the enemy. Harry’s blood.

Harry’s heart suddenly raced, blood pumping hard. Blood was the answer. His blood flowed in Voldemort’s veins. And what was it that flowed in Harry’s own veins? His mother’s sacrifice. She had died for him, and so her blood kept Harry alive, this was why he could live safely at Privet Drive, because Petunia also had Lily’s blood. In trying to make himself as powerful as possible, Voldemort had made his worst mistake. They shared a piece of soul, and since Voldemort’s return, they also shared blood. Voldemort had tied Harry to life while he himself lived. While Voldemort lived, Harry must live. And Harry had died, so that Voldemort may die. Two people, similar in upbringing. Two half-bloods, orphaned, hated by the muggles who raised them. They took such different paths, but were tied together. And now, the bond was broken. The soul was dead. Harry lived. And he could come back, to see that Voldemort died once and for all.

As if this was the queue it had been waiting for, the fog began to roll in around Harry. The train station disappeared before his eyes, the wailing of the twisted creature faded into silence, and everything around Harry turned once more to blackness. He was ready to come back.

Harry lay still, eyes closed, as he came to his senses and tried to work out what was happening. Was he back in the real world? He could hear sobbing, and as he focused more he realised the sound was right next to him. Someone was holding him, and crying. The last thing he had seen as Voldemort hit him with the killing curse… Sirius! Sirius saw him die. Harry blinked slowly, opening his eyes to see a distraught Sirius cradling Harry to his chest. Harry gently pulled back from Sirius’s embrace so he could look at his face. Sirius gasped loudly in shock and his sobbing stopped immediately.

“Harry?” he gasped, in disbelief. “Harry? How can you be… you were dead…? I saw it, he killed you!”

Harry looked deeply into Sirius’s grey eyes, and smiled softly. “I can’t explain yet, Sirius. This has to end now.”

He looked around, surveying the scene. Dumbledore was still on the floor where Voldemort had thrown him aside, and Harry thought he was actually unconscious until he saw the pale blue glint in his eyes. He looked at Harry as if he knew all along that he would come back. Harry rolled his eyes. He looked around further, knowing Voldemort must be somewhere around here. It appeared that Voldemort had been affected the same as Harry, he too was on the floor as if he had fallen unconscious.
Harry looked to Voldemort’s side and saw Nagini on the floor. It seemed that when Voldemort had passed out, his protective spells on her had failed. She slithered across the marble floor, and Harry made the split second decision. This may very well be the only time to kill her, before Voldemort became aware that his protections had failed. Harry thanked Merlin that the all-knowing Dumbledore had given him basilisk fangs, although it still irked him that Dumbledore always seemed to know everything and yet explain nothing. Pulling a fang from his robes, Harry leapt towards Nagini and grabbed her head, trying to avoid her poisonous fangs that reached for his flesh and tried to attack. Quickly, Harry stabbed the basilisk fang into her head, straight through the brain, and she collapsed to the ground, convulsing slightly.

Harry backed away quickly, hearing the scream of rage as Voldemort, consciousness regained, leapt to his feet and looked down upon the corpse of his last remaining horcrux. Sirius grabbed Harry and pulled him backwards, shielding him from Voldemort with his own body. Voldemort pulled out his wand and growled in Harry’s direction, and Dumbledore was on his feet in a second, pulling out his own wand and striding towards Voldemort to meet him head on.

Voldemort turned to Dumbledore, the powerful wizard was a much bigger threat to him at this moment than an un-armed Harry. The two wizards stood opposite each other, Voldemort glaring with ill-disguised rage, Dumbledore staring back with a deep hatred boiling beneath his calm exterior. Wands pointed at each other, there was a long second of silence as everyone seemed to hold their breath. Harry was minutely aware of every tiny sound in the room, and he gasped at the loud crack of apparition, spinning around to see the Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge, standing breathless in the middle of the room, complete with about ten Ministry officials and a look of complete shock and disbelief on his incredulous face.

Neither Voldemort or Dumbledore acknowledged the newcomers. As Harry, Sirius and the dumbfounded Ministry officials watched on with baited breath, both wands fired a green spell at the other, the killing curse glowing deadly emerald green. Harry felt that everything in his life had led to this moment. The spells hit each other in the middle of the two wizards. Dumbledore had a knowing glint in his eye as his killing curse, the more powerful, caused Voldemort’s to rebound. Harry gasped as Voldemort’s weaker killing curse rebounded and hit the evil wizard in the chest, along with Dumbledore’s killing curse. A look of disbelief coloured his face as he fell to the floor, motionless. Vacant red eyes stared upwards into nothing. Tom Riddle was dead.

Silence fell, Harry’s breath caught in his throat as his mind tried to catch up with what had just happened. You could’ve heard a pin drop in the atrium as everyone surveying the scene held their breath. Then, suddenly, Fudge was striding over to the carnage, a wild expression on his face, Dumbledore was conjuring himself a large, plush armchair to sit on and recuperate, and ministry officials began to swarm around Voldemort’s body. They cast unidentifiable spells, looked sharply at each other, one brave man actually nudged the body with his foot.

“Blimey. He’s actually dead!” One of them spoke up, his voice rasping loudly in the commotion. “Dumbledore did it! He killed You-Know-Who!”

Everyone started talking and shouting at once, Dumbledore was buried in a sea of ministry workers shooting questions at him, meanwhile Sirius let out a loud whoop of joy and pulled Harry into a tight hug. Harry let out the breath he had been holding in a whoosh, laughing breathlessly and finding that he couldn’t stop. He embraced Sirius in return, burying his face in the older man’s chest as he tried to control his laughter, tears spilling down his cheeks. He felt almost numb, not entirely sure what to feel. Elation was bubbling up, bursting through the confusion and shock. After spending nearly his entire life being followed by the constant threat of Voldemort, it was suddenly all over in a flash.

In all the commotion, Harry saw members of the Order arriving in the lift from the Department of Mysteries, spilling out into the atrium and racing towards the group of people in the middle of the room, eager to know what on earth had just happened. Dumbledore was still invisible in the throng of ministry officials so Harry was the one who was overwhelmed with sudden questions. They all seemed to notice the body on the ground at the same time, eyes widened, gasps uttered,
“Harry! The Death Eaters downstairs, they all suddenly looked at their Dark Marks and panicked, we figured something must’ve happened but this… can it be real?” Remus asked Harry quickly, looking at Sirius for confirmation. Harry grinned and nodded.

“It was Dumbledore! They faced off against each other, they both cast the killing curse at the same time and Dumbledore’s curse won. He’s really dead!” Harry said, finding it weird to say out loud. Voldemort was dead. Tonks shouted out loud with joy, and started jumping up and down before hastily stopping to nurse a pain in her leg. Remus tutted and placed a soft kiss to her cheek, which immediately burned red as she blushed at his attention in front of everyone. Moody looked smug and told everyone in hearing range that he knew Dumbledore was up to something, that he was almost completely sure that this was going to happen tonight. Snape mostly hung around in the background, not wishing to talk to Harry if it wasn’t entirely necessary, and rushed to talk to Dumbledore as soon as he was able. Harry answered a few more questions, and gathered from the Order that Kingsley was staying downstairs to watch over the Death Eaters, all of whom had suddenly experienced a lack of any feeling in their Dark Marks where they had always known a dull ache since Voldemort returned.

Several of the ministry officials were sent downstairs to deal with the Death Eaters, and the Order members rushed to fill their place interrogating Dumbledore, although in a much more respectful manner. Harry sighed, glad they were all okay but feeling overwhelmed after all the attention.

Sirius pressed a soft, gentle kiss to Harry’s temple, and Harry smiled at him. Sirius was here, and that was more important than anything. For a moment, he thought that he’d lost him in the Death chamber, and the last thing Harry had said to Sirius was that he hated him for bullying Snape when he was in school. Harry cringed at how ridiculous and angry he had been. Yes, it was wrong of Sirius to do those things to Snape but it was in the past. He was a different person now, and in the grand scheme of things it didn’t matter at all. What mattered now was that Voldemort was dead, Harry was free from his constant shadow and he and Sirius could be happy together.

Looking up from Sirius’s chest, Harry saw Dumbledore making his way quickly towards them. He pulled away, beaming at the headmaster.

“You did it, professor! I can’t believe he’s really gone,” Harry said shakily, still feeling odd to say it out loud.

“It was thanks to your sacrifice, Harry, that I had the opportunity. You brave, brave man. Soon we will sit down and discuss all that has happened, but first, rather more pressingly, Cornelius Fudge is making his way over here to interrogate us and I think it best that Sirius leaves.”

Sirius frowned at this, keeping his arm wrapped firmly around Harry’s waist. “I want to stay with him.” Sirius said firmly, Harry smiled but he knew Dumbledore was right.

“Sirius, I didn’t go through all of this just to lose you again. I can’t see you get arrested, I can’t have you taken away from me, not this time! I don’t think I could get through it,” Harry said quickly, panicking somewhat. He could see Fudge getting closer to them, an expression of triumph on his face as he spotted Sirius. The older man sighed, and pulled Harry into a hug again.

“Okay, okay, I’m going, but you’d better come back soon. Good luck,” he said with a wry smile, looking at Fudge with defiance before apparating quickly out of the room. Fudge growled with frustration as he reached them, turning with a huff to Dumbledore.
“Black was right there, why didn’t you stop him?!” He said angrily, gesticulating at Dumbledore. Harry thought it quite ridiculous that Fudge was angry at Dumbledore for letting Sirius go, when he had just watched him defeat the greatest Dark Lord the world had ever known.

“We’ll get to that in time, Cornelius. I imagine you would like to speak to me about the death of Tom Riddle.” Dumbledore smiled blandly at Fudge, and red patches appeared on the agitated wizard’s cheeks.

“Tom whatnow? I presume you mean You-Know-Who- “.

“The least you could do is speak his name now that he’s dead, Cornelius,” Dumbledore spoke sharply. “Is there anything left to be afraid of?”

“Well now, that’s precisely what I would like to talk to you about!” Fudge said, flustered. “how are we to know he’s really dead this time? It happened before, and look where that ended up!”

“As I recall, it ended with you refusing to admit that he was back, until you saw me kill him not five minutes ago,” Dumbledore spoke harshly. Fudge had the decency at least to look somewhat guilty.

“Yes, well, the evidence was very much not in your favour…”

“I think you’ll find, Cornelius, that Lord Voldemort is well and truly dead. Last time this happened, on Halloween all those years ago, there was no body to be found. He disappeared, stayed in hiding, biding his time until he gained the strength to return. This time it is all over. You may examine his body, and I am sure you will detect the large amounts of dark magic that he used to return to this somewhat human form.”

Fudge gaped at Dumbledore, then his gaze moved to Harry. “Ah, Potter, but of course you’re here. Care to enlighten me on what exactly you had to do with all of this?”

Harry gulped, struggling to formulate a response. Luckily, Dumbledore came to his rescue, yet again.

“Harry and I will both be more than happy to answer your questions, if we may go somewhere more comfortable and private to discuss matters.” He glanced around at the avid crowd of ministry officials who were not even trying to disguise their eavesdropping. Fudge nodded somewhat reluctantly, and led them into a small office off of the atrium. Harry took a deep breath, knowing this was not going to be easy. He only hoped he had the strength to recount everything that had happened to him. Thinking of Sirius, however, Harry smiled and knew that he would have the strength to do anything as long as he had that man by his side, even if he wasn’t physically here now.

“Shall we begin?” Cornelius Fudge said, sitting at a desk holding a quill eagerly over a long roll of parchment. Dumbledore and Harry lowered themselves into two chairs in front of the desk, Dumbledore quickly squeezing Harry’s shoulder. He was ready.
Several months later, Harry gazed at Sirius, the man he was irrevocably in love with. They were standing in the master bedroom of their new house that Sirius had bought shortly after being found innocent of his crimes. Time had flown by since the day that had made history, the day that Voldemort had been killed. The two of them had spent many hours since then discussing everything, Sirius had some especially pressing questions after seeing Harry be killed by Voldemort, then having him wake up in his arms. When he had heard how Harry sacrificed himself to allow Voldemort to be killed, all the colour had drained from his face and he hadn’t let Harry out of his sight for days afterwards, as if Harry would disappear after all if he lost sight of him.

Cornelius Fudge had naturally stepped down as Minister for Magic after the dramatic events leading up to Voldemort’s death. It was hardly appropriate to remain Minister after denying for months that Voldemort had returned, only to have him turn up dead in Fudge’s own workplace, along with a gang of Death Eaters. Kingsley Shacklebolt stepped up to be the temporary Minister after Fudge’s emergency dismissal, and was later voted in as the official replacement. Harry couldn’t be happier with the choice, he had a much more level head than Fudge and he knew exactly what he was doing.

Another upside to this turn of events was that Kingsley, as Minister for Magic, knew exactly what happened with Peter Pettigrew and Sirius Black, and started an immediate search for the elusive Death Eater rat. After a tense few weeks of Sirius being cooped up in Grimmauld place again, Pettigrew was found and put to trial, spilling his confession under the duress of Veritaserum. Sirius was cleared of all charges to the shock of the general public, and celebrated by buying a nice new modern house in the middle of nowhere that looked nothing like his childhood home. Harry and Sirius spent a secluded few weeks there, just the two of them, recovering from the everything they had been through. Many nights were spent running through the surrounding English countryside as dog and raven, enjoying the feeling of being free.

One day Harry received a message by owl that took him completely by surprise. Dumbledore, still insisting on being Hogwarts headmaster after turning down the position of Minister for Magic once again, wrote to him to invite him back to Hogwarts to complete his education. It would mean starting from his fifth year and therefore being a year older than everyone else in his year, but Harry was more than happy to go back to the castle that he never thought he’d see again, the first place he could ever call home. Sirius was somewhat moody when Harry told him the news, and he felt bad for leaving Sirius again, but he reminded the older wizard that he was completely free to come and visit Scotland whenever he wanted, and the very map that Sirius had created himself gave Harry explicit knowledge on how to sneak into Hogsmeade to come and see him. Sirius grinned at this and told him he would make a Marauder of him yet.

Ron and Hermione were together now. They hadn’t told Harry to start with, but he could tell. The way they looked at each other, it was obvious how they felt. Harry guessed that they had grown closer in the year that Harry had been out of Hogwarts, and it had been just the two of them. Harry had just come out and asked them, eventually, and after much blushing and stammering he had ascertained that they had been in a relationship for a few weeks now. Harry was so happy for them, that they had found a love much easier to live with than Harry and Sirius’s. No matter how difficult it was to keep their love a secret, however, Harry would never change it for the world.

Sirius himself was standing next to Harry now, his hands firmly wrapped around his waist, hugging him tightly as he pressed lingering kisses on his neck and jaw. Harry hummed in appreciation, running his own hands gently up and down Sirius’s toned back. Sirius turned his head, capturing Harry’s lips in a searing kiss, which Harry moaned into and deepened, delving his tongue into Sirius’s warm mouth and exploring his musky taste. Their tongues moved slowly and sensually against each other, setting a delicious rhythm that Harry was loath to halt as he paused to draw breath. They breathed heavily against each other, kiss swollen lips just barely touching.

Harry was so incredibly happy to be here with Sirius, in their own home, together without the threat of Voldemort hanging over them anymore. He had never known freedom like this. Smiling
to himself, Harry relaxed into Sirius’s gentle touch as he lightly massaged Harry’s back, kissing him softly on his collar bone, along the tendon in his neck, nibbling on his ear lobe. Holding back a low moan, Harry ran his hands over Sirius’s tight muscles in his stomach and chest, enjoying the feeling of the soft hairs leading downwards.

Feeling the tell-tale hardness in his pants, Harry decided it was a good idea for them to move to the bed. He gently pushed Sirius backwards, walking them to the massive plush bed that took up most of the space in their bedroom. Harry was immeasurably glad to have this bed back after his first term back at Hogwarts. He had missed that castle more than he could ever have expected, yet it just didn’t feel the same anymore. It just wasn’t home anymore, not now that he had experienced living with Sirius. The once comfortable dormitory bed now felt empty and cold, and he wished he had Sirius next to him to warm it up. There had of course been that one night that Harry, wide awake and horny, had somehow convinced Sirius to sneak down the secret passageway from Hogsmeade and meet him in the castle, at which point they had giggled their way to Harry’s bed, cast as many silencing spells as they could and continued to have amazing sex right there in the fifth year boy’s dormitory. Sirius had seemed extremely guilty afterwards and sadly it had been a one off, but Harry had spent many a late night in his dormitory remembering that moment fondly.

Before they sank down on the bed, Harry pulled out his wand and carefully removed all of their clothing with a non-verbal spell. He had become conveniently efficient at this particular charm. Standing back a little, Harry raked his eyes appreciatively over the delicious man standing in front of him. Tall, dark and handsome, that was certainly the right way to describe Sirius. His dark hair flopped effortlessly over his face, almost concealing tenacious grey eyes which were currently bright and glazed with arousal. Perfectly sharp cheekbones and jawline, a well-toned stomach and chest, a dark trail of hair leading down to one of Harry’s favourite features of Sirius’s... which was currently very much standing to attention.

They both laid down on the bed, Harry straddling Sirius’s hips. Their lips crashed together once more, kisses becoming more heated as Harry subconsciously began grinding himself against Sirius’s thigh. Sirius’s moan was muffled by Harry’s deft tongue, a gentle hand guiding Harry until their rock hard members were grinding against each other. Waves of pleasure ran through Harry and he felt their bodies heating up, a layer of sweat building up on their skin, salty to the taste, bodies sliding against each other.

Breaking the kiss reluctantly, Harry reached over to the cabinet and pulled out their trusty bottle of lube. Still sitting on top of Sirius, Harry looked him in the eye and carefully poured some lube out onto his own hand, reaching down between his legs to prepare himself. Sirius’s eyes flickered shut briefly as he let out a loud moan. “Merlin, Harry, the things you do to me…” he growled, running his hands over Harry’s chest, his face, running his fingers through his hair, eyes opened wide now as Harry scissored his fingers in and out of himself, stretching himself for Sirius. Finding his prostate, Harry massaged it gently, eyes shuddering closed, a deep throaty noise ripped from his throat almost beyond his control.

Eventually, Harry deemed himself ready for Sirius. His cock was dripping, already getting close to the edge before Sirius had even entered him. Looking down, he saw that the older man was in exactly the same state as him. Licking his lips, Harry looked on with interest as Sirius guided Harry gently down onto him, his thick, dripping cock filling him up. Harry let out a gasp and held himself in place, taking a moment to get used to the feeling. There was nothing quite like it, the feeling of being so full. After a moment, he flexed his muscles and raised himself up, almost drawing himself completely off of Sirius before slamming back down onto him, enveloping Sirius in his hot, tight entrance. They both let out loud moans, Harry riding Sirius and beginning to pick up a quick rhythm.

The muscles in his legs were burning, his whole body felt as if it was on fire, but Harry couldn’t stop. The two of them moved together as one, their movements becoming quicker and jerkier as they reached the edge. Sirius grasped Harry’s cock with a sweaty hand, and only a few quick pulls later Harry was climaxing, his seed spilling all over Sirius’s chest, stomach, his hand. Harry contracted tightly around Sirius and the feeling pushed the older man over the edge, following Harry into an incredible orgasm. The two of them collapsed onto the bed in a sticky mess, lungs fighting to regain control as they breathed heavily.
“Wow,” Harry huffed out, laughing slightly in his euphoric post-coital bliss. Sirius turned and smirked at him, winking in his effortlessly sexy way, and Harry’s grinned to himself. He still wasn’t sure what exactly he had done to deserve this incredible man, but he was going to treasure every moment that they had together. They had both almost lost each other several times in their lives, and Harry was not going to let it happen again.

Their relationship was just as unconventional as the two of them were, unexpected yet perfect in its way. After all, who else could Harry ever be this close with? The two of them were meant for each other. The closest people to them knew the truth, and perhaps some of their other friends and family would find out in time, but perhaps not. The two of them were perfectly happy to live out their lives in their little secluded home, away from prying eyes. What other people didn’t know wouldn’t hurt them. Harry lay on the bed, eyes closed, a vacant expression on his face as he dozed lightly and dreamed of a quiet marriage ceremony, just the two of them with Remus, Ron and Hermione in the audience. Sirius placing the ring on his finger, and Harry placing Sirius’s on in return. A vow to stay together forever. Harry smiled fondly, butterflies in his stomach at the thought. But he was still young, and for now he was happy to continue as they were now. They had their whole lives to live out together, and that was exactly what he intended to do, without fear this time. Harry’s scar had not pained him since the battle of the Ministry of Magic. All was well.

Chapter End Notes

Here we are at the end! I do truly hope that you enjoyed it, and I would be so grateful if you could leave a comment letting me know what you think :) thank you so much for all the kudos and comments to date. I have a plan forming for a new Harry/Sirius fic so keep an eye out!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](http://www.archive.com) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!