Butterfly Effect

by Quiet_Shadow

Summary

Reincarnation is a tricky thing, even for the legendary Silver Crystal. Somewhere down the line, something went wrong and the Senshi didn't reappear in Japan but half a world away in England, with new families... and access to a new kind of magic they had never suspected existed.

Now, if they could only sort out their confusing memories and understand what happened and why they can't transform anymore, it'd certainly help them...

And in the meanwhile, the Wizarding World gains a few interesting characters and things certainly won't stay the same...

Notes

Hello Ladies and Gents and welcome to this fic, which was my nano project for the year 2016.

I like Harry Potter but hadn't tried to write fics in what feels like year. I like Sailor Moon but had never attempted to write a fic in that fandom -- aside of crossovers, of course.

Because I really lovee crossovers and don't write nearly enough ^^

So my musings, after deciding I needed a small break from Transformers, lead me to consider a HP/SM idea and here's the result: multiple ficlets and connected one shots, here's hoping I'll find the inspiration to write the rest of the ideas I had originally planned and which didn't end up in the first round of stories.
I hope you'll enjoy your reading. :)
Life at the Dursleys, Harry Potter found himself frequently musing, would have certainly been a lot less nicer if he had been an only child. Not that life at the Dursleys was all smiles and sunshine, of course, but it was, well, tolerable.

And Harry was convinced it was solely because he had an older sister.

Not that his sister was much older than him; she wasn’t his twin, but she was only a couple more months older than him. It was, from what Aunt Petunia had muttered between her teeth to the neighbors and to the school teachers who had been surprised to have the two Potters children in the same class and noticed they didn’t have the same birthdate, because Harry had been born very premature, and his mother had gotten pregnant very quickly after the birth of Harry’s sister.

Perhaps it had something to do with being born premature, but Harry had always been small and skinny for his age -- and perhaps it would have been worse if he had had to sleep in the cupboard under the stairs, which he had at some point until he and his sister grew up too much to both fit in it, after which Uncle Vernon had reluctantly moved them in Dudley’s second bedroom. The move, Harry remembered, had been quite the event, especially since Dudley had pulled a tantrum and made himself sick on purpose to try and make his parents change their mind. That’s it, until Harry’s sister had grabbed him by the hem of his shirt and looked down at him; Dudley hadn’t protested anymore after that.

Sure, it wasn’t the best room at 4, Privet Drive -- it was actually the smallest of the four -- but it was nice to have space, even if Harry had to share with his sister, which he didn’t mind. The bunk bed Aunt Petunia had bought them from a second-hand store because they couldn’t sleep eternally on cots, no matter how much she’s have prefered that -- they were growing fast after all, especially the Potter girl -- was old and rickety and creaked whenever one of them turned on their mattress took its share of the space, but it was fun all the same. A bunk bed! Dudley had almost been purple with envy when he had seen it and had loudly clamored to have his own just for himself. It took much cajoling from Aunt Petunia to make him change his mind, and Dudley ended up having a King size one courtesy of Uncle Vernon, but Harry and his sister didn’t care; their cas cooler, they had decided early on.

But circumstances asides, Harry remained a small, skinny boy. He looked even smaller and skinnier than he really was at times because he often had to wear old clothes of his cousin Dudley, and Dudley was easily four times bigger than Harry was.

Thankfully, his sister often took time to try and make Dudley’s clothes into something more fitting, provided she could have access to thread and elastic band and scissors and buttons -- which Harry and her had to buy by themselves with what money they found on the pavement and saved, for Uncle Vernon was always barking about how much the Potters were costing the Dursleys already and Aunt Petunia was scarcely better. As a results, what his sister managed to do weren’t always good fits, because there was only so much she could do given she wasn’t a great seamstress, but his sister was trying and Harry often did look more presentable when she was done with them.

“Hey, sleepyhead, done daydreaming?”

Harry blinked at the teasing interruption, surprised and relaxed once his eyes crossed the teasing, smiling face of his older sister. “Better be careful with the bacon, Aunt Petunia always get screechy when it gets even slightly burned,” she advised as she looked over his shoulder to get a look at said bacon herself.
Harry smiled ruefully. “So do you, Lita,” giggling at the look of outrage on her face as Lita loudly proclaimed she wasn’t ‘screechy’ by any sense of the term.

It was funny how little Lita and Harry looked alike, despite being brother and sister. Harry was small and skinny and had a thin face, knobbly knees and black hair that grew up all over the place. He also wore round glasses that had seen better days (and would probably had to be patched up with Sellotape from all the times Dudley had tried to punch him on the nose if Lita hadn’t intervened to chase their cousin and his friends away). Lita, for her part, was tall (and promised to grown just as tall, if not taller than Aunt Petunia, who was rather tall herself) and fit, with a face rounder than Harry’s and long brown wavy hair she usually kept tied up in a ponytail. She wore no glasses, unlike her brother.

The only common feature the two children shared were their eyes, which were a bright green. As such, Harry tended to like his eyes, for it was the best proof of his and Lita’s kinship. The only other thing he liked about his appearance was a very thin scar on his forehead which was shaped like a bolt of lightning. Curiously enough, Lita also had a scar on her forehead, but it looked rather like a ‘4’. They both had had them for as long as they could remember and one of the first questions Harry could remember asking his Aunt was how they had gotten them.

“In the care crash when you parents died,” Aunt Petunia had snapped. “And don’t ask questions.”

Don’t ask questions -- that was the first rule for a quiet life with the Dursleys. If it didn’t quite suit Harry, he followed it readily. However, Lita tended to often challenge said rule. But then again, it was Lita; nothing seeming to be able to scare her, something Harry could only admire.

Other girls got scared of mice and spiders -- Dudley often poked fun at them and tried to give them a scare by catching insects and shoving them under their nose or putting them in their hair to make them scream in fright. Not Lita though; the only time Dudley had tried, he had found himself punched in the nose very much like he usually tried to punch Harry and glared down by Lita who, hands on her hips, had warned him not to try that again. Not that Dudley had listened -- at least until he and his friend Piers, Dennis, Malcolm and Gordon had tried to take up a new game they had dubbed ‘Harry-hunting’.

The memory of an angry Lita grabbing Dudley by his t-shirt and actually lifting him off the ground -- which was no small feat given his size and weight -- and screaming her head off at him concerning his attitude still had Harry smiling wide and warmed his heart whenever he thought about it; Lita was incredibly strong and she didn’t like bullies. She was a very nice girl, but when she was acting in defense of Harry or of one of the younger kids of the neighbors, she could become quite fearsome.

Maybe it was because she had scared them herself, or maybe it was because they didn’t want to admit aloud they had all gotten beaten by a girl, but neither Dudley nor the rest of his gang had ever seemed to complain to their parents about Lita and the way she had punched them -- and still did if she caught them bothering smaller kids. Not that they did it much anymore or if they did, then they made sure Lita was nowhere around before they pulled it off. Suffice to say, Harry-hunting had disappeared almost as quickly as it had been invented and Harry enjoyed a relative tranquility at school asides of being mocked for hiding behind a girl and let her fight for hi, even if that girl was Lita. Frankly however, Harry couldn’t find it in himself to care.

To Harry’s amazement, no member of the gang ever seemed to complain about the Potters siblings to their parents, not even Dudley. Of course, maybe it was due to Dudley showing some self-preservation; he lived under the same roof as his cousins and so would be in close range if Lita decided to retaliate.
Not that Harry thought Lita ever would; his sister was strong and hated bullies, but she was also, well, a girl. The scuffles with Dudley and his friends asides, Lita had interests very at odds with her strong-girl appearance; the older Potter sibling loved the color pink and enjoyed hobbies such as window shopping (Aunt Petunia never gave them any money to do actual shopping, but Lita loved to go see shops whenever they could and Harry tended to tag along with her rather than stay alone at Privet Drive. It boggled him how his tough-looking sister could squeal over the ‘cuteness’ of a dress, the color of a coat, the glint of a jewelry piece, but Harry supposed all girls were like that. Perhaps.), gardening, romance novels, cooking and more specifically, baking.

Actually, considering that last hobby, perhaps Dudley’s reluctance to speak of his not-so-secret confrontations with his girl cousin came from the fact that, if Lita was punished, then it was more than likely she wouldn’t be allowed in the kitchen for some time and that he’d have to skip on his Baking Day treats. Lita loved to bake treats and all sort of cakes and she was good at it. Even Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia, for all the disdain they showed their nephew and niece, were forced to admit it -- especially when loudly reclaimed things Aunt Petunia was bad at baking herself (her lemon pie had always been awful, in Harry’s humble opinion; not that he had been allowed to taste it often, but still). Baking Day, as Harry had dubbed it, consisted of Lita being allowed to bake a tray of goodies or a cake for Dudley’s enjoyment -- and if they were lucky and Dudley wasn’t hungry enough, his friends weren’t here or Lita made more than one batch, Harry and Lita were allowed the leftovers.

That was hardly fair, in Harry’s opinion, but fair wasn’t something that happened often in the Dursleys’ house. Not when you were called Potter anyway.

“Harry? Harry, turn down the stove!”

Startled by the sudden outburst, the green-eyed boy almost spilled the pan’s content over but thankfully, he was fast and he had good reflexes. His hand automatically went to turn off the stove as he lifted the pan up. He felt Lita come up behind him, felt her hands taking a stronger hold over the handle, taking it away from him.

“Careful here, little brother, or you’re going to burn yourself. Here, let me take it,” she chided him as Harry let go and moved swiftly out of her way. “You’re lucky Aunt Petunia didn’t see you or she’d have accused you to try to ruin breakfast on purpose. Honestly, she shouldn’t have let you at the stove without supervision,” Lita mumbled under her breath as she carried the pan over and let the bacon (a little darker than what Aunt Petunia deemed acceptable, but far from being burned, so it was alright, mostly) slide in a plate.

Harry frowned, squaring his shoulders. “She lets you cook alone,” he pointed out, feeling irritated. Sure, he loved Lita dearly and it was comforting for him to know she loved him and cared for him, but sometimes she was just too overprotective of him. “Besides, she’s not far.” In the living room actually, fawning over Dudley and watching a cartoon with him at the pudgy boy’s insistence while Lita and Harry were in charge of making breakfast which, now that Harry thought about it, was the very first time they were made to.

“Hardly,” Lita replied, snorting. “She always keeps an eye on me when I bake, and she won’t let me use the oven alone, let alone the stone; it’s always her who turn them on and open the door. Even if she let us cook by ourselves, she’s not supposed to let us alone in the kitchen, period. I… she had never done that before,” she added for herself in a low voice, frowning and glancing in the living room’s direction. “Damn Dudley,” she muttered.

“Well… perhaps she thinks we’re big enough to not need to keep an eye on us?” Harry offered. Not that the reason mattered for him; Harry had long since decided his Aunt didn’t make sense in the way she treated Dudley and the way she treated Harry and Lita. “Anyway, want me to fry the eggs?” he tried, only for Lita to shake her head.
“I’ll do it,” the brown-haired girl said calmly and Harry tried not to feel annoyed; just because he had almost let the bacon burn (and almost burned himself because he had been daydreaming) didn’t meant it was going to happen again. “Can you serve the corn flakes instead?”

Harry shrugged. “Why not?” And he did just that, pushing away all lingering questions he had been pondering for now.
Mr and Mrs Granger, both dentists, were usually described in conversation as a very pleasant couple, smart and competent in their profession. It must be mentioned that Mr and Mrs Granger, Victor and Jean of their true name, were indeed smart people. The two of them had met while pursuing their respective Licentiate in Dental Surgery and had, from what they told, instantly fell in love. After the end of their studies, they had perfectly naturally decided to marry and to open a common surgery on the outskirts of London, where they also lived.

Victor Granger was a tall, slightly plump man with brown bushy hair. He loved travelling and theatre. Mrs Jean Granger was thin and black-haired. She loved flower and literature. Both Mr and Mrs Granger had also a certain fondness for real estate. Both Doctor Granger were always working; when they weren’t, they were travelling to Italy, France and Spain or going to theatres and concerts.

Mr and Mrs Granger had a good relationship with their neighbours, were respected by their patients and were leading a very peaceful, normal life. Well, peaceful and normal but for a single detail: Mr and Mrs Granger were parents.

Now, Victor and Jean Granger loved their children, they loved them very much. But it was hard for them not to notice there was something a little… different about them.

Their eldest daughter, for one. The birth of their first child had been planned for a long time, though both Doctors had decided early on not to try for a child until their surgery had developed sufficiently to their taste. It wasn’t to say Mr and Mrs Granger hadn’t been overjoyed, for they were genuinely happy to become parents. But they were always so busy, and the timing had to be perfectly right.

After their baby girl had been born on September 19th, 1979, Mr and Mrs Granger had decided to give her a nice, unusual first name because they wanted to establish how educated and intelligent they were; it must be mentioned that Mr and Mrs Granger were smart and charming people, but they also tended to be a little arrogant from time to time. Still, they loved their little Hermione Jean very much.

Hermione took very much after her father; she had the same light skin, the same brown eyes and the same brown, bushy hair. She was also, as her parents discovered early on, very smart herself; Hermione would always be found with her nose buried in a book and had a vocabulary far more developed than children of her age usually had.

But if she was smart, Hermione was also a little odd. Or rather, random odd things tended to happen around her when she was upset or in a tense mental state. Of course, Mr and Mrs Granger had no reason to believe Hermione had anything to do with the plates which had exploded on their shelves the day their brown-haired daughter got angry over being snubbed by a substitute.
teacher who seemed to despise smarter than average children. And there had to be a perfectly logical, reasonable explanation as to why Hermione’s favorite stories book that a pair of bullies had thrown in a puddle had ended perfectly fine and dry when she had gotten it back. And there was nothing suspect about the way one of said bullies had ended up with bright green hair when Hermione had crossed path with him again, nothing.

Such happenings let Mr and Mrs Granger bemused, but they tried to ignore it. Or at least, they would have tried to ignore it if the number of oddities didn’t tend to double when their second daughter was also present.

Now, it must be said again that Victor and Jean Granger loved their children very much; still, Mrs Granger’s second pregnancy caught them by surprise. Having giving birth a few months prior only, Mrs Granger wasn’t quite certain she wanted another child. As for Mr Granger, while he did wish a second child eventually, he hadn’t envisaged it to be happen so soon. But there was a baby coming, and ready or not, Mr and Mrs Granger were sure they could handle it.

And so a second little girl was worn on September 10th, 1980; Hermione wasn’t quite one year old yet when she greeted her new baby sister home.

It took some consideration but in the end, Mr and Mrs Granger decided to call their second daughter Amy Miranda. Now, while they would have liked to give their new baby girl a name as unusual as her older sister, it had come to Mr and Mrs Granger’s attention that the pronunciation of Hermione’s name was a subject of difficulties for a number of people, among which Hermione’s grandparents. As well, little Hermione was starting to talk already and the way she was massacring her own name while attempting to say it aloud made them wince.

Amy seemed like a good first name, and the Grangers could still hint at their love of Shakespeare with the new baby’s second name. And since it was much easier to pronounce, it was no wonder one of Hermione’s first words after ‘Mama’ and ‘Daddy’ was ‘Amy’.

Unlike Hermione, who took after her father, Amy definitely took after her mother; she had black hair, like her mother, and blue eyes. Her skin tone was a few tone lighter than her parents. Where Hermione’s hair were bushy, Amy’s were flat. They didn’t look much alike at all.

But they were both brilliant, almost scarily so even.

The realization Amy was a genius isn’t much of a surprise after dealing with Hermione’s increasing vocabulary and her continuous perfect scores on tests -- though it is still surprising to see Amy conscientiously spell words with her cubes when she’s two or three, then heading off to read the dictionary when she’s four years old. Mr and Mrs Granger considered it a good thing; being smart people themselves, they were very proud of the fact both their daughters were just as smart if not smarter than them.

But if they were proud of both their daughters’ intelligence, Mr and Mrs Granger couldn’t help but notice Amy could be just as odd as her older sister -- or rather, that oddities happened around her just as regularly as they did around Hermione.

It was hard not to notice, really, even more so after both their daughters turned seven years old.

Finding a logical, normal explanation for Amy falling in the neighbor’s pool and sinking to the bottom, staying under several minutes without drowning, was giving them headaches. And Mr Granger prefered to avoid recalling the one time he went up to his youngest daughter’s bedroom to find one of her pet fishes swimming in the air; he usually chalked it up as a dream. A dream he had while awake and in the middle of the afternoon.
It was bemusing. It was worrisome. But it didn’t stop Mr and Mrs Granger from loving their children dearly.

They just wished sometimes that their daughters weren’t so competitive toward each other. Oh, there were no doubt that Hermione and Amy loved each other; but being both genius little girls, they both felt the need to show how smart they were be it to their classmates, their parents… or each other.

It usually translated by a litany of perfect tests brought home and put on the fridge to better display them, of advanced reading while sitting at opposite sides of the kitchen’s table and commenting the aforementioned reading with little ‘I knew it already, of course’ that was either happy or condescending depending on their respective mood, of very interesting and intense games of Scrabble and Trivial Pursuit and, unfortunately for Mr Granger who liked to fill them himself, of stolen crosswords pages in the newspaper.

Still, Mr and Mrs Granger led a nice, peaceful life.

That’s it, until the day after Amy’s ninth birthday, Hermione and Amy got into a screaming match over a misplaced copy of a book both girls were seeking out, one for a homework, the other for research purposes in compliment of her own reading.

Victor and Jean Granger had been calmly taking a cup of tea downstairs in the kitchen when a loud scream had made them pause. Hermione’s horrified voice was joined by Amy’s a beat of heart latter and just as suddenly, two sets of feet were heard running down the stairs.

“Mom! Dad! Amy’s hair…!”

Mr and Mrs Granger rose from their seats at the same time, mouth open. Mr Granger wasn’t proud to admit he dropped his (thankfully empty) cup when he saw his youngest daughter, who was following behind Hermione; it broke in dozens of pieces, annoying Mrs Granger who had been very fond of that particular set. Her china, however, was the farthest thing away from Mrs Granger’s preoccupation when she saw Amy.

“Mom? I don’t know what happened, I swear, it just turned that way suddenly. Do you think it comes from a chemical in the water? Or perhaps in that new shampoo you bought me?”

“That can’t be possible, or it’d have turned much sooner,” Hermione replied doctorally. But she couldn’t offer a better explanation.

Mr and Mrs Granger, for their part, exchanged a horrified look. Explaining away a dry book in a puddle or not drowning in a swimming pool was one thing. This, however...

Now, how were they going to explain their youngest daughter’s formerly black hair had suddenly turned bright blue?

Chapter End Notes

Hey, would you look at that? I have actually done whole profiles for our Sailor friends in the HP verse, inspiring myself from their official profiles in universe! I will need to add Jupiter’s in the first chapter later on, but here’s Mercury.

By the way, I highly recommend reading about the wand cores and the wand woods and their signification; you’ll understand why I made some choices ^^
Mizuno Ami/Sailor Mercury

Name: Amy Miranda (from the English dub/portuguese family dub)
Surname: Granger
Blood status: Muggleborn
Family: Dr Victor Granger; father. Dentist; Dr Jean Granger; mother. Dentist; Hermione Jean Granger, sister
Birthdate: September 10th, 1981
Entering Hogwarts in: 1992
House: Ravenclaw
Wand wood: Hazel
Core: Unicorn hair
Size: 10 inches 3/4
Description of wand: Very springy
Best Subject: Arithmancy
Worse Subject: None
Electives: Arithmancy, Ancient Runes, Care to Magical Creatures
Extracurricular activities: Chess Club, Charms Club
Dream: To become a full-fledged Healer and Doctor
Rei, 1985-1986

Chapter Summary

Little Hino Rei arrives in Japan...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rei’s first thought about Great Britain it’s that it’s cold, wet, grey and that she very want to go back home right now. But it must be mentioned that the day she arrives at the airport is a cold, rainy day at the end of autumn and a bad weather rarely helps children get a good impression, even more so when they don’t want to be there in the first place. She frowns, she tries not to shudder from the cold and from displeasure and fear and she holds her mother’s hand just a little tighter.

The beaming smile she receives in return is enough to soothe her already ruffled temper. “Will Daddy be here soon?” she asks quietly while her mother brushes a lock of black hair away from her forehead.

“Very soon, Rei-chan,” the beautiful woman who she closely resemble to tell just as quietly. “Be nice just a little longer and then we will get to see our new house. It’s going to be so pretty, you’ll love it.”

That, Rei very much doubts so. She’s already missing their old house in rural Japan, with the street lined up by cherry trees that made the prettiest flowers in the spring and the nice garden with a pond they had in their backyard. Rei had loved feeding the koi and the various magical fishes her father kept there to have access to fresh potion ingredients if the need arises.

Part of her already resents her father for making them move here, making her leaves her (rare) friends behind. But it’s very important for her father’s career that he comes to work in Great Britain, Mommy had explained with her gentle, reasonable voice, hugging her close while they were both sitting around the Kotatsu and enjoying a cup of tea.

Her father is someone very important in the Japanese Ministry of Magic and sometimes his work forces him to move a lot; but several of Rei’s friends also have friends working for the Ministry, and their fathers aren’t away as often, the little girl argues back.

Of course, none of the other girls’ fathers work in the Department of International Magical Cooperation. Hino Takashi, however, is one of its rising stars; an accomplished wizard, speaker of many languages, expert with laws and trading, polite, hard-working, appreciable. Still too young to old a key position in the Ministry, of course, but considering how diligently he works, give him a few years and he’ll probably be head of the Department or even hold a Seat on the International Confederation of Wizards.

Which is why his family is in Great Britain now. And Rei doesn’t want to be in Great Britain.

Rei could whine and throw a tantrum, but instead she keeps silent and she observes people as they walk past her in the airport’s halls. Most of them are ‘Muggles’ (Daddy longly insisted on the right term to use while in Britain and he coached Rei to use it frequently, but the word still tastes weird
on her tongue), though she’s certain there has to be a few witches and wizards as well among the
travellers or among the staff to help travelling Squibs and Muggleborns or to stop smugglers to get
forbidden items into the country. That’s how it works in Japan anyway, so Britain had to do the
same thing, right?

Rei isn’t sure she likes airports much; they’re noisy and far too full of people. She wishes they had
had another way to travel. But Wizarding transports, although reliable enough at the scale of a
country, aren’t as well adapted when you have to move to half-the-planet away. Asides of
Portkeys, of course, but international Portkeys take times to arrange thank to both countries having
to agree to it. And they probably wouldn’t have for just two people, one of them being non-
magical.

Her father is a wizard, but Rei’s mother isn’t -- and she isn’t that healthy to begin with. So they
took the plane, like Muggles. It was interesting, Rei supposed, but so long!

She feels tired and drowsy and the rain outside isn’t helping. She tries to listen to conversations,
but she quickly gives up with a humph because she can’t understand them. Daddy insisted she
learns some english already, but Rei only knows a handful of words so far. Instead she’s trying to
smile brightly while her mother speak to her in japanese, talking about the place Daddy bought for
them, and how much Rei will love it. The black-haired girl doubts it very much, but she doesn’t
comment.

It takes nearly one hour for her father to come in but suddenly he is there, calling out their names.
Rei is swiftly lifted off the ground and hugged her, making her stare; had someone jinxed her
father? He never acted like that before.

Then again, Hino Takashi had left for Great Britain almost four months prior in order to start his
new work at the British Ministry of Magic, where he had obtained a post in their own version of
the Department of International Magical Cooperation, and to prepare for his family’s eventual
arrival, for he intends to keep his new position for years and commuting from Britain to Japan on a
daily or weekly basis isn’t possible.

Four months without seeing either his wife or his daughter; he must have missed them. Besides…
well, despite often being on the move, Rei could hardly deny her father loved her and loved her
mother. He was only home one day per week but when he was, he devoted all his time to his
family, taking them out or enjoying quiet games and conversations and hearing about their own
week.

(It doesn’t occur to Rei until she was much older that arranging for weekly, international Portkeys
between China, where her father had been based from 1983 to mid 1985 in the same kind of work
he’d later do for the British Ministry of Magic, and Japan must have been incredibly difficult for
her father and probably had had to require the use of many personal favors. She had been more
lucky than she could have guessed.)

Soon enough they are heading out of the airport with a couple of suitcases (magically Extended
and alleged for a easier transportation of their belonging, of course), Rei holding tightly her
mother’s hand as they press under a large umbrella to protect themselves from the car. It
isn’t like the magical umbrellas they had at home, which were spelled to project heat over the
holder and to push water away; just a plain Muggle umbrella and Rei doesn’t like that. But at five
and half and with a parent who has always stressed out how careful they had to be when they
were non-magical people around, the little girl is smart enough to understand they couldn’t just
magic.

“... held up at work, I’m sorry; the Head of the Department decided to hold a last minute meeting
after we seized a lot of forbidden, imported flying carpets…” her father is saying as he walked
next to them, unbothered by the rain as they reach the parking lot and walk to an unfamiliar car. His wife is nodding with a smile to everything he says while Rei pays it little attention, her gaze wandering around.

Britain is definitely took grey and cold for her tastes, she decides, feeling opinionated. But at least the car is nice, she decides, and very large, much more so than she would have guessed from the outside. “Is that a magic car?” she asks as both her parents installed themselves next to her in the backseat. There is a british wizard behind the wheel, with whom her father speaks briefly and her mother greets warmly. Rei peeps out a small ‘Hello, Sir,’ some of the few words she knew in english then ducks and hides her face in her mother’s skirt.

“Exactly, Rei-chan,” her father smiles faintly, rubbing her head briefly. “Specially Enlarged and charmed to be able to fit into small passages a normal, Muggle car wouldn’t be able to fit through.”

“But I thought charming Muggle objects was forbidden, dear?” Rei’s mother inquires softly, looking vaguely worried.

“Normally it is,” her husband approves gravely, pleased his wife knows so much of the laws of the wizarding world, “and this is why we have a Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office, but those cars were charmed by Ministry personnel and for Ministry use. They’re perfectly legal, though their utilisation and access is restricted. I was lucky to be able to borrow one to come and pick you up.”

Rei turns out the rest of the conversation after that -- even more so after her parents switch to english to speak with the driver. Her mother is stumbling a little on words, but her father is perfectly fluent -- then again, he knows many languages outside of Japanese, such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Italian, Greek, Merinish, Gobbledegook and Troll, or so Rei has heard from some of his co-workers who had been invited home once or twice. Softly, she presses her forehead against the window and watches the landscape as the car leaves London and its outskirt and progress through the countryside. Eventually, Rei dozes off and fall asleep, rocked by the moves of the car and the reassuring presence of her parents.

By the time they wake her up and the car come to a stop, it is almost twilight. Rei yawns and looks blurrily around as her mother helps her out of the car and her father and the driver are pulling the bagages out of the car’s truck.

“Well, Rei-chan, what do you think? Do you like our new house?” her father asks as he crouches down besides her.

Rei tilts her head too look at the house, mentally comparing it with their traditional home back in Japan; she misses it very much at the moment, but part of her has to admit the house in front of her looks good.

It’s easily three stories tall, the exterior painted light grey and the roof dark blue slates. There seems to be a garden behind the house and two rows of rose bushes are framing the alley that leads to the porch and the door. There is also a big tree growing near the corner, its currently almost bare branches almost touching the windows on this side of the house.


A House-Elf named Pokey opens the door for them and greet them insides; it’s so unexpected her mother gasps and Rei hides behind her with big eyes. They knows what House Elves are, of course, and they even met some before but it’s very strange for Risa to have a servant at home.
“Don’t you think it’s too much, darling?”

“Well, I thought the same thing, but Pokey is bound to the house and was part of the sale. She has lived there her whole life and I just don’t have the heart to give her clothes. You know how they are about it…”

“Still…”

“Don’t worry; if it doesn’t work out, we’ll find a solution. Rei? You can say ‘hello’, you know. Pokey doesn’t bite,” he winks.

Pokey has a slightly too high-pitched voice for Rei’s comfort, but she seems nice. Of course, she’s only speaking english, so it’s hard for Rei to understand her. “We’ll get her to learn some Japanese, and it’ll make someone to help you practice your english, Rei. Actually, I could make that part of her duties instead of cooking or cleaning if you really wish to do it yourself, Risa.”

“That might works,” Rei’s mother comments thoughtfully while Rei makes a face; she’s not fond of the idea of learning more english, even if she knows she won’t have much of a choice here.

Then they’re off to visit the house.

Her father hasn’t finished preparing the house -- he has been waiting for the last of their furnitures, which are currently safely shrunken and stored inside the suitcases his wife and daughter brought with them -- but he certainly did a great decoration work. The ground floor is decorated and lay out in Western still and Rei finds it curious and unfamiliar and the second floor is a divided attic that remains to be properly decorated and furnished, but the first floor has a genkan-like area at its entrance and its floor is covered in tatami and has fusuma instead wooden doors.

“I thought we’d be more comfortable this way,” Hino Takashi explains after giving his family a tour of the house, smiling proudly. “A Western setting is best to greet eventual guests and hold dinner parties, but there is no reason for our rooms and private quarters to be fully Western as well. Now, how about we finish furnishing your room, Rei-chan?” he smiles while his wife gives a quiet laugh.

Rei just nods solemnly, though she doesn’t stay so solemn and actually ends up having fits of giggling as she directs her father on where she wants her bed to be put and how she wants her bookcases arranged and her Daddy even let a space free so he can buy her and install a proper desk later on. The shelves are soon full with her toys and books while her mother, humming, finishes to put her clothes in the closet and her father uses his wand to change the color of the lampshade to make it red, Rei’s favorite color.

Pokey watches them work while wriggling her fingers, obviously distressed, but a few words from Rei’s mother seems to calm her down and she soon disappears from sight -- to cook dinner, her father explains later as Rei inspects her room again and nods with satisfaction at the end result. She’s even more satisfied and happy when her father sets the kotatsu in one of the free room, the low, wooden table ready to be used at any moment should they desire to. It’s actually around the kotatsu they end up eating that night.

Dinner is pleasant, full of conversations and smiles and laughs from Rei’s mother as her husband tells her what happened to him during those four months of absence and tell them anecdotes about his work and his co-workers. He speaks mostly Japanese, but every now and then switches to english -- they all need to practice, he says, and Rei wouldn’t be surprised if he declared that they should only speak english at dinner table. Pokey do the service and disappears regularly with the empty plates, startling Rei and her mother every times she does. The House Elf is something they’ll have to get used to. Still, Rei has to admit so far, things aren’t going too bad, and her father
promised to show her the garden tomorrow.

When later on her mother tucks her in bed and kisses her goodnight, Rei thinks a little less of how much she’s missing Japan and a little more about how maybe Britain won’t be that bad after all.

*_**_*_**_*

She’s wrong; Britain is just as bad as she feared. In fact, it’s worse.

Her mother and father say it’s just different and that there are good things too, but Rei can only see the bad sides.

The solitude, for one. Not that she truly minds it, because sometimes she just feels better when she’s alone and not surrounded by noisy classmates, but she doesn’t want to be alone all the time either. In Japan, she has been attending a special kindergarten-like structure set up by the Japanese Ministry of Magic for children who haven’t yet the age to enter Mahoutokoro, the Japanese wizarding school. Mahoutokoro recruits its students when reach seven years old, though they only started to learn magic in earnest from the age of eleven onward.

Most pupils at the kindergarten came from Wizard families, but there were also children from Muggles families with wizarding ties and children issued from Squibs clans. MahouKo is where Rei has been learning colors and numbers and how to write and Muggle Studies so that everyone knew what to do or not do in the Muggle world if they ended there alone by accident. Rei had loved it.

But unlike Japan and a good part of Magical Asia, Magical Britain doesn’t have an Elementary school for magical children. Children from wizards families were homeschooled, and children from Muggles families, who were only formally identified when they go their school letter for Hogwarts, the British wizarding school, went to normal, Muggles schools. The children of mixed families ended in one system or the other, depending on their parents’ decision.

“No very practical, I admit,” Rei has heard her father say once as he spoke with his mother about Rei’s school options. “But Britain isn’t an exception; if anything, Asia is very progressive about early schooling for witches and wizards. The ICW really should set up some international standards on the matter. Of course, given how divided they already are on wizarding school in general, I can understand why early education isn’t part of their preoccupation. Did you know they only recognize eleven schools worldwide?”

No programs for young witches and wizards meant staying home all day. Rei didn’t have many friends back home, but now she’s feeling their absence acutely. Aside of her mother and Pokey (and her father when he’s home), she has no one to talk during the day. Sure, she could go in town and try to find playmates among the Muggles children, but her progresses with english are painstakingly slow; she apparently doesn’t have her father’s gift with languages. How can she plays with other children when she can’t even communicate properly?

She ends up spending a lot of time with her mother. They make paper flowers and origami that her father animates when he gets home. They make bubbles with sweet-scenting magical soaps, which bounce on the walls instead of bursting. Her mother reads her stories and they listen together to the Wizarding Wireless Network. It’s nice, Rei supposes, but it’s still lonely.

That said, Rei can’t say she likes having guests over either. Not her father’s co-workers at least. When Hino Takashi announces they’re going to have guests for dinner, Rei is always torn between hoping to be sent to bed early or having the right to stay up late to keep her mother’s company. She wishes they’d didn’t have to hold dinners so often.
“I need it for work, Rei-chan,” her father patiently explains more than once while Risa helps Pokey set the table. “If I want to be able to secure a better job for myself here in Britain and later back in Japan, I need to build reliable connexions through the Ministry. It’s not different that what we had in Japan.”

But it is, Rei thinks to herself.

Oh, most of her father’s co-workers are alright, but Rei can’t help and watch them suspiciously, waiting for the moment they realize Hino Risa isn’t a witch. She sees the way some smiles freeze while others turn condescending, how eyes become just a little more judgmental as they watch Rei’s mother up and down as if she had done something wrong. Their eyes usually skip over Rei with less severity, but there is still a certain coldness to their gaze. Pokey’s presence and impeccable service mollifies most of them, but not all. They don’t like the fact Risa is non-magical.

It’s so… so stupid!

Japan isn’t like that. All wizard clans, even the most ancient ones, have Muggles relatives; they are the ‘minor branches’ of the clan, distantly related to the ‘main branches’ but still considered kin and honored as such. When Squib children are born in the ‘main branch’, it is customary for their parents to have them adopted by ‘minor branches’ members in order to provide them with a good life, and watch out for them and their descendants in case one of them turned out to be magical a few generations later. And when magical children are born to ‘minor branches’ members, ‘main branch’ members tend to adopt them in, providing them with a good standing in Magical society.

Britain isn’t the same at all. They disregard Squibs altogether and are disrespectful of Muggles.

No, Rei can’t say she likes Britain very much when she realizes those people think her wonderful, kind mother is beneath their notice because she can’t use a wand. Especially since her mother is a Yoruno!

“No, my honored Grandparents, my parents and myself are Squibs, but the Yoruno clan is a very well-known magical clan. My Great-great-grandfather was Yoruno Mitsumasa; he was the Japanese Minister of Magic for five years between 1898 and 1903,” Risa explains once to a woman that reminds Rei of a toad (she makes Rei’s skin crawl, though she doesn’t understand why. Not yet). “And his son, my Great-grandfather Yoruno Masafumi, served on the ICW as one of Japan’s seats for over twenty years.”

Rei’s mother stands tall and regal, unbothered by the thinly veiled contempt of their unwelcome guests. She has no power, but she’s from a long and honored line of wizards nonetheless.

(Rei wonders sometimes just how much her father’s attraction to her mother had originally been due to her maiden name and the political benefices of being married to a Yoruno, even a ‘minor branch’ one. But her father genuinely loves her mother, of that she’s also certain.)

Such credential seem to sooth some of the harsher looking witches and wizards (the pink wearing, toad-like witch never comes to their house again though; Rei is grateful.)

The ones who still smile normally or those whose smiles turn more genuine and interested when they realises Risa doesn’t have a wand are rarer, though they exist as well. Rei’s favorite are among those rare people are a red-haired couple, the Weasleys, who have come once and who have been very nice; Mr Weasley had asked Risa questions all evening and had probably continued even after Rei was sent to bed.

Still, Rei doesn’t feel at ease with british wizards. She’d prefer to be back to Japan already. She’s
just... Rei isn’t quite six years old yet, but she’s insightful (so her father claims anyway). Deep down, she’s bothered by something. Something she can’t explain. Like if something is wrong, wrong about her, wrong about the world, and she can’t pinpoint what it is. She’s not at her place here in Britain.

And the weird dreams aren’t helping her to calm down at all.

Rei dreams of fire. Of a bright fire, warm and reaching high, while a long-haired miko she couldn’t see the face of was sitting in front of it in zazen position. And she wasn’t alone, Rei knew there had to be other people in the room, in front of the fire; she felt their presence, but she couldn’t turn her head, couldn’t move. Could just watch the fire and the miko and catch the distant smell of blooming sakura trees all around her. Crows were croaking somewhere, louder and louder. Then suddenly the miko was looking up and Rei saw something red flashes...

And she wakes up.

Other time, she dreams of an old man in a priest blue hakama. Sometimes it’s a small man that isn’t much taller than Rei, bald and laughing and eyeing the girls, other times it’s a dignified gentleman with a mustache who wink at her. He feels safe and reassuring and loving, like a Grandfather. But Rei’s two grandfathers don’t look like this at all...

The dream makes little sense, but at least it doesn’t feel threatening or overly weird. Only...

Only some times after dreaming, Rei feels like something is more off than usual. She becomes clumsy, for example, her moves uncoordinated when she tries to grab something or reach out for things. It feels like her limbs are too short and too long at the same time.

Then out of nowhere, Rei has brief flashes of deep loathing toward her father. She doesn’t know why; it’s not like he did anything wrong. Sure, he took them to Britain, made them leave England, but he did so because he didn’t want to be parted from his family. Wouldn’t it make more sense to loath him if he had sacrificed his family for his career?

(He did. He didn’t; but he did, somewhere, somewhen. He’s still too alike to the father-that-once-was for Rei’s mind not to draw subconscious parallels.)

It’s wrong. It’s confusing. It’s not normal. But she can’t bring herself to tell her parents about it. She doesn’t know why; if something is wrong, then they would fix it, right? And if they couldn’t, then a Healer would; Healers knew how to fix everything! They had even fixed Old Tanaka’s eyebrows when Rei’s first burst of accidental magic had burned them off.

She can’t, though. It is as if her throat is frozen, her words locked away. So she doesn’t say anything, just mutters something about nightmares when her parents notice she’s feeling down and lets her mother and Pokey fuss (the old House Elf is quite taken by ‘Little Mistress Rei’ to Rei’s puzzlement).

Then one morning, when she comes down for breakfast, she gets a surprise that chase away the dreams for moment. Instead of finding her mother in the kitchen giving instructions to Pokey and her father having already left for work, Rei finds both of her parents waiting for her in the living room. They sit in the couch next to each other and they’re smiling. Her father holds her mother’s hand while she lets her free hand rest her belly.

Rei knows even before her mother starts to speak.

“Rei-chan, your father and I have a big news for you…”
And now, here's Rei profile ^^

**Name:** Rei  
**Surname:** Hino  
**Blood status:** Half-blood (Pureblood father, Muggle mother)  
**Family:** Takashi Hino; father. Works the Departement of Magical Cooperation and the Department of Magical Games and Sports, among others. Risa Hino; mother. Muggle with magical relatives. Housewife. Died circa 1989. Miyabi Hino; sister. Born 1987; looks a lot like Rei  
**Birthdate:** April 17th, 1980  
**Entering Hogwarts in:** 1991  
**Pet(s):** Phobos and Deimos, two ravens  
**House:** Slytherin  
**Wand wood:** Silver Lime  
**Core:** Unicorn hair - brother core to Minako's  
**Size:** 11 inches 1/2  
**Description of wand:** Brittle  
**Best Subject(s):** Divination, Transfiguration  
**Worse Subject(s):** History of Magic  
**Electives:** Divination, Arithmancy, Muggles Studies  
**Extracurricular activities:** Xylomancy, Frog Choir  
**Dream:** To become a mondially recognized reference in Divination, fund a Divination magazine and teach/rehabilite the subject
Serena, 1988

Chapter Summary

Philippina Moon née Lovegood is an awesome mother to a clumsy blonde little girl...

Chapter Notes

Come on, there is officially a 'Moon' family in the HP verse, how could I resist? ^^
(even if I had first wanted to go with Lovegood, but I kept the idea anyway :p)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sudden sounds of porcelain shattering after hitting the ground made Philippina Moon pause in her proof reading of the latest article she had been sent and wince. Merlin, she hoped it wasn’t the blue china set; she had always been fond of it and it’s crescent moon pattern.

Seriously, it was getting quite ridiculous, Mrs Moon decided as she abandoned her attempt at correcting the article (rather dull, but Witches Weekly rarely produced anything she judged of quality) and grabbed her wand, knowing full-well she’ll need it to properly repair the damages once again. Why her husband refused to let her charm the china to make it unbreakable was beyond her.

And how their daughter always managed to break things that were supposed to be under lock and key or spelled not to be removed from their shelves by anyone but the caster was a source of near constant migraines.

So much for Serena being a Squib, she thought dryly and with a slight frown as she remembered the last row she had with family members over the matter. If her daughter’s tendency to get in trouble wasn’t magic, then Philippina didn’t know what it was.

Just because her daughter wasn’t animating her toys or floating in the air like her cousin Lily didn’t meant her daughter wasn’t a witch, she thought ferociously as she went down the stair, lifting the hem of her long skirt to avoid walking on it; Serena’s clumsiness was not quite an inherited trait, but Philippina had to privately admit she wasn’t the most agile witch herself.

As she entered the kitchen and eyed the scene, she had to sigh. Well, at least it wasn’t the blue chine; just an ugly vase Philippina had received from her grandmother-in-law (awful lady, really, and not someone Philippina wished to spend any time with if she could avoid it; she was half-convinced the first accusation of Serena being a Squib had originated from her).

Philippina had no trouble imagining the scene; here came his sweet-tooth addled daughter, wanting a snack and deciding cookies were just the thing, then noticing the jar had been pushed on the top shelf of the kitchen cabinet, too far out of her reach for her to grab it unless she summoned it to her in a feat of accidental magic (which Philippina was persuaded had been her husband’s idea) … or, more pragmatically, to push a chair toward the counter and use it to climb on the aforementioned counter. And, of course, the vase had been knocked over in the attempt.
It didn’t take much for Philippina to imagine how startled Serena had been, so startled she had accidentally kicked the chair over and fell to the ground, landing on her bottom on the other side of the counter, far away from the glass shards. Pure dumb luck, or subtle manifestation of magic? Philippina would argue the latter, but most of the family would argue the former. And sadly, her husband would be among them.

But now wasn’t the time to think about her contrary husband; Philippina’s immediate concern was first and foremost to care for her crying daughter.

Because Serena was indeed crying, and her mother took no time to kneel besides her and check her over, sighting in relief as she saw no shard had buried itself in the little girl’s skin and no blood drops stained her clothes. It was more shock and fear that were making Philippina’s little girl cry, something that could easily be fixed with a few hugs and lots of reassurances. Gently, she gathered Serena in her knees and started to stroke her hair.

“There, there, sweetie, it’s okay,” she murmured. Serena just wailed, making Philippina wince at the high-pitched noise. In between sobs, Serena was trying to speak and her mother smiled joylessly as she continued to pat her. “I’m not upset with you, Serena. I’m not, I promise,” she murmured soothingly and repeated herself several times until her daughter accepted to look at her.

Philippina looked at her fondly. At seven years old, Serena was just adorable. She had blue eyes that seemed almost too large for her face and that gave her a perpetually innocent look and long, long golden blond hair that almost fell to her waist. Philippina had tried several times to style them in a good hairdo, but so far nothing she had done had pleased Serena -- nor Philippina herself, to be honest. Serena loved candies and cakes and had declared her absolute favorite was ice cream, which prompted her mother to frequently take her to Florean Fortescue’s Ice Cream Parlour in Diagon Alley for treats as rewards… or as comfort.

And Merlin knew Serena needed all the comfort she could those days, the blonde witch thought briefly with distaste.

The last couple months had been tense to say the least, ever since Serena’s seventh birthday party where her cousin Lily, who was only a year older than Serena, a made a display of accidental magic that had had the adults gossiping gayly… at least until someone remarked that the birthday girl had yet to have a single burst of accidental magic worthy of notice. As stated before, Philippina strongly suspected her grandmother-in-law to have thrown the first stone, possibly out of spit; the old hag had never accepted that one of her cherished grandsons had married ‘that crackpot Xenophilius Lovegood’s sister’ and had never lost any occasion to try and discredit her. Serena was just a handy target.

Old bitch, she thought angrily as she hugged Serena harder.

So what if Xenophilius was a little eccentric? Alright, he was very eccentric, but he was Philippina’s older brother and she loved him; she wasn’t about to cut him off from her life just because some of her husband’s family members disapproved of him! Archie was usually supportive, but Philippina wasn’t blind to the way her husband was starting to tense whenever his brother-in-law was mentioned those days. That hurt, but she tried not to show it and avoided talking of her work for the Quibbler if she didn’t have to. Not that Archie would have have anything to tell her; who she proofread for, photographed for or drew caricatures for was none of his business, and it wasn’t the rest of the Moon family’s business either.

Especially not the snobbish idiots that composed the older generation. Tss; because a Moon had been Minister of Magic during the forties, they were insufferable about their standing in society. They weren’t quite pure-blood supremacists, but they were dangerously toying the line. Well, not all of them; one of Archie’s uncles had married a Muggle and one of his older brothers had
married a Muggleborn witch. Next to that, Archie’s marriage to Philippina Lovegood was considered more than acceptable; at least the Lovegood were a wizarding family.

But to have a Squib in the family? The ‘Old Guard’, as Philippina had nicknamed them, judged it to be completely unacceptable -- and they were quick to try and ‘rectify the problem’. Philippina had lost of count of poisoned words she had heard in the last months, the commiserating over being ‘the mother of a Squib’, how much better it’d be for Serena ‘to grow up among her kind’. Philippina hadn’t been proud to have to call the Accidental Magical Reversal Team after one such comment had made her lost her temper.

But the falsely honeyed words were easier to deal with and to support than the relatives who had tried to ‘make Serena show some magic’. By ‘accidentally’ pushing her out of the window. Or by making her fall from from her swing. Suffice to say, Philippina had hexed quite a few persons and she was currently persona non grata at her mother-in-law’s tea parties. She didn’t care much about it.

What truly hurt her what to see her husband starting to be swayed by his family’s opinion of his daughter. Archie loved Serena, but… It was hard not to notice how he wasn’t defending her as much anymore, or how he questioned her at length about what she did during the day in the hope of catching the faintest proof Serena was magical. It was also hard not to notice the way his smile fell when it became obvious Serena had done nothing out of the ordinary.

He hadn’t talked to Philippina about it but… he was becoming distant.

Well, screw them the blonde witch thought fiercely.

Philippina wasn’t ashamed of her family, and she wasn’t ashamed of her daughter. Serena was a witch, she was sure of it. Her little girl was just a late bloomer, that was all. And even if she was, that wouldn’t stop Philippina to love her just as much.

“‘M sorry Mummy,” Serena sniffed, and Philippina was quick to draw a handkerchief out of her pocket and make her blow her nose. “I didn’t meant to broke it!” She was wailing again.

“I know sweetie, I know,” Philippina reassured her, rocking her. “I’m not angry with you, little one. I can repair it quickly, see?” She used her wand and cast a simple ‘Reparo’, watching with satisfaction as all the shards levitated and converged together to reform the vase -- though she made a quick note to charm it later.

Her satisfaction faded as she saw Serena flinch as the vase repaired itself. It hadn’t escaped Philippina that displays of magic were starting to make her daughter become withdrawn when they weren’t simply scaring her. It made Philippina’s heart break to see her gentle daughter gradually become afraid of what was their natural gift and she silently cursed her husband’s family again.

Thankfully she knew just the way to cheer Serena.

“Say, Serena, how about we go visit your Uncle? You could have a playdate with your cousin,” she mentioned casually. Serena just looked at her with teary eyes, prompting Philippina to add. “Your Uncle Xenophilius and your cousin Luna.” The teary eyes suddenly became animated by a happy light and the little blonde nodded her head quickly.

Obviously Serena had thought her mother had been talking about her cousin Lily. Philippina had nothing against the child, really; Lily was usually a sweet girl as well, but she was taking too much of her cues from the adults. Philippina suspected she had done or said something to Serena when the two had been alone, but her daughter was tight-lipped on the subject and there was little
Philippina could do to get her to open up.

At least her secret weapon -- an afternoon with her favorite Uncle and cousin -- was still working; hopefully it’d be enough to chase away Serena’s sadness for the time being, and it’d give Philippina a breather as she spoke with Xenophilius and his wife Pandora. Now, that was a witch she was always pleased to speak with, although Philippina sometimes worried about her occupation. Spell-crafter wasn’t an easy job and many things could go wrong during testing…

But there was nothing to worry about; Pandora was always careful, she reminded herself.

She gently pushed Serena away in order to stand and, like an afterthought, reached up to the cookies jar and picked one she handed to her daughter; Serena’s happy squeal at received the chocolate-chipped treat made Philippina smile slightly. Walking to the series of peg along the wall, she grabbed a couple of warm winter cloaks for herself and Serena and smiled down at her daughter. “Alright, how do you prefer to go? Should we Apparate or use the Floo powder?”

*_*_*_*_*_*_*

Serena barely had the time to hug her Aunt Pandora to say ‘hello’ before with a cry of joy, Luna was pouncing on her. Serena almost fell on her bottom but she laughed all the same. “Luna!”

She had missed her cousin. Luna was always fun to hang out with -- all the Lovegoods were so it was no surprise Luna was her favorite cousin ever, ever! Well… mostly. But now wasn’t the time to think about Lily; she was here to play, wasn’t she?

“Come, we’re going to play in my room!”

Serena let Luna tug her along as they raced through the tower, climbing up the stairs as fast as they could -- though Luna was mindful of slowly down whenever Serena started to stumble. From downstairs, she could vaguely hear Mommy and Aunt Pandora talking, though the sound was too muffled for her to make sense. Perhaps they were talking about Serena’s latest mishap.

The little golden-blonde girl’s heart gave a pang. It had been an accident, honest; she hadn’t meant to break the vase. And… she didn’t meant to make Mommy and Daddy so worried and she didn’t meant to make everyone so angry and she hadn’t meant to broke the tea cup or the glass or the little crystal cat statue on her mother’s desk! She had just wanted to look at them closer than they had slipped from her hands, honest!

It never seemed to really upset Mommy, but Daddy… Daddy never seemed happy with her those days. Neither was the rest of the family asides of Uncle Xeno and Aunt Pandora and Luna, of course.

She really would have liked to see Uncle Xeno today, because her Uncle was the funniest and most awesome wizard Serena knew; he gave great hugs, he was a great explorer and he knew stuffs most wizards didn’t know about, like the Crumple-Horned Snorkack! Daddy thought it was all ‘hogwash’ but Serena still listened to Uncle Xeno’s takes with rapt attention. She had even offered to help him by drawing Crumple-Horned Snorkacks pictures to put in the Quibbler -- something Luna did too. Uncle Xeno had even published them! Serena still kept a copy in her treasures box under her bed at home.

She had tried to show it to Lily when she had come on a playdate the other day, but… Well, it hadn’t worked too well. Lily had been disdainful from the moment she had arrived, and she had said things…

She hadn’t told Mommy, because Mommy would have worried and she would have been sad and
Serena didn’t want Mommy to be sad over her, and she didn’t want to tell Daddy either because she didn’t think Daddy would have been able to help either. But… it hurt all the same.

… It wasn’t Serena’s fault she didn’t show magic, the blonde thought dejectedly before she yelped, stumbling over a step. She would have fallen if Luna hadn’t steadied her. Serena looked up to cross eyes with Luna.

“Everything alright, Rini?” Luna asked as she looked at her up and down with a frown, using the nickname she had given her cousin when they had both been toddlers.

The golden-blond girl ducked her head. “Yes…” but she had to wince as how unconvinced she sounded even to her own ears.

Thankfully, Luna didn’t ask questions. She just looked at her for a moment more before shaking her head. “You shouldn’t listen to them,” she said seriously. Then she took a dreamy look, her eyes lost faraway. “They’re Moons, but they don’t see the Moon,” she sing songed before giving Serena a smile that left the golden-blond bemused. Luna could be a little weird sometimes… but Serena adored her all the same.

Another tug from Luna, and they were both off to reach Luna’s room again.

“So, what do you want to play to?” Serena asked as Luna opened the room.

“Oh, I don’t know,” Luna said airily, but her eyes were twinkling. “I thought perhaps we could start with Chocolate Frog Cards, what do you think?”

Luna always had the best ideas, Serena thought briefly as she dropped to her knees on the pale blue carpet and squealed at the assortment of Chocolate Frog cards Luna had spread over it. There were a couple she didn’t recognize right away and she wondered if she could get Lune to swap some.

“I had new ones thank to Daddy,” Luna giggled as she sat cross-legged next to Serena. “He sent them over from Sweden; they are a couple you don’t find in England. You want to help me sort them?”

Serena nodded eagerly, hands already reaching for the nearest cards. “Of course!”

She always loved Luna’s collection because there always were rare, unexpected cards inside -- though perhaps not as much as in Serena’s own collection. Uncle Xenophilius travelled a lot in order to find some of the more elusive creatures he described in the Quibbler, something Serena admired him for, and whenever he travelled, he brought back Chocolate Frogs for Luna -- and for Serena as well.

While most of the Famous Witches and Wizards Cards hidden in the Chocolate Frogs packs were released internationally, there were a couple that country-exclusives. Hardcore collectors traded them for lots of Galleons or even for hundred of other cards, but importing foreign packages and hoping to find a rare one was still the easiest method. Of course, importing them costed money -- not that Serena truly understood how much.

All that she knew was, Uncle Xeno brought them foreign Chocolate Frogs packs that were sometimes different from the british recipe (France had an exclusive strawberry mousse-filled recipe, and belgian chocolate was way tastier than every other and their Frogs hopped much higher than average and then there was Germany which had an anatomically correct, peppermint-flavored variant where you could slurp the Frog’s insides and there were so many others she didn’t know about and she wanted to try!) with new, funny cards inside that Serena had never
seen anywhere else, and there were also plenty of local differences, like Albus Dumbledore’s robes being purple in Britain but deep blue with stars on the cards released in Germany.

(When she’d grow up a little and showed her collection around in Hogwarts, she’d make a couple of older students choke when they realized what exactly was in young Serena Moon’s collection - and that was only those she had brought to Hogwarts to begin with)

“Hey, I didn’t know you had gotten Circe! I still haven’t found it,” Serena exclaimed, pouting, as she leaned forward to pick a card of the famous Greek witch. She had such pretty dark curls, Serena thought as she watched the painted witch raise an eyebrow at her. “Mommy and Daddy only let me have one Chocolate Frog a day,” she added wistfully as she finished reading Circe’s biography before whining. “At this rate I won’t get her before foooooorever!”

A single Chocolate Frog a day was clearly insufficient, but Daddy was intransigent about it. At least Mommy understood that chocolate and cakes and candies and ice cream (especially ice cream) were Important, and she regularly baked her treats for afternoon snacks and dessert. She, however, agreed a single Chocolate Frog a day was enough and Serena couldn’t make her change her mind.

Luna didn’t have that problem, she thought wistfully; she got to eat all the Chocolate Frog she wanted.

Her dirty blonde cousin giggled, hiding her mouth behind her hands. “You’re funny Rini! I got it in two exemplary, want to trade for one?”

Serena’s eyes brightened before her face fell. “I’d like to, but I haven’t brought my cards with me,” she confessed, feeling distraught over such a big mistake. Of course, it wasn’t as if the trip to see Luna had been planned like usual...

Luna waved the objection aside. “That’s alright, you just look at what cards you’d like and we swap the next time you’re over,” she smiled brightly. “Plus, you’ll have new ones as well.” She leaned forward conspiratorially, her eyes looking larger. “I shouldn’t tell you, but Daddy sent a owl with a package the other day, and there were two boxes of Chocolate Frogs in.” The happy squeal Serena made landed her in a new fit of giggling, which only grew louder when Serena tackled her to hug her. The two girls ended rolling on the carpet, sending cards flying everywhere as they playfully wrestled.

By the time their laughter had calmed and they broke the hug, both were lying on their front, gathering the Famous Witches and Wizards cards together and sorting according to Luna’s taste (which made no sense to Serena but she certainly wasn’t going to complain because Luna’s system, mysterious as it was, was a lot more fun than ordering them by number like her older cousins on the Moons’ side did), quietly chatting. Luna even read Serena Uncle Xeno’s latest letter and showed her the pictures he had taken from a blurry figure that might have been a Crumple-horned Snorkack? Serena was most impressed, though her attention was still mostly on the cards.

As such, she wasn’t expecting Luna to suddenly ask her a question. “Aren’t your hair bothering you? I mean you keep pushing back that strand behind your ear.”

Serena paused, glancing at her fingers where eyes caught golden blonde threads. True enough, she had been in the midst of pushing it back, again. As much as she liked long hair, whenever she was lying on her belly they just hung over her face and started to bother her, but it had become such a common occurrence that Serena didn’t pay it much attention anymore.

She shrugged. “Kinda?” she offered. “But I don’t like it when Mommy tie them; they never
look… right,” she finished lamely, frowning. It was very hard to explain, really.

She didn’t mine Mommy doing her hair but whenever Serena looked into a mirror, she couldn’t help but find her reflection felt wrong one way or another and end up undoing the braids, pigtails or ponytail she had been styled with. It was like… the little girl who was staring back at her in the mirror had her eyes and her face, but it wasn’t her, her. Luna might get it, Serena thought briefly, but it was hard to put into words, especially so since Serena herself had no idea of what felt wrong. Letting her hair free wasn’t ideal, but it felt less wrong than other hairstyles. As for cutting them… well, that felt worse and wrong and she had wailed like a baby the first and only time someone had suggested her to.

Luna hummed thoughtfully. “What if I was the one to do them?” she asked brightly. “You do mine, I do yours?”

Serena hesitated. “Sure, why not?” she finally decided, because Luna’s eyes were shining and it couldn’t hurt.

A moment later, she was sitting on her heels and trying to stay still as Luna was brushing her long golden blonde hair and pulling and twisting them as she wished, humming to herself as she worked. Serena let her hands rest over her knees and hummed along with her. She could feel her cousin rolling her hair on either side of her head in little buns, but a lot of Serena’s hair stayed free as well. Strands kept escaping Luna’s hand the other seven years-old had to try and try again but finally, she leaned back with satisfaction; “There, all done!” she crowed in victory, jumping to her feet to go pick a mirror on the cute pale blue dressing table by her windows; Luna didn’t have a big cheval glass like Serena had in her room, which Serena thought was a pity. Cheval glasses were neat and you could try plenty of clothes in front of one to pick the best outfit! Perhaps she should ask Mommy if they could offer one to Luna for her birthday…

Her train of thoughts stopped abruptly.

Luna was holding the mirror in front of her face and Serena could only stare at her reflection with an open mouth. Her hand started to rose to tug at her hair but Luna’s hand on hers stopped Serena. “Better be careful, I’m not too sure how well it’s going to hold up if you touch them,” the dirty blonde girl advised.

Serena nodded wordlessly, staring at the two little round buns on either side of her head, with pigtails flowing from them at the back.

For the first time since forever, Serena was looking at herself and feeling that something was right>. Though she couldn’t understand why, in that very moment, she wanted to pet Luna like she would a kitten...

“So, you like?” Luna asked with a bright smile. “I thought that’d look cute on you. You look like a bunny,” she added after a moment of reflexion and a giggle. “You’re the prettiest moon bunny ever!” Serena couldn’t help it; she giggled too.

“There’s no rabbit on the moon, Luna!”

“Oh, but Daddy is convinced there are, and Daddy is usually right,” the other child replied doctorally.

“Oooh, if Uncle Xeno says there are, then there must!” Serena clapped. “Do you think we’d get a chance to see one if we used the telescope?” Because moon rabbits wouldn’t be found on
Earth, of course, so the only way to see them would be to observe the moon every night.

“Perhaps,” Luna mused, “but I don’t think Mommy or Auntie Philippina are going to let us stay up late at night.” She sounded dismayed by the idea, and so was Serena.

“But I wanted to see the moon bunnies!” She whined.

“That’s alright, Rini,” Luna patted her. “We’ll see them another time, when we’re older and Mommy and Auntie can’t stop us from staying up if we wish.” She passed a hand in her loose ponytail, reminding Serena she had promised to do her cousin’s hair as well. Carefully, she took the brush Luna had put on the ground.

“So… how about we’re making you a moon rabbit as well?” Serena proposed with a giggle (though Luna ought to be a moon cat, the golden blonde couldn’t help but think).

Luna’s eyes brightened.

*_*_*_*_*_*

Philippina tried to smile but it felt forced; she didn’t particularly want to be here but she could hardly turn down an invitation for her niece’s birthday party without being frowned at -- and she wasn’t about to let Archie go alone with Serena. Merlin only knew what would happen then, what’s with most of the family’s attitude toward the supposed Squib.

At least Lily was a sweet girl, or she used to be be, Philippina thought dispassionately as she nodded cordially at her sister-in-law Catherine, the wife of Archie’s brother Jasper (Muggleborn and very nice, but she rarely saw her; a pity, because she was one of the few people in the Moon family who wasn’t giving Serena any grief). And at least there were some intelligent, bias-free adults to speak with, as Clavius Moon had turned his girl’s birthday party into a social event by inviting a couple of his co-workers at the Department of Magical Games and Sports and their children.

Which might explains why Xenophilius had been invited; the Quibbler wasn’t a highly sought after magazine but it still remained a magazine with a few faithful readers, and Clavius (or perhaps more so his wife Lavinia) tended to like publicity. Philippina’s brother hadn’t come alone thankfully, and even as Philippina exchanged a flat greeting with her mother-in-law (no way Philippina was going to say ‘sorry’ about the charmed teapot which had attacked the guests, not so long they hadn’t excused themselves) she could see Pandora Lovegood herding her husband toward a group of similarly minded wizards.

Little Luna, bless her heart, had taken to stick by Serena and the two of them were chatting and giggling over the last crossword of the Quibbler in between cheering for the kids who had started a Junior Quidditch tournament in the Moons’ backyard. Neither Luna nor Serena seemed to be interested by the broom games, much to Philippina’s relief; while she was certain her daughter was magical, Serena’s clumsiness would be a bad mix if coupled with toy brooms. Presumably, the two cousins would let themselves be tempted by a game of Gobstones once there was a free spot in the field, unless they wandered to the table where a couple of children were playing Exploding Snap.

She wasn’t worried for them. She was even relieved the two of them were together.

“So Philippina dear, I saw this very amusing drawing in the Prophet the other day and I’ve been told it was yours?”

“Oh, yes, yes, it was,” the blonde witch replied distractedly before losing Serena and Luna in the
crowd as the two blondes ducked behind adults, probably going to join the rest of the children somewhere. Well, nothing could happen to them while they were together, she decided, pushing away any lingering worries.

She was right.

Nothing bad happened during the afternoon, aside of a few scratched knees, smelly children who had lost at Gobstones begging for a Scourgify and some perfume and a few disputes over the arbitration of the final match of the tournament -- but given they children had a professional referee overseeing them, their protestations were for moot. Having Magical Sports and Games experts on hand certainly does make for an interesting party, Philippina mused to herself as she accepted a cup of tea from her mother-in-law (their respective smiles were still forced but at least they weren’t glaring at each other, which was a progress).

“That’s an interesting hairstyle your daughter is spotting, Philippina,” one old lady (wasn’t it Leonard Spencer-Moon’s widow? Philippina wasn’t sure; there was a couple relatives here she was utterly unfamiliar with) mentioned as Serena run past their group, apparently engaged in a scavenger hunt across the property. Her two buns and the long tails that escaped from them gathered a few glances.

At least the comment wasn’t hostile, merely curious. Philippina’s smile was thin but genuine. “Oh, yes. An idea from her cousin Luna; she had the most curious idea that Serena was actually a ‘moon rabbit’ while they were playing and that Serena should ‘look the part’. Serena just loved the hairstyle and now she keeps insisting I do her hair that way every day. I don’t mind, really, it makes her happy and I admit the style does suit her.”

The story gathered a few laughs and an exchange of meaningful looks between mothers who had had daughters to raise.

“A moon rabbit,” another witch chuckled with fondness. “What won’t children invent?”

“But there aren’t any rabbits on the moon!” a child voice piped in, sounding indignant. Philippina tried not to sigh as Lily Moon, face far too serious for her nine years old, looked over her Grandmother’s shoulder.

“There aren’t, sweetie, but one can always play pretend,” her grandmother advised, patting her hand. Lily didn’t sound convinced but left without further question, dragged away by one of her friends. Her Grandmother grumbled. “I love this child but really, her parents shouldn’t push her to grow up too fast. Next she’ll tell you she’s too old for dolls,” she sighed regretfully.

“How right you are,” Philippina let compassion drift in her voice, and other witches said much the same thing. “Children need to be children.”

Her mother-in-law didn’t reply, but Philippina had the impression her gaze had softened slightly the next time Serena passed by them; suspected Squib or not, Serena was very much a little girl and very playful, something her grandmother obviously appreciated enough to overlook any other ‘fault’ -- at least for the time being.

Philippina didn’t catch much of a glimpse of the birthday girl for the rest of the afternoon until it was time for the cake.

And what a cake! Philippina eyed it appraisingly as it was brought it, levitated by two wizards in a livery (employees of the bakery that had made the cake in the first place, Philippina guessed). It was easily four stories tall with animated decors depicting galloping Unicorns, Flying Horses stretching their wings, dancing Fairies and digging Niffler. The candles had been artfully placed
on each stories and were lighted with pink flames. It didn’t take a genius to guess it was also
flavored according to the birthday girl’s favorite favors (vanilla and lemon curd, if Philippina
remembered right from previous birthday parties).

On the whole, it was the kind of birthday cake every little witches dreamed of, and Philippina
made a mental note to ask for their cards before they left; Serena would certainly enjoy a cake of
the same type for her own birthday next year.

Everything feels nice and for once, Philippina feels like maybe the family reunion won’t be a
complete disaster.

That’s it, until Lily’s eyes narrowed at Serena as the blonde sat at the table in a seat opposite her,
practically drooling in anticipation for the birthday cake. Luna sat next to her, giggling and talking
with her cousin in a low voice.

“I don’t want Serena to get a slice!”

Lily’s declaration made Serena’s eyes widen. Not everyone had heard her; the room was crowded
as it was and many relatives and acquaintances who hadn’t seen each other in a while were using
the occasion to share the latest gossip and reconnect. The children, even the birthday girl, were left
mostly unsupervised. But not by Philippina; the blond witch always kept an ear about for Serena
and her cousins, even as she was speaking with her in-laws.

And what she heard was enough to make her stop a sentence abruptly and give herself a whiplash
as she turned her head to stare at her niece in shock.

Lily stuck her tongue at her younger cousin, crossing her arms over her chests as Serena’s bottom
lip started to shake; next to her, Luna’s eyes had lost their dreamy shine and she seemed to have
become a touch paler as she took a step backward. “Because cakes are for witches, not for
Squibs!” Lily claimed aloud, making a few adults startle or stiffen as they heard her.

Philippina’s eyes narrowed dangerously as her gaze zeroed on Lily’s parents. Lily used to be a
nice, sweet child, the blond witch recalled with dread and fury. She had helped Serena take her
first steps when she had been a toddler, had come for sleepovers at Philippina and Archie’s house
for the sole purpose to be able to play with her cousin. Lily adored Serena. Had adored.

There was no way the now nine years old girl had changed her opinion about her cousin or come
to such conclusions all by herself. Children tended to imitate their parents and take what they said
for the absolute truth. Archie’s oldest brother Clavius could be a prick, but from his shocked
expression, he hadn’t expected his daughter to say something so hateful, especially not in front of
so many guests. From the squareness of his jaw, Philippina guessed he would have words with
her once the guests had left. His wife, however… well, there was a look of smug satisfaction
about her that made Philippina’s skin crawl.

Instinctively, her fingers searched for the pocket where she stored her wand, ready to use it.

She didn’t have the occasion to; Serena started to sniff. “M not!” she screeched, fists tightening
and tears welling up at the corner of her eyes.

“Are too!”

“Are not!”

”Are too!”

“I AM NOT!” Serena wailed so loudly that the people nearest the table felt their ears ringing.
From the corner of her eyes, Philippina saw Archie walking toward the table, looking displeased and embarrassed by his daughter’s outburst. She was ready to move to intercept him and stop him from scowling their daughter (it wasn’t Serena’s fault, she thought fiercely) when it happened.

Without warning, Lily’s birthday cake shot up in the air and started to float a good meter above the table -- and it started to raise even higher as Serena’s sobs gained a higher pitch. Lily gasped, adults muttered between them, wondering who had cast a spell to make the cake levitate.

Philippina’s heart missed a beat as slowly, the realization dawned on everyone present that no one had cast a Wingardium Leviosa because no one had its wand out but before anyone was able to say anything, Serena screamed.

“I HATE YOU!!!!”

And the cake shot up again to collide with Lily’s face.

Everyone stared. Most adults’ eyes had widened in shock, though Xenophilius and Pandora had stayed perfectly calm and looked amused. Little Luna had her mouth hidden behind her hands (and if Philippina knew her niece, she was probably trying to hide her grin). Archie’s mouth had dropped open in shock. Lily, stuck speechless, could only stare at her cousin as cream dripped off her hair and down her face in thick globs. Serena was still wailing and rubbing her eyes with her fists, unconcerned by what had just happened -- maybe she hadn’t even noticed, upset as she was.

Not perturbed and feeling both giddy about her daughter’s first confirmed display of accidental magic (making a cake levitate! Philippina should have known her sweet-addicted daughter would do something like that) and understandingly vindictive toward the rest of her relatives, Philippina just smirked and sipped at her cup of tea as if nothing was wrong.

“Well, so much for Serena being a Squib, don’t you think?” she asked sweetly as if nothing was wrong.

Serena stopped crying, taken aback. She looked up at her mother with teary eyes but a strangely hopeful look on her face. Philippina gave her the tiniest nod and winked at her. Serene started to tentatively smile as Luna hugged her and congratulated her.

And beautiful chaos erupted in her stead.

Chapter End Notes

Name: Serena Bunny Victoria (from the English dub, French dub and DiC's promotional trailer for the English dub)
Surname: Moon
Blood status: Pureblood
Family: Philippina Lovegood; mother. Correspondant, photographer and caricaturist for The Quibbler and various other wizarding magazines; Archie Moon; father. Ministry employee: Xenophilius Lovegood; uncle. Pandora Lovegood; aunt. Luna Lovegood; cousin. Various Moon relatives
Birthdate: June 30th, 1981
Entering Hogwarts in: 1992
House: Gryffindor
Wand wood: Bi-mattered wand from a limited experiment by Mr Ollivander;
Rowan with Willow shards
Core: Phoenix feather
Size: 9 inches 3/4
Description of wand: Nice and flexible
Best Subject: Astronomy
Worse Subject: Potions
Electives: Care of Magical Creatures, Divination, Muggles Studies
Extracurricular activities: Astronomy Club, Wizard Cards Collectors' Club
Dream: To marry (and perhaps work in a pet shop)
Darien, 1987

Chapter Summary

Darien Shields has confusing memories of the car accident... Or is it accidents?

For as long as Darien Shields remembered, he had always been fond of roses.

There was something about the flowers that he found deeply comforting, though he would have been unable to put what in words. Perhaps it was their discreet but sweet scent, or perhaps it was the richness of their colors range, or perhaps even the incredible number of varieties and the subtle variations he could find in their petals, in their thorns or absence of thorns, in their robustness or their fragility.

(Roses made a good weapon… No. They didn’t.)

Darien Shields just knew he loved roses, especially red ones, and he had made a point of filling the family’s small garden with rose bushes. His mother watched him gardening with a pleased smile, but he wasn’t blind to the small wrinkles creasing at the corner of her eyes, on her forehead. She was worried, worried for her son, worried that her boy was just using intense gardening as a way to deal with the trauma of the accident. Which would have make sense, except… except Darien couldn’t say he had been traumatized.

Not that he dared to say it to his mother; she wouldn’t have understood. The accident had left too many marks on her, be they physical or mental. She had abruptly become a widow, had almost lost her son and her own life in a matter of minutes when that truck had t-boned their car at a crossroads.

Strangely, Darien had only the barest memories of the accident itself. He knew he had been in the car and that he had been injured, breaking his arm and violently hitting his head but… it never felt real to him. Sure, he remembered being in the hospital, and he remembered wearing a cast, but that was about it. It was as if the accident itself had happened to someone else. As weird and shocking as it was, he never felt anything when it was brought up, when his own father was brought up.

And that wasn’t normal. His father had been a good man, and he had loved his family -- and Darien must have loved him back, because everyone kept telling him how great Mr Shields had been. But whenever Darien tried to connect his picture (and there were a lot of pictures of him in the house, put on display by a grieving Mrs Shields), he just felt empty. The black-haired man smiling on the chimney’s mantle felt like a stranger. And Darien couldn’t really cry for the death of a stranger.

Darien knew it upset his mother and he felt guilty to cause her so much worry when she had so many troubles dealing with the sequels of the accident herself, but he couldn’t help himself. Whenever she tried to speak about it, Darien just felt… blank.

Dr Pearson, the psychiatrist he had had to see after the accident, had told them Darien was likely suffering from a form of dissociation, probably using detachment as a coping mechanism to avoid dealing with his own pain.
Perhaps he was right, but knowing why he may feel nothing about his father’s brutal passing didn’t help Darien -- and it didn’t help Mrs Shields. Therapy could only do so much for her own trauma and her physical injuries.

 Whereas Darien had been ‘lucky’ and Mr Shields had died, Mrs Shields had suffered multiple fractures that left her still walking with a cane nowaday.

 (Her survival was akin to a miracle, the neighbors whispered between them, thinking Darien wasn’t able to hear them; the car had been so badly crushed, she should have died. But it was as if something had protected her, protected her and Darien, who had been sitting just behind her in the car.)

 (Magic takes strange forms. Magic can save lives. But magic can’t save all lives, and there is only so much a child’s wild, accidental magic can do to protect him when he’s in danger or protect those who are nearest him.)

 (Magic is akin to a miracle, as Darien would learn when he turned eleven and a tiny wizard came to his house to deliver a letter.)

 (An even later, when he’d finally, fully remember what once was and who he had been, he would wonder if surviving a car accident twice over was a strange coincidence or a strange form of magic in itself.)

 From the doctor’s’ report, there was little chance Mrs Shields would ever be able to walk without one ever again. The pain she experienced when walking or standing up for too long was so severe she often ended her day in a wheelchair.

 That was from her wheelchair she usually watched Darien as he went around in the garden, pulling weeds and cutting off dead flowers, mowing the lawn or raking the dead leaves, those small wrinkles painfully obvious to her son whenever he looked up at her. He was hurting her, even if he didn’t want to, and it made Darien feel rotten because if he couldn’t connect emotions with his father’s memories, he loved his mother.

 So he tried to cover her in hugs and kisses and always brought her the prettiest roses in the garden to embellish her room or put in the vase next to Mr Shields’ portrait and he smiled in relief when the wrinkles receded and she beamed at him, even if it was temporary.

 Roses were easier than humans, Darien decided. And easier than memories. Or dreams.

 He hadn’t told Dr Pearson yet, but… he was starting to remember the accident. Sort of. He believed so at least. What was certain was that Darien had nightmares, and they were nightmares about a car accident. But… they didn’t felt like they were about the Shields’ car accident.

 Mr and Mrs Shields’ car had been t-boned by a truck that had run through a red light. In Darien’s dreams, Mr and Mrs Shields’ car was going too fast in a slope and ended up breaking the security barrier. Mr Shields had died, Mrs Shields had survived although injured. In Darien’s dreams, both died. Faces were clear, always blurred. He saw his parents in the dreams, but he also saw strangers swapping places with them. He heard cries, he heard metal tearing and crushing, he smelled spilled fuel and fire and the coppery scent of blood. He felt tears in his eyes and on his cheeks and dizziness.

 It felt both real and unreal and many a night, Darien woke up with a gasp, shaking helplessly as he tried to calm down and not wake up his mother. He tussed and turned and often ended opening the shutters to look at the moon overhead until he had calmed down enough to go back to head -- though he tended to let the shutters open in order to let the moonbeams enter the room.
The light of the moon had a little something he found appeasing and, when mixed with the scent of his roses, it allowed him to sink into a peaceful, dreamless sleep. He had the feeling tonight would be no exception.

But tonight was a full moon, and perhaps, just perhaps it’d chase away the nightmares and he could dream of more pleasant things, Darien thought briefly.

For now, however, he had roses to take care of.
Chapter Summary

Something went very wrong, and Pluto has no idea what...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For Trista, the sad truth of the matter was never trying to remember, but trying to understand where she was and what had happened. For Pluto was the Guardian of Time, and she couldn’t forget, could never forget.

(True, her memories had been locked away after her resurrection following the showdown in the 31st century, but it was all but a setback, a safety precaution while she was getting used to her new body; her Queen and the Silver Crystal weren’t so cruel as to let her awaken panicked over the memories of dying for her Princess.)

So Pluto remembered and grew more and more distressed as the world around her failed to make sense. Her body was barely that of a toddler when her mind grew clear enough to think, and that was the very first hint that let her know that something was very, very wrong. No Senshi should have remembered a past life while she wasn’t sufficiently matured to use an Henshin Pen. Sure, the first time around, when Queen Serenity had personally hand-picked them to become the new guard that would surround and protect her daughter, they had been young, but not THAT young.

Then came the language. What Pluto heard around her was nothing akin to Japanese, which she had known through her first reincarnation, nor Lunarian, which the Senshi and youma alike all spoke in the midst of battle (and it amused her secretly to see that neither the Princess nor her Senshi had ever realized that monsters shouldn’t have been able to speak Japanese and that something had to be going on).

So, she was a baby, and she was far away from Japan. Something, Pluto often thought with distress, had gone seriously wrong somewhere.

What, however, she would have been unable to say. For all the centuries she had lived isolated at the Doors of Time, Sailor Pluto wasn’t more knowledgeable about the powers of the Silver Crystal than her newly awaken Princess, and her understanding of Senshi reincarnation mustn’t have been as precise as she had hoped, if her current living situation was of any indication.

There was sadly nothing she could do. Just wait and see and learn as much as she could before she was grown up enough to try and find out where the other Senshi were.

(Unsaid was the fear that haunted her for years, deep down, that she alone had reincarnated or that they had all been dispatched across the world. But the Silver Crystal bound their souls together, and where one Senshi could be found, the other were sure to make an apparition sooner or later.)

Her name, as she learned as she deciphered the language was now Trista Silvanus, as opposed to her former name of Meioh Setsuna. Trista rolled strangely on her tongue, but it was a name as good as any other and one she thought she liked. Her parents were British (english! They were speaking English! Serenity, may the Princess and Venus have also been reborn in Great Britain...
because if not, then they would definitely have a communication problem; Pluto hadn’t forgotten how bad Tsukino Usagi’s grades had been nor Venus proclaimed dislike of the foreign language. Trista apparently had her father’s dark skin tone and her mother darkly colored hair, though Trista’s held a familiar, welcome green tinge that slowly grew more pronounced with time -- which would have probably worried her parents if they hadn’t chalked it up to their daughter’s magic.

Because Mr and Mrs Silvanus were, to Trista’s admonishment, a wizard and a witch.

Now, Pluto… Trista knew magic existed; the Silver Millennium had been as much a kingdom of sciences as it had been a kingdom of magic. But never since the fall of the Moon had she seen so much magic, especially used in such a mundane way. Mrs Silvanus -- her mother, she tried to remind herself -- just had to wave her wand to set the oven on from afar, to make the brooms sweep the floor free from the dust, to make rags rub at the windows glasses. Knitting needles were knitting alone in the air, dishes washed themselves and the Silvanuses regularly disappeared in the flames of their chimney, using it as a form of teleportation -- and it didn’t even cover the teleportation itself, which Trista had witnessed -- and experienced first hand.

To her great shame, she hadn’t handled the experience well. Thankfully, a quick wave move had cleaned up her father’s shoes immediately.

A whole realm of magic… It was as fantastic as it was worrisome. How could such a society have escaped her eyes when she had stood vigil at the Doors? True, she had mostly contented herself with watching over glimpses of her fellow Senshi’s lives but surely she should have been aware of something?

But as far as her memories went, mundane magic not related to Senshi or invading aliens or monsters didn’t stand out. Not even in the memories-that-weren’t -- the memories Pluto couldn’t made sense of, because they contradicted other memories she had to the same events.

Pluto had stopped time only once that she knew off; to stop Prince Diamond to connect the two Silver Crystals and destroying the universe. She had died from it. So she couldn’t have stopped time to save Uranus and Neptune from dying in an helicopter explosion… or could she?

Glancing through the Door of Times, the Guardian had been privy to different scenarios that could and should have played out in the lives of mortal; different timelines appeared and disappeared each time she blinked, time always flowing and never allowing her to catch anything more than little details. She never saw herself, and she never saw the other Senshi -- never tried to either, for it was a taboo just like stopping the natural course of time was taboo -- but if she had… would those contradicting memories have played out in front of her?

Would she had seen alternate version of herself, of her Princess, of Small Lady and her friends?

Was she truly Sailor Pluto as she remembered herself to be, or was she perhaps the amalgamation of several version of Pluto?

Oooooh, just thinking about the possibilities gave her a headache!

But wherever or not she was, Trista decided, it didn’t matter. What mattered first and foremost was finding her Princess. She didn’t delude herself into thinking it’d be easy.

But Silver Millennium called to its members. Sooner or later, it would bring them together. She just had to be patient and wait -- and in the meanwhile, learn everything she could about magic. Who knew; perhaps it was that ‘magic’ thing that had interfered with the workings of the Silver Crystal?
She’d find the others later. She hoped.

Chapter End Notes

**Name:** Trista Celia (from English sub/Outer Senshi dolls sold before Sailor Moon S aired in the US)  
**Surname:** Silvanus  
**Blood status:** Pureblood  
**Family:** Mylor Silvanus; father. Auror, former teacher of DADA during the 1984-1986 school (left due to serious injuries caused by a group of escaped Erklings). Sidia Silvanus; mother. Unspeakable.  
**Birthdate:** October 29th, 1975  
**Entering Hogwarts in:** 1987  
**Pet(s):** Charon, a toad  
**House:** Slytherin  
**Wand wood:** Pine  
**Core:** Phoenix feather  
**Size:** 13 inches  
**Description of wand:** Quite rigid  
**Best Subject(s):** Ancient Runes, Ancient Studies  
**Worse Subject(s):** Potions (no talent for the subject)  
**Electives:** Ancient Runes, Divination, Ancient Studies (sixth and seventh year), Alchemy (sixth and seventh year)  
**Extracurricular activities:** Sewing Club, Knitting Club, Hogwarts Ancient Runes Club  
**Dream:** To become an Unspeakable
Garrick Ollivander had always known he’d become a wand-maker. He was an Ollivander after all, and it was rare an Ollivander wasn’t proficient in wand-making. Garrick, however, was unanimously recognized by his family as being one of the best the family had ever produced and he was on his way to become the most famous wand-maker of the 20th century – though Garrick Ollivander thought his notoriety would certainly last well after his death.

Life was going well for him at every level. He had a charming wife, a brilliant son who he hoped would inherit the shop when Garrick decided to retire – which wouldn’t happen for many years from now, but one had to be careful and think of the future – and a lovely daughter (though he privately admitted he was worried about her; her health had never been the best). Ever since he had finalized his studies on woods and cores when he had been much younger and despite the initial difficulties into making them accepted by the public at large, his wands had since been recognized as far superior to any other in Europe (and were on their way to recognized as such in the United States as well). That recognition had lead to a boom in business that was very much appreciable.

However Garrick Ollivander privately admitted that, by the end of the seventies, he had started to get bored. Make no mistakes, the last few years had been dreadful thank to the rise of He-Who-Must-Be-Named, but political concerns mattered little to Garrick Ollivander. His principal subject of preoccupation was and remained wands and sometimes, by extension, the wizards or witches they were matched with. He was always interested by the various combinations he encountered, the subtle varieties of characters between each wizard and each wand, the different ways affinities revealed themselves,… He could speak about them for hours without interruption.

Wands could make beautiful things, but also terrible ones, depending on the owner – and the ones sold nowadays in the United Kingdom were his all creations. Well, almost all; there were still a stock of older wands in the backroom which had been created by his father and before him, his grandfather and even one case or two coming from his great-grandfather. By this point, there was little hope they would ever find a matching owner but the Ollivanders never threw away a wand of their making. Older models could always be used as study objects for the future generations in order to improve the quality of their products; Garrick had certainly spent a lot of time working on them, trying to determine why they felt wrong to him and his son was already following in his footsteps.

Anyway, the rise of a Dark Lord aside, the seventies had coincided with a period of brooding for Garrick Ollivander. There were still many things he had to learn about wands, he knew it, but for some reason, he couldn’t find himself satisfied with his work anymore. The wood felt flat under his hands and the combinations he realized never satisfied him despite their excellent quality.

Which was probably why, by the time the eighties started, Garrick Ollivander had decided to experiment again. But this time, he had aimed for something a little different.

Wands were usually made of a single, carefully selected wood. Each wood, as Ollivander had
pointed out during his researches, had its own qualities and its own character, which coupled with a magical substance, gave the wand its will.

But what would happen if one was to use two magical substances as core… or two different types of wood to create a wand?

Garrick Ollivander had to admit the possibilities made him giddy; imagine just how much his notoriety would grow if he ever managed to make it work!

Of course, he didn’t delude himself in thinking it would be easy; he knew he was far from being the first wand-maker who had entertained the idea, nor the first one to even give it a try. Wandmakers across the world had access, if they so wished, to the expensive memories of late Middle Age wand-maker Balthus Garamant, a man who, despite having produced very few wands of quality, had spent most of his ‘life researching magical properties and wood qualities.

While Garrick Ollivander remained unconvinced by several of his in-depth studies (Balthus takes on wood nature and character were severely off by Ollivander’s estimations; cedar as an easily fooled wood! The nerves of!), the fact remained that Balthus Garamant had researched how to make a functioning wand out of several woods or several cores at once.

Suffice to say, the mixed cores had resulted in enough fires and explosions to dissuade future generations to try it out again (Balthus’ memories contained quite a few singed, hole-riddled pages). Garrick Ollivander knew his art but even him hesitated in tackling such a sensitive matters. It would certainly require far more time and careful preparations than he was able to pull off at the moment, between his family and the shop and the need to replenish his stocks before the start of the next Hogwarts school year.

Perhaps, once his son was ready to succeed him, he could devote more time to the study of mixed cores and the interactions between magical substances (even if the idea of mixing sub-par substances made his inner professional scoff; there was a reason he only worked with phoenix feather, unicorn hair and dragon heartstrings after all) until he managed a make it right. But the woods… ah, the woods were another matter entirely, and something he could easily work on his spare time.

When you knew your woods and what kind of personalities they reacted best with, then you already had half your work done for you. Maybe Balthus Garamant himself could have pulled it off if his understanding of woods hadn’t been so skewed, for his attempts had had merit. The few sketches he had included in his notes showed he had had an interesting take on design, and that was a line Garrick Ollivander could easily follow.

Still, mixing woods wasn’t as easy as it sounded. You had to choose your associations carefully, lest the two different natures and wills forced together would fight each other and just made the wand implode. Aspen, which suited duelists, and blackthorn, who tended to choose warrior, might mesh well together for example due to their respective combative nature. The same thing could be said about apple wood and rowan, who both enjoyed a disassociation with the Dark Arts on the merit of no Dark wizard ever been known to possess one (but then again, the same thing could be said of pear wood). However Ollivander had to recognize that dogwood, which thrived on tricky and mischievous owners, would have a hard time working with more ‘serious’ woods. Finding it a match would be a challenge, but one he’d be interested in taking up.

Sadly, the woods natures and wills weren’t the only thing a wandmaker of Garrick Ollivander had to take into account. The common witch or wizard might think a wandmaker just had to break a branch out of any tree to make a wand, but a wandmaker knew better. Not all tree were suitable to make wands. The tree had to have a, a ‘sparkle’, Ollivander thought. It was hard to put into words, but an experienced wandmaker just had to look at a tree and then he knew, just knew if its
branches would be suitable to make wands. And those trees were far rarer than the average wizard thought; Garrick Ollivander had spent whole afternoons walking in a forest and come back empty-handed.

(In truth, he could have taken a few branches, but Garrick Ollivander insisted on only working with quality products. If the tree wasn’t meeting his quality levels, then he discarded it immediately.)

Or one could always look for Bowtruckles; much like wandmakers, Bowtruckles instinctively went after magic-suitable trees to install their nests and apprentices wandmakers often tracked colonies in order to find appropriate woods.

But even once you had a suitable wood, one had to consider the core and how it reacted with a specific wood as well; Ollivander had yet to manage to make another yew tree and phoenix feather combination since the one he had sold to one Tom Marvolo Riddle in the 30s. The two seemed to be adverse to each other and most yew wands he had made since contained dragon heartstring cores.

Wand-crafting was a subtle balancing art, but Garrick Ollivander was always up to a challenge.

That said, it took him the better part of five years before he managed to produce one perfectly working wand made of several wood essences, and another two years before he decided to drop the idea altogether (at least until he had made deepened his understanding of his art which, to his chagrin, he now realized he wasn’t as good in as he would have hoped).

The end results, at the end of the 80s, were of only seven working wands, and Garrick Ollivander had to wonder if they would ever find a wizard or a witch able to embody the characters traits they represented. At the same time, he couldn’t help but be proud of himself for managing to make those wands, but also very curious about how some essences had managed to mesh so well together.

It was odd, for example, to see the wise nature of the beech wood being counterbalanced by the sensitivity of the hazel wood, for the two were rather at odd. However, Ollivander had to accept that one could be wise beyond their year but still have a temper. Associated with the hair from a young but spirited female unicorn who had lead him on a merry chase, it made for a very interesting wand. He modeled it simply, encrusting the hazel as little hazelnuts mouldings running across the length and using a different varnish to make them stand out against the darker shade of the varnished beech. It was simple, but elegant -- and the owner would probably be so as well.

(When he sold the wand in the summer of 1989 to young Mylene Michel, Ollivander came up to the conclusion that the young girl’s merpeople ancestry had to have played a role in such an unusual combination; hazel wands were known for their tendencies to find water and would be perfectly at ease in the hands of someone who was ‘born of water ancestry’, as one could say. The young witch’s Sorting in Ravenclaw didn’t surprise him the slightest -- not the fact she was a budding artist and a talented musician; it was perfectly in accord with the nature of beech. As for the core, it resonated well with the little light of mischief Ollivander saw in the young lady’s age as well as her steady results in school; unicorn hair made for the most constant magic.)

The rowan and willow combination the old wandmaker had come up with next was a wand almost too pure for words, in between rowan associated with pure-hearted wizards and excellent at protective spells and the willow who was an unusual wood but known for its power in healing spells as well as its tendency to favor people of great potential (and many unwarranted insecurities). Finding a proper core had been a struggle but in the end, the wand reacted well with the feather of a recently reborn phoenix who had been kind enough to let him take a feather which had survived the flames of its rebirth. This time, he stylized the wand by making the whole handle
out of willow and adding a series of willow rings for a third of the wand’s length (and, in secret, he used the bark as an inner lining between the core and the rowan). This wand was a marvel that could only end in the hands of a powerful wizard or witch, and Ollivander dearly hoped he’d be able to meet the matching owner.

(When the wand matched with young Serena Moon in 1991, Garrick Ollivander wondered if he had made a mistake somewhere; the blonde witch had showed herself very clumsy and easily startled, making several piles of wand cases fall when colliding with them at the wandmaker’s apparition. However, she was a kind child, immediately offering to put them back, and appearances could be deceptive. Besides, potential could take years to reveal itself, just like it did with young Mr Longbottom, who he’d only met a few years later.)

If the rowan and willow wand was pure light, Garrick Ollivander had to wonder what possessed him to create a combination out of hawthorn and elder. Sinister woods, those two, though he would have been hard pressed to say they chosen only witches and wizards with dark intentions, for it was not true. Still… hawthorn, with its dual nature of healing blossom and leaves but its scent which reminded everyone of death and elder, the unlucky wood that however had a reputation of performing powerful magic? Ollivander could tell already the owner was going to be special. It came to no surprise for him when the only core which could match the very unusual combination was a phoenix feather (from a small, feisty specimen which had tried to snap its beak at him). He made the wand as elegant and unassuming as possible, sculpting the handle so it would resemble a fencing sword’s, but engraved and inserting part of the hawthorn in a series flowery pattern that made for a girly look.

(It was lucky, Ollivander supposed, that this wand made its way in the hands of a charming young witch like Olivia Black-Williams in 1994; a boy certainly wouldn’t have liked the flower effect. Still, he couldn’t help but wonder about Miss Black-Williams; there was definitely a relationship to the Blacks here, the little girl held a passing resemblance to some members of the family that Garrick Ollivander had the (dis)pleasure of meeting, but those kind, soft eyes weren’t Blacks eyes at all. She was small and sickly-looking, but there was a vague feeling of strength, determination and power underneath that made Ollivander pause as he gave her the wand. Miss Black-Williams would do great things, like Miss Moon; what exactly, however, remained to be seen.)

Then came a wand of rowan and hornbeam, yet another combination he wouldn’t have thought of before the wand started sliding under his hands, but which left him with a much lighter heart than the hawthorn and elder one. Hornbeam wands’ owners tended to be very driven when it came to an idea or a passion to the point it could verge on obsession, but it had none of the foreboding that came with elder or hawthorn (though, amusingly, elder wands had a powerful affinity for owners of rowan wands). Couple with rowan, Ollivander could only hope the wand was promised to a wizard or a witch who held a pure ideal. It was with that hope in mind he stylized the wand into the delicate swirls and twists of an unicorn horn, making sure to use both woods in equal quantity and never missing the irony that the core was actually a phoenix feather.

(It didn’t seem to truly disappoint young Miss Serena Shields when she came for the wand in 2014, proudly surrounded by both her parents; if anything she seemed quite amused by it. She was a strange little witch, young Miss Shields, and Garrick Ollivander had to fight down the impression he had seen her before. At least the wand seemed to match her personality from the start, unlike her mother’s -- even twenty years later, his first impression of Serena Moon, now Serena Shields the eldest, remained. But he had also been right; she was indeed a very light-oriented witch, and with a lot of potential. Between her mother and her father, Garrick Ollivander had no doubt Miss Shields would live up to be a great witch.)

(And when, a few years later, the Shields were back to his shop with their youngest daughter in tow, one Miss Selene Shields, Garrick Ollivander was unsurprised to see them leave with the last
bi-mattered wand he had ever realized, a lovely combination of unicorn hair for the core, rowan wood for pure-heart and applewood which promised her a long life. It did little to reassure him that Miss Selene Shields seemed to share her mother’s clumsiness. By the time they left his store, Garrick Ollivander decided maybe it was time for him to retire. Possibly.)

And then, he made one of his most exquisite but also most contradictory wand ever. If Garrick Ollivander hadn’t selected the woods and crafted the wand himself, he would have wondered if a mistake hadn’t been made somewhere.

Beech and hazel were one thing, but applewood and cypress? Prosperous! How could a witch or wizard ever manage to deal with a wand that was made of a wood both suited for those with a well-loved, long life while at the same time being better matched to wizards who were of the self-sacrificing type and willing to die a heroic death (which they often did, and quite violently at that; it hadn’t escaped Garrick Ollivander that several Aurors and bystanders caught by Death Eaters and deciding to fight wand in hand had owned cypress wands)?

The very concept gave Garrick Ollivander headaches. Those two woods shouldn’t have been able to interact so well -- especially not when coupled with a dragon heartstring core, the most powerful core Ollivander used and the one which produced the most flamboyant spells. To add to the unusual side, the heartstring for this peculiar want had come from a magnificent specimen of Antipodean Opaleye still in his prime, a dragon that Ollivander had seldom access to as it wasn’t native of the British islands or Europe; he had to have it imported and the customs and regulations were such a bother he didn’t get more than one or two a year. Considering the Opaleye was one of the less violent dragon breeds existing, only killing to feed themselves, it only added to the wandmaker’s confusion.

Sure, Garrick Ollivander had sold cypress wands and applewood wands to members of a same family (in one case, he had even sold them to a pair of twins), and his Antipodean Opaleye wands sold well, but a single individual couldn’t be long-lived and most likely to die young at the same time while being powerful but non-aggressive!

Well, it was a slight exaggeration; cypress wands’ owners didn’t all die young and many actually lived fairly normal lives -- or had, until He-Who-Must-Be-Named’s rise. With his death, one could always hope a return to less troubled times.

But cypress still remained one of applewood’s total opposite; how he had even managed to mesh the two together, Ollivander had no idea. But here it was, gleaming softly thank to the varnish he had consciously applied over the various knots forming the handle -- he had gone with a thick handle and a very thin length, making it more striking in appearance -- and seeming very much at its place in the hand of the young wizard he had presented it to.

Ollivander eyed the eleven years old thoughtfully and tried not to glance at the woman in a wheelchair who was waiting anxiously besides him. Wheelchairs weren’t unknown in the wizarding world but unusual, since magic could fix most damages provided they were treated on time. Given her relative young age and her son’s clothes however, coupled with the fact he couldn’t remember ever selling a wand to someone named Shields before, it was clear Darien Shields was Muggleborn. Ollivander couldn’t have cared less; what interested him were wands and matching personalities, not blood status. Still, it came as a surprise that this surprisingly contradictory wand had chosen its master in such an unassuming young wizard.


“Excuse me, Sir, but what’s so interesting?” the boy inquired politely.

“This wand, Mr Shields, is a very unusual combination. Applewood and cypress, 13 inches ¾,
with a dragon heartstring core,” he listed for the boy’s sake. “Bi-mattered wands are a rarity; indeed, it must be the first one I sold -- and probably not the last. Considering all those elements, Mr. Shields, I think we must expect great things from you. I’ll look forward your future career, young man.”

The boy shuffled uneasily and his mother looked vaguely worried. Mr. Ollivander didn’t understand why, really; coming from Garrick Ollivander himself, those words were a great compliment.
Chapter Summary

Lita and Harry celebrate Christmas at the Dursleys...

If she was honest with herself, Lita didn’t know if she liked Christmas. Well… no, it wasn’t quite that.

She liked the idea of Christmas as it was described in the books or on the TV shows she had managed to get a glimpse of whenever the Dursleys forgot she was in the room: a beautifully decorated tree with garlands and lights, shops windows specially decorated for the occasion, snow outside if they were lucky so children and adults alike could build snowmen or partake in a snowball fight and the possibility to stay near a good fire with a mug of hot cocoa or tea spending time with loving relatives before having a succulent dinner that would be animated by the opening of crackers and finally, exchanging presents while wishing each other a Merry Christmas.

But Christmas at the Dursleys was different.

Oh, there definitely were a Christmas tree and treats and Christmas-themed cakes and biscuits and a fancy dinner and presents -- but first and foremost for Dudley and his parents. Lita and Harry always felt like an unwelcome addition that Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia had to deal with, and it was even worse when Aunt Marge (not really their Aunt, as she was Uncle Vernon’s sister, but Lita and Harry were forced to call her so) was present. Thankfully this year, the obese harpy was spending Christmas at her own home to keep an eye on one of her aging bulldogs whose health wasn’t very good. Lita didn’t know wherever she pitied the dog or not; she was just happy to have dodged Aunt Marge this year. Of course, she’d probably come to Dudley’s tenth birthday party come June instead, but June was far away from now.

For now she took comfort in the sweet scent of the batch of Christmas tree biscuits she had just pulled out of the oven, hoping Dudley would leave some for her and Harry this time. Their cousin, who was looking more and more like a pig with each passing year, had already gorged himself on homemade brownies and a batch of cinnamon rolls, something Lita had been baking for the first time and had looked forward tasting. It wouldn’t be for this time, she thought mournfully.

But at least she should be table to have Christmas pudding tonight, she reminded herself, and roast turkey and potatoes and gravy. For all their faults, at least the Dursleys never exactly starved them, but neither Harry nor her could eat as much as they liked, what’s with Dudley always taking anything that the Potters siblings truly wanted, even if it made him sick.

“What are you still doing here?” Aunt Petunia snipped behind her, sounding unhappy. Lita glanced at her over her shoulder, not leaving her place by the sink.

“I’m finishing washing the dishes, Aunt Petunia,” she replied calmly, raising a dripping plate out of the soapy water before passing it under the stream of clear water to rinse it and delicately put it on the pile besides the pans and pots she had done earlier. “I thought it be best to clean everything up before dinner time. Less work after, right?”

Aunt Petunia did a small sound that sounded like a grunt of reluctant approval, her piercing eyes
checking the pile of clean dishes over with the same intensity she reserved to spy on her neighbors. Lita fought down a wave of annoyance; really, did her Aunt think she was going to break or chip something on purpose? She happened to like Aunt Petunia’s china, thank you very much, and she always took extra care when she had to manipulate the pieces. She didn’t voice it, however, just emptying the sink and drying her hands on a nearby towel as her Aunt continued her inspection.

“Well, if you’re done, go to your room and try to make yourself presentable for dinner,” the thin woman finally snipped, turning around and going back to the living room to fawn over Dudley who was busy opening some of his presents early, after much pleading and the start of a tantrum over having to wait until tomorrow morning. Typically Dudley, Lita thought as she quietly made her way upstairs, ignoring the loud cheers from the Dursleys; that boy had no patience at all. Surely a couple hours weren’t going to kill him? At the same time, the sounds of wrapping paper tearing made her feel sad.

Not for the first time, she wished she could have a proper Christmas, like the other children -- or even a proper birthday for that matter. If Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia spoiled Dudley rotten with presents, the larger the number the better, Lita and Harry had to find themselves lucky if they received anything at all -- and given what they tended to get, perhaps it would have been better if they hadn’t been given anything at all. Last year for example, Aunt Marge had gave Harry and her dog biscuits for Christmas (which had made Lita seethe silently at the implied comment that Harry and her were no better than animals and maybe she was mistaken, but she sometimes imagined she had seen a glint of disapproval in Aunt Petunia’s eyes. Perhaps. Maybe. Probably not.) while the Dursleys had given them coat hangers. It was depressing.

Harry was the only one who was bothering to try and give her presents, and the reversal was true as well. Of course, they had little money to their name; Uncle Vernon refused to give them pocket money like he did for Dudley (unsurprising) and Aunt Petunia scrupulously counted the change whenever she had to send them on an errand. Still, they had some; Harry had found and repaired an old piggy bank in the mess of old broken toys that had filled Dudley’s second bedroom when they had cleaned it up and the two siblings sometimes found money on the ground in the street on their way back to or from school. It wasn’t much and the saving was incredibly slow, but it allowed them to try and give each other small presents at their birthday or, well, at Christmas. They usually distributed the content of the piggy bank between them and tried to find something for the other to enjoy.

Lita’s tenth birthday had happened only a couple weeks prior, on December 5th and for the occasion, Harry had bought her a slice of cherry pie, her favorite dessert ever, and a box of multicolor hair ties. Nothing much, nothing fancy, but it had warmed her heart anyway, knowing she had family thinking of her.

*Family…*

Funny how the word tended to provoke pangs of… something deep inside her. Lita had never told anyone, but she frequently woke up in the middle of the night with the unsettling feeling something was just wrong with her life and she couldn’t recognize her room.

In blurred, half-remembered dreams, she walked and lived in a small and cozy apartment decorated to her taste with cute decorative trinkets and potted plants everywhere, flowers blooming in a myriad of colors… and she was alone. Desperately alone.

Then she’d heard Harry’s breathing above her and the creak of the bunk bed as he turned in his sleep and the dreams went away and she remembered who she was and where she was living. She wasn’t alone; she didn’t have parents (had she ever, a soft voice whispered in the back of her mind, so low she barely heard it?) but she had a brother. And, even if they weren’t worth much,
an Aunt, an Uncle and a cousin.

She wasn’t alone, she reminded herself as she pushed the door to her and Harry’s shared bedroom. So why did it feel like she was missing something or rather… someone?

Lita tried to smile as Harry perked up at her arrival, looking at her over the top of the comic book he had been reading – yet another of the thing Dudley regularly threw away; the poor comic was lacking its cover and there were dried chocolate traces that looked suspiciously like fingerprints on almost every page. Normally the Dursleys didn’t let them keep anything from Dudley’s old, broken toys buuuut, Lita may or may not have bribed his cousin into discreetly giving Harry books and comics he didn’t want in exchange of extra homemade cookies. Just because she wasn’t above punching Dudley on the nose for being an idiot didn’t mean she didn’t know how to be subtle. The comics were generally torn up and rubbish, but the books were usually in pristine condition; Dudley didn’t like to read unless there were lot of images involved and so long they stayed upstairs and out of their sight, neither Aunt Petunia or Uncle Vernon cared little for what they did.

“Aunt Petunia sent you up, eh?” Harry commented as he put down the comic and sat up on Lita’s bed -- Harry usually slept in the top bunk, the bottom one was his sister’s --, eyes questioning.

Lita nodded. “Ordered me to get presentable for dinner. I guess that means you have to too.” Harry and her snorted at the same time before exchanging a knowing, slightly bitter smile. No matter what they’d do, both Lita and Harry knew their efforts wouldn’t be enough for their Aunt. Still, it was Christmas Eve so an effort was required, and Lita didn’t mind dressing up. She just wished she could look like the models in the fashion magazines Aunt Petunia bought and that the brown-haired girl sometimes managed to get a glance at when Aunt Petunia wasn’t looking her way. There were so many cute outfits!

Sadly, there were none in Lita’s closet. Aunt Petunia usually bought Lita’s clothes at charity shops and they were far from being fashionable; at least they were clean and they fitted, so she couldn’t exactly complain. She was better off than Harry, who more often than not inherited Dudley’s old clothes and Dudley was easily four times Harry’s size. Harry looked so small and pitiful in them that Lita hadn’t been able to take it anymore and had grabbed the books on sewing she had been able to find in the house (funnily, they had been mostly kept in Harry and Lita’s room among the things untouched by Dudley).

Lita had learned the basics from them and often did her best to make Harry’s clothes fit him better, adding elastic waistbands for the pants and shorts and reduced t shirts sizes. Her work wasn’t the most elegant and her sewing points tended to be irregular since she did everything by hand (Aunt Petunia didn’t have a sewing machine and even if she had, Lita doubted she would have been allowed to use it) but at least Harry looked much better when she was finished.

She was getting much better at it though and Lita wondered if maybe she should try harder projects next. There was a very interesting chapter in one of the books about how to turn old bedsheets and clothes into summer dresses and she longed to try it out...

“Lita? Do you think we should exchange our presents yet? Since Dudley is already opening his, I mean?” Harry asked tentatively, making the older girl pause.

“I don’t know… it’s not yet Christmas, is it? We could at least wait until midnight, no?” she suggested after seeing Harry’s face fell in dismay. The green-eyed boy immediately seemed happier.

“Oh yeah, sure. Midnight. I… it’s not much, you know, but…” he stammered. With a smile, Lita sat next to him on the bed and hugged him.
“Little brother, I may not tell it often enough but the more precious of gifts for me? It’s to have you.” She felt Harry relax slightly in her hold before she released him and passed her hand in his hair too ruffle them, much to the younger boy’s indignation.

“Lita!”

The brown-haired girl giggled. “First dibs on the bathroom to change,” she claimed. “Better get ready fast, you know Aunt Petunia will want the dinner served as soon as Uncle Vernon get home with the last of Dudley’s presents.”

She was right, of course. Aunt Petunia was very predictable, and so were the rest of the Dursleys.

Dinner for Lita and Harry wasn’t unpleasant; in fact, it went very well by Lita’s standards. Uncle Vernon was in a fine mood, proud to have gotten Dudley the very last exemplary of a toy the blond boy absolutely wanted to own and relaxed by the glass of sherry Aunt Petunia had served him as an appetizer. The two spoke loudly of Uncle Vernon’s last business deal and the promotion he was hoping to get this year thank to his hard work for Grunnings. Dudley was just as loud, eager to start playing with all his new toys and to open the rest of his presents already. When he wasn’t talking, he gorged himself on the roasted turkey and barely left a drop of gravy but he scarcely touched the greens, which ended composing most of his cousins’ dinner. Not that they minded; Lita loved vegetables and Harry wasn’t a picky eater. The two siblings mostly kept silent unless to ask for more water, offered polite smiles whenever someone looked their way and tried not to draw too much attention to themselves. Lita and Harry were allowed to open a cracker between them and keep the content for themselves and even had the right to take a Christmas cookie before politely asking to retire early for the night.

As they climbed the stairs and heard the Dursleys laugh and joke between them, Harry and Lita exchanged a look of relief. Compared to last year Christmas, everything had gone wonderfully, to the point Lita wondered when the other shoe was going to drop and something happen to ruin it all. By the look on Harry’s face, the younger boy was probably just as wary as her of their recent ‘good fortune’.

But it was Christmas, and miracles happened, right?

They ended up reading until late in the night -- Harry had more torn comics from Dudley and Lita found herself rereading one of her favorite cooking book, wondering when she’d be lucky enough to try out the recipes -- then they turned off the light in order to watch fresh snowfall on the pavement and get a better view of the Christmas lights set up by the neighbors all down the street, quietly chatting between them in a low voice -- especially after hearing the loud steps of the Dursleys in the stairs as they went to their own bedrooms. Nobody checked on them, but it wasn’t unusual.

“You think midnight is still far away?” Harry questioned, glancing at his taller sister. Neither him nor Lita owned a watch.

“Probably not. For all we know, perhaps it’s Christmas already.” Lita answered after a moment of reflection. And it might as well be; when they were on school breaks, the Dursleys never forced Dudley to go to bed early and he had often bragged to them and his friends to have been allowed to stay up until one in the morning. ”You want to exchange gifts already?” she offered with a wink and giggled when Harry nodded eagerly and went to forage in the closet in search of whatever package he had hidden earlier. Lita went to her bed and felt her way under the mattress until she pulled out a thin package she had carefully wrapped in a strip of grey paper.

“Merry Christmas Harry,” she said as she handed it to him with a smile.
“Merry Christmas Lita,” Harry said with a smile of his own, handing her a colorful envelope and a large chocolate bar.

Soon, they were opening their parcel, Harry hugging Lita tightly as he discovered the red scarf ending with pompoms she had knitted him; the points were a little loose, betraying her inexperience (it was the first time she took to knitting and she was finding it even more enjoyable than sewing to be honest) but Harry couldn’t have cared less. He was most eager for his sister to open her own gift, which she did with a smile before blinking as the envelope’s content rolled in her hand.

“Oh,” she breathed, eyes round, almost closing her fist around the small items. “A parure?” she finally managed to get out as she stared at the matching set of jewelry. Those were fantasy jewelry fit for children, made of plastic, but… those were the very first jewelry pieces she had ever owned. More than that, they were shaped like flowers.

Like roses. Bright pink roses. Without thinking, she brought them closer to her face, half-hoping to smell the sweet scent of the true flowers only to be disappointed when she smelled nothing. It was silly, of course; flower-shaped earrings weren’t real flowers, they couldn’t have a scent; her mind, however, wasn’t so easily convinced. She looked up at Harry.

“Thank you, little bro,” she murmured with a fond smile. Rose scent or not, it was a great gift.

“Wanna try them on?” the smaller sibling asked; his new scarf was wrapped around his neck, the pompoms dangling and weighting it down.

At the eager question, Lita’s smile faded a little and she sighed with regret. “Oh, but I can’t Harry.”

Her brother startled and looked vaguely hurt. “What? But why…?”

“Harry, I love them, I love them very much, especially the earrings, but can’t wear them,” she gently told her puzzled brother. “Those are stud earrings, little brother. They have to pass through the earlobe in order to stay on, you understand? I don’t have my ears pierced,” she explained, “and you need to in order to wear that kind of earrings. See?” She turned the two rose-shaped earrings in her hand, letting Harry see the studs at the end of small posts.

Harry deflated and his cheeks started to redden. “Oh. I hadn’t thought about that. I… I’m sorry Lita.”

“What for?” the brown-haired girl replied dryly. “It’s not like boys usually know this stuff. Myself, I only knew because I talked with some of the girls in class. Did you know Bianca had pierced earlobes already? And Rita and Jenny wear clip-on because they parents said ‘no’ to piercings until they’re at least twelves!” she babbled to distract Harry. “Besides,” she added as she lightly pulled on her earlobe, “I’m going to get them pierced someday too and then you can bet I’ll wear them everyday. And in the meanwhile,” she added yet again as she saw Harry open his mouth to argue, “I can still wear the pendant.” To prove it, she fastened the chain around her neck, letting the single rose hang above her chest. It was surprisingly light.

Harry didn’t look fully convinced but at least he didn’t try to argue further. He just let himself drop on Lita’s bed, looking tired and distraught. He had clearly expected a better outcome for a gift he had obviously selected with care, knowing Lita loved flowers and that girls loved jewelries. It wasn’t his fault he didn’t know much about earrings fastenings.

Lita sat next to him and ruffled his hair, earning herself a half-glare. “So, want a square of Christmas chocolate before going to bed?” she offered as a distraction while she brandished the
chocolate bar, and mentally high-fived herself at the glint of happiness in her brother’s eyes. Just for that, Lita decided that maybe Christmases weren’t so bad after all.
Chapter Summary

Risa Hino is no more, and Rei tries to settle in a new routine for her family's sake -- and it would be so much easier without those contradictory feelings about her father.

The house felt too empty but it wasn’t new, Rei thought dispassionately as she gave a look at the grandfather clock standing in a corner of the living room.

At her feet Miyabi, barely two and half, was giggling as she poked at a magical ball that changed color every time she touched it. Her baby sister wasn’t hungry yet, but Rei knew it wouldn’t be long now before she started to fuss and wail to have dinner. Hopefully Pokey had everything ready already.

Half-past seven already, and their father had yet to make an apparition; he had however warned Rei he might be late tonight due to a meeting with the Department of International Magical Cooperation senior staff. With the elections of a new Minister of magic incoming, he tended to stay at work until very late at night. Rei didn’t see the point; it wasn’t as if Takashi Hino was presenting himself. Then again, a new Minister was usually accompanied by a few changes among the Departments’ Heads and it was a prime opportunity for Rei’s father to further advance his career.

And those days, his career had become the only thing that mattered to him. Well, his career and his daughters, Rei amended to herself sheepishly after experiencing a flash of guilt. She wanted to resent him for thinking of politics rather than be home but at the same time… she couldn’t bring herself to. Not after seeing his despair and his pain while his wife was slowly wasting away, no Muggle or magical remedies able to heal her. They had only, at best, helped her to live another few months. She couldn’t hate him when he had taken so much time to be with her and Rei and Miyabi until the end.

Not when he had stood by Rei’s side, holding her hand so tightly and carrying Miyabi against his chest with his other arm while the white varnished coffin was set on fire and Risa Hino’s body cremated, as per tradition. Not when he had sent home well-wishers with a face that seemed cut out of stone in order to concentrate on his daughters for the time being.

It hadn’t stopped visitors to frequently drop to check on him – and on his daughters, now that their mother wasn’t there anymore. Mrs Weasley had been chief among them, coming almost every week for two months and always bringing a baskets of scones or muffins with her. Her two youngest children, Ron and Ginny, had trailed behind her once or twice, in order for Rei to have ‘playmates to help distract her’. It hadn’t really worked because Rei hadn’t much in common with her children (Rei had never been particularly fond of Quidditch, she wasn’t very good at chess and she was too self-conscious to ‘play house’ with near strangers), but the black-haired girl couldn’t blame the red-haired witch for trying and the Weasley children had been a welcome distraction.

While not a close friend of the family, Mrs Weasley had been on friendly terms with Risa Hino ever since the Weasleys had received their first invitation to a dinner party at the Japanese wizarding family’s home. While her mother’s and father’s clan had been warned of Risa’s rapidly
declining health and the inevitability of her death, few had been able to visit while she was still alive, and few had been able to attend the funeral. Mrs Weasley had ended being the most regular visitor to the Hinos’ house during Risa’s final, already lost fight against death. It had been Mrs Weasley again who had stored Risa’s clothes and personal belongings in boxes, and put those boxes in storage. No Hino family members had had the courage to, and Pokey hadn’t dared to touch them without her Master’s permission.

Mrs Weasley was a little invasive at time, but she was well-meaning and Rei wasn’t sure they would have managed so well without her in the beginning, until they settled in their new routine. Mr Hino couldn’t stay away from work forever, after all, and he had been at loss over the proper thing to do. His work was important, but so were his daughters. In the end, after talking it over with Rei and with Mrs Weasley, he went back and continued to work just as hard and long, but he made a rule to always come back home to have lunch and/or dinner with his daughters and regularly gave Rei fire calls to make sure everything was alright.

Mrs Weasley did much the same thing at first, though she called less and less now she was (almost) certain Rei was managing. It left the black-haired witch strangely touched. Pokey had been taking care of the house, of course, but human contact and the quiet reassurance another adult was nearby and ready to help, was thinking of the details none of the Hinos were able to think of and face as they tried to overcome their grief… that had been precious. So was the reassurance that if anything happened and Rei was unable to join her father at the Ministry, she would still be able to join Mrs Weasley.

“Just throw some powder into the fire Rei dear, and call for ‘The Burrow’,” the red-haired woman had fuzzed.

The kind offer had however offended Pokey, who thought she was more than able to care for her Master’s children all by herself -- and she probably was, or else Mr Hino wouldn’t have let his children alone all day with only the old House Elf for company. But Pokey was old, and she wasn’t an expert on human children, and the House Elf had finally grudgingly admitted it made sense to have someone to contact if there truly was an emergency, especially where Miyabi was concerned.

Rei hoped there never would be one, and so did her father.

Rei looked up sharply as she heard a faint ‘pop’ from outside the house. She checked the clock again; 8pm precisely. She heard the door open, and Pokey high-pitched voice greet her Master home.

He was only going to stay for dinner tonight, Rei thought briefly before a strange feeling started to creep inside her. Her eyes widened. Shaking her head, she fought down a dizzy spell then a wave of annoyance. Damnit. Not wasn’t the time to have another vision! Moments like that, she truly was missing Japan.

Rei had just turned seven when the first ‘symptoms’ had showed themselves. Her weird dreams had started to amplify, and then one day she had just… seen a vision of the future. Precognitive sight, an old, traditional japanese witch her father had contacted shortly after had diagnosed. Not unusual in humans, but rare enough and very random. Rei’s parents had been both worried and proud. Over time, however, the worry had started to outweigh the pride as Rei’s precognition seemed to kick in randomly and so suddenly she had injured herself more than once, falling face first on the ground after stumbling.

The first few times it had happened to her, her parents had tried to get the counsel of a Healer, to no avail. British wizards didn’t have a high opinion of Divination and Spiritual Walks and most Mind Arts in general and had little to no procedure to help possible Seers safely live through their
visions without a risk of injuring themselves or other people.

All Rei could rely on were meditation exercises to try and canalise whatever she was experiencing so they wouldn’t happen randomly all day. Usually, it worked, but sometimes… well, sometimes, they happened too briskly for Rei to do anything but live them through. She started to breathe in and out slowly, closing her eyes like her father had instructed her to if she wasn’t feeling well, and leaned back in her chair, hands clasping the arms until her knuckles were white.

*Her mother died, and her father didn’t care. She wasted away alone in the hospital, without a single visit from her husband. She doesn’t want to live with that man again, never, ever. Thankfully Mother has relatives; her father is a priest, and he is kind and more than ready to greet and raise his granddaughter himself. Her father doesn’t mind; it leaves him freer to pursue his precious career as he wishes. She doesn’t seem him much after moving. One per year, on the day of white dresses and white flowers, while an elegant looking younger man watch over her…*

Her eyes snapped over as she felt a tugging on her skirt. She looked down at Miyabi, who was looking at her with a giggle. She looked so much like mother, Rei thought distantly.

(Rei does as well; she just can’t bring herself to think so)

The older girl leaned down and lifted her sister in her arms, hugging her close and continuing to breathe in and out, in and out, until she felt herself calm down. She glanced at the clock yet again; eight past two. The vision had been a very short one.

“Rei-chan? Miyabi-chan?”

“In the living room, Father.”

Her father was doing his best, she reminded herself as she rose up from the couch, Miyabi safely secured against her chest. He wasn’t cold or insensitive or focused only on his career at the cost of his family. Her father wasn’t a perfect man, but he was taking care of his children. The vision she had made no sense. Her visions never made sense.

She… couldn’t share them. Never. Letting people know she was having visions was one thing. Letting them know what they were about was quite another. There was no reason to burden her father with things that weren’t real when he was already worried enough about her gift’s implications. Briefly, she closed her eyes.

Takashi Hino smiled at her as he entered the room, light reflecting off his glasses. “Did everything go well today? How are my little princesses tonight?” He walked over to Rei and gently took Miyabi from her, the younger child shrieking in joy at the sight of her father.

Rei smiled, trying to look innocent. “Oh, perfectly well on both account, Father. Perfectly well on both account…”

(Not.)
Hermione Granger prided herself on being a very smart girl. Her parents, her teachers, her classmates all said she was a genius. Well, not her classmates, really; they usually called a ‘Miss Known-It-All’ or a teacher pet because she loved answering the teachers’ questions and she was never wrong and she never tried to mess around in class and take part in their attempts at causing a ruckus.

Hermione tried not to show it, but those snide comments were starting to hurt her. What had she done to them to make them dislike her so much? Still, she supposed things could have been worse; while she wasn’t popular with the rest of the students, she at least could rely on her sister to understand what she was living through share the misery.

Amy Granger was, after all, just as smart as Hermione and facing much the same problems.

Then again… there was something very peculiar about Amy, something Hermione couldn’t put a finger on. She just knew there was something a little different about her younger sister -- and it wasn’t her blue hair. That, she had decided early on, was just one more symptom of the oddness surrounding Amy. Of course, Hermione didn’t fool herself into believing she was perfectly normal herself: if she ever entertained the idea, a quick remembering of the ‘dry book incident’ was quick to dispel the notion. That and, well, the fact one of the bullies usually hounding her had ended with green hair.

Which often made Hermione wonder if the state of Amy’s own hair was due to something she had done herself.

After all, Amy’s hair had suddenly changed color right in front of Hermione, while the two sisters had been engaged in a shouting match. Hermione had felt upset and suddenly Amy’s black lock had become bright blue.

And most curiously, the color had stayed. The bully’s hair had come back to their usually mousy brown after a few weeks and several shampoos, but Amy’s had stayed the same, unnatural shade. The Grangers had tried everything to make it change back, but to no avail. Shampoos hadn’t washed away the blue. Attempts at dying them were unsuccessful; it was as if Amy’s hair had their own will and were repelling the dyes. Attempts at bleaching them were met by the same lack of success, and Amy continued to stand out among a crowd, getting stares from children and adults alike for her strange coloring.

This impossibility to correct the obvious ‘problem’ had finally made Hermione decide that whatever had happened to her sister’s hair, the bushy-haired girl couldn’t be the only person responsible. Hence, there was something very odd about her sister, and she intended to find out what.

Sadly, Hermione had to grudgingly admit it was easier said than done.

Because while Hermione was convinced something wasn’t quite right with her sister, Amy also
appeared to be perfectly normal -- perfectly normal for one of the Grangers’ daughters anyway. That is to say, very smart, a little awkward in society, loving to read and learn and bringing home perfect test after perfect test.

But there were more than that to Amy Granger; Hermione kept a very complete list of her sister’s likes, dislikes and oddities that stood out.

Amy loved reading, like Hermione. Her favorite dish was sandwiches because it allowed her to continue to read while eating. She was also a very good chess player, which was incidentally her favorite game; her true love when it came to extra-curricular activities, however, was swimming. Hermione could seldom recall a week where Amy didn’t head for the pool to dive underwater; the blue-haired girls had even won several competitions, something Hermione felt a little jealous off if she was honest. Hermione wasn’t much of an athlete herself. Then again, swimming was the only sport Amy was good at. Amy also liked fishes -- or at least she liked fishes as pet; it had taken much begging from her, but Mr and Mrs Granger had finally relented and allowed their youngest daughter to set up an aquarium in her room, and Amy took an almost religious care of the half-dozen of colorful aquatic animals. But to propose for Amy to eat fish? The blue-haired girl would gag; the scent of fried fish was enough to make her sick.

Next on the list Hermione kept was her sister’s favorite color. Amy was fond of the color blue, which often made their parents’ joke Amy’s hair had turned out fine after all. Amy’s favorite subject at school was maths and she was very good at mental calculation; Hermione had to grudgingly concede that her sister was better than her on this point, although Hermione was better at solving logic puzzles, which Amy also had to grudgingly concede. Curiously, both sisters tended to have complementary skills when it came to school subjects; Hermione was good at history while Amy enjoyed geography. Hermione had high mark without effort in Technology, whereas Amy had no problem acing Sciences and biology in particular.

And then there was language… Given of much they enjoyed travelling, Mr and Mrs Granger had become proficient in Spanish and had some passing skills in Italian. It made the travelling all the sweeter as they could converse more easily with natives and learned tidbits of information they wouldn’t have been able to get otherwise. As such, it was all naturally they had tried to foster some language skills on their daughters, usually by calling them with greetings in foreign languages that Hermione and Amy, giggling, tried to guess the origins of.

Hermione didn’t know who had been the more surprised when Mr Granger had once jokingly send out a ‘hello’ in Japanese, only to have Amy automatically correct his pronunciation and accent, which she had judged ‘awful’.

Because, weirdly enough, Amy understood Japanese. And even more bizarre, she had never took a single lesson to learn it; she just spoke it as naturally as she spoke English, to the point she sometimes switched between the two without even noticing she did. At the same time, the Grangers had discovered that, despite speaking Japanese almost as well as a native (or just as? Hermione lacked a point of comparison to decide), Amy was unable to actually read kanji.

Cue Hermione putting ‘mysterious languages skills’ down on the list of oddities about Amy that made no sense whatsoever.

Hermione sighed. Amy was like a fascinating puzzle, one she didn’t seem to be able to solve. Still, all puzzles could be solved eventually, provided you found the right pieces. And someday, the bushy-haired girl was certain she’d find Amy’s.

It was just a matter of time.
Ron Weasley, like all the children of the Wizarding World, grew up hearing about Harry Potter. Funny how he hadn't heard of his awesome sister before...

Like every child born to a wizarding family, Ronald Bilius Weasley, better known as Ron by his family and hopefully his (future) friends, had grown up hearing about Harry Potter. There were probably houses in which the name of the Boy-Who-Lived was pronounced with resentment or hatred, but the Weasleys household wasn’t one of those.

How could they not be grateful and in admiring in front of Harry Potter, when their family had lost so much to You-Know-Who and his Death Eaters? That was at least what his mother often told her husband when she thought her children weren’t listening (which they did because being sneaky in the Burrow wasn’t that hard, provided you knew what you were doing). The name of Gideon and Fabian Prewett tended to be hushed in those conversations, and all the Weasleys children, including Fred and George who were usually very rambunctious, tended to stay quiet about what they had heard.

To be honest, Ron had no memories of his mother’s brothers; he had only been a baby when they had died and they had always felt like, well, not strangers but not quite real people to him. That wasn’t the same for Bill and Charlie and Percy, who were old enough to remember them when they died and Ron didn’t mean any disrespect, but that was how it was. Still, he knew they had been great people and great wizards and that his mother had loved them dearly. Molly Weasley still tended to be emotional when they were mentioned in conversation and she regularly put flowers in front of their pictures (on the second floor of the Burrow, near Mr and Mrs Weasley’s bedroom).

As such, it was no wonder if Harry Potter was a revered name in the Burrow. However, Mr and Mrs Weasley often had to stop their children from getting too enthusiastic about the Boy-Who-Lived and the stories circulating about him.

“He’s just a boy who is Ron’s age, children. I’m fairly certain he can’t have ridden a dragon from coast to coast,” Mr Weasley would say with a hint of amusement. “Besides, if he did, don’t you think the Ministry would have been mobilized to cover it up?”

“That poor boy isn’t someone to gawk at,” Mrs Weasley would say sternly. “If you ever meet him, I expect you to be polite and kind and not ask him embarrassing questions.”

Which, Ron had to admit while trying not to wince, he kinda had done himself when he had asked if Harry really had a scar though to be honest Fred and George had played so many tricks on him in the past he had started to be wary of everything they said.

If his mother ever heard about it, the red-haired boy was fairly certain he would receive a Howler. Best not ever mention it in conversation at home, ever, he decided. Though his question had probably been more tasteful than Fred’s, who had been wondering if Harry remembered what You-Know-Who looked like. While Ron couldn’t deny he was (morbidly) curious about it himself, he also knew it wasn’t something to ask unless he wanted to pass for an insensitive prat.

Thankfully Harry hadn’t been bothered by his first question and the two of them had ‘hit it off’, so
Thankfully Harry hadn’t been bothered by his first question and the two of them had ‘hit it off’, so to speak. Harry seemed to be a nice boy, and Ron found himself relaxing as they chatted — that’s it, until the compartment’s door opened and a tall girl entered, tall enough to look like a third year and already dressed in her Hogwarts uniform, making Harry’s eyes light up.

As stated before, Ron had grown up hearing about Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived. He had heard about Who-Know-Who’s defeat (whenever there was a Weasley clan’s reunion, there would always be at least one adult who, after hitting the Firewhiskey, would start recalling what he had been doing on Halloween 1981 or in the following days at the parties). He had heard about Harry Potter being sent off to live with relatives (though who exactly was a largely debated subject). He had heard about the lighting bolt scar (the only thing known for certain about the Boy-Who-Lived).

He hadn’t heard Harry Potter had a sister.

Well, perhaps he had heard about her at some point when he was little; Mrs Weasley had often tutted about the ‘poor dears’ when speaking about the Potters, but Ron hadn’t paid much attention. Funny as it was (or wasn’t, Ron mused, because being totally forgotten because of another sibling? Ron could totally sympathize), nobody ever spoke about the Potters’ other child. Ron wondered why; perhaps they thought she was dead too because of the Boy-Who-Lived moniker?

But there she was, and Ron Weasley felt himself puzzled — and he had the feeling he wouldn’t be the only one once they arrived to Hogwarts. A wicked part of his mind (groomed by years spent under Fred and George’s influence) wished he had a camera to capture people’s expression.

“So… not twins?” Ron asked after swallowing a mouthful of ham and cheese and tomatoes sandwich; Lita’s sandwiches were awesome, so much better than the corned beef ones his mother had made and which Lita had freely swapped for while Harry was out buying sweets from the trolley for all of them; Merlin, he loved the Potters already. He eyed Lita thoughtfully; she was so tall especially next to her brother, he would have thought she already was a Hogwarts student. But on close inspection, it was easy to notice she didn’t have any trim or badge indicating in which House she had been Sorted.

“Nope,” Lita replied cheerily. “We’re often asked because we’re close in age, but I’m older than Harry by a couple of months. Our Mom had Harry fairly shortly after me and he was born premature,” she explained with the ease of someone who was used to frequently answer the question. “Else I suppose we would have been in different years?”

Ron hummed. “Probably. You need to be eleven already to be allowed to enter Hogwarts and must have them before September 1st. I guess if you’re born September 2nd and you have a younger sibling born August 31th, you both enter Hogwarts at the same time?”

“Well, anyway, I’m happy to be going with Harry; I wouldn’t have liked leaving him alone at the Dursleys.” Lita had a wistful look. “Besides, he’s always getting into trouble, so I better keep an eye on him.”

“I resent that remark; I don’t always get into trouble!” Harry protested indignantly as he reentered the compartment with an armful of sweets, ranging from Bertie Bott’s Every-Flavours Beans and Chocolate Frogs to Pumpkin Pasties, Cauldron Cakes and Liquorice Wands.

“Yes you do,” Lita replied as she moved to make some room for him. “Remember Ripper?” she asked meaningfully, to which her brother pouted while Ron wondered worriedly what or who a ‘Ripper’ was.

“That wasn’t my fault, he shouldn’t have been in the corridor!”
“Yeah, and if I hadn’t managed to grab him by the collar and yank him back, you would had been stuck in that tree until nightfall,” Lita commented. “But nevermind; what’s all that?” She was eyeing the sweets with narrowed eyes, and Ron dimly realized that since they had been raised by Muggles, neither Lita nor Harry would know about the awesomeness that was wizarding sweets.

Well, he was going to educate them on that point.

They had a good time eating the cakes and pasties. Ron absolutely had to explain to them all about the Every-Flavour Beans and Chocolate Frogs. It was weird to learn Muggle pictures stayed still (how boring that was? Though his Dad would probably like the information if he didn’t already known about it) but the discussion they shared as they opened the Chocolate Frogs was highly entertaining.

Ron couldn’t help his chuckle at Lita’s gasp when the first one jumped out of the box, a chuckle Harry shared until Lita playfully shoved him with her shoulder. Lita, like Ron, was more interested in the chocolate but Harry didn’t seem to be able to take his eyes off the Famous Witches and Wizards cards; Dumbledore, Morgana, Hengist of Woodcroft, Alberic Grunnion, Circe, Paracelsus, Merlin,... Nothing Ron didn’t have already, but his newfound friend seemed delighted. It made Ron vaguely regretful he hadn’t packed his collection with him to go to Hogwarts, because then he would have been able to swap or give him some of the cards he had in too many exemplaries.

Perhaps he could ask his parents to mail it to him later?

When not speaking, Lita spent a lot of time watching the countryside flying past the window as it grew wilder. The neat fields had gone. Now there were woods and twisting rivers and dark green hills.

“It’s beautiful,” she breathed once.

None of the boys commented, too busy dealing with the apparition of a boy searching for his toad (who even had toads as pets anymore nowadays? If Ron had been in his place, he’d have tried to lose it on purpose already), then by trying to turn Scabbers, Ron’s pet rat inherited from Percy, yellow with a spell George had taught Ron (which, he realized later, he should have been suspicious about; given the twins’ love for jokes, it could have turned Ron himself yellow instead of being a dud).

Which, sadly, had coincided with a return from the toadless boy (who he didn’t mind, the other boy seemed shy but alright) this time accompanied by a very bossy girl already wearing her Hogwarts robes (not that Ron could complain about it; Lita had changed around the time the train had left platform 9 ¾ and Ron knew his brothers must have changed early on as well).

That girl, that girl was a nightmare! And she was rude!

“... Nobody in my family’s magical at all except for my sister but she’s too young to enter Hogwarts yet, we weren’t sure she was but the teacher who came at our home to explain the magical world confirmed she was, anyway it was ever such a surprise when I got my letter, but I was ever so pleased, of course, I mean, it’s the best school of witchcraft there is, I’ve heard I’ve learnt all of our set books off by heart, of course, I just hope it will be enough -- I’m Hermione Granger, by the way, who are you?”

Ron had never heard someone talk so fast before -- and without taking a breath. Ron looked at Harry and Lita and was relieved to see by their stunned face that they hadn’t learnt all the books off by heart either and that the idea had probably never crossed their mind (it certainly hadn’t crossed his and it probably wouldn’t have crossed Percy’s and Percy was the most book-oriented
of his siblings to the point they had wondered if he wouldn’t make it to Ravenclaw instead of Gryffindor).

“I’m Ron Weasley,” he muttered feeling both awkward and grouchy.

“Lita Potter,” Lita replied. She had a peculiar expression on her face that Ron couldn’t place. It looked like a mix of surprise, shock, and fond exasperation. Mrs Weasley had pulled a very similar face when Fred and George had pulled their last, massive prank at home before starting Hogwarts. ‘Just like your Uncles’, she had muttered before sending them off to bed after forcing them to clean everything.

(When he’d met Amy Granger the following year and saw her and Lita strike a friendship, he’d remember that face and would wonder… but not for long, because the Heir of Slytherin business would take most of his mind for the rest of the year.)

“Harry Potter,” said Harry.

“Are you really?” Hermione said. “I know all about you, of course -- I got a few extra books for background reading, and you’re in Modern Magical History and The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts and Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century.”

She made a pause, and Harry barely had the time to murmur ‘Am I?’ in a daze before Hermione’s eyes focused on Lita as she frowned and started to talk again.

“Did you say Potter? Are the two of you related? Oh, you’re cousin right? Modern Magical History and The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts both mentioned you had been sent off to live with relatives though they didn’t mention whom of course, due to security concerns though it makes sense that you’d end up with…”

“Actually, I’m his sister,” Lita cut out Hermione’s speech easily and Ron felt his growing admiration for her rise (great maker of sandwiches, self-admitted cook, and able to shut off that Granger girl rant with a few words? That girl was great!).

Hermione’s mouth opened and closed several times before her face frozen into an indignant expression. “Are you? But there is no mention of you in any of the books! Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century even explicitly states Harry Potter is an only son! There is no mention of a twin anywhere! The books can’t be all wrong!”

“Yeah, well, Harry definitely got me so I guess not all books are right,” Lita shrugged with a wistful smile. “And I’m not his twin, I’m older so I guess it tends to slip off people’s minds but I’m starting to finding that old, people not remembering I exist.”

“I did,” the toadless boy said shyly, making everyone pause and look at him (Ron hadn’t caught his name; Nashville? No, Neville!). He shuffled uneasily under the sudden attention. “My, uh, my Grandmother? She kept a lot of issues of the Daily Prophet from the last twenty years and I remember seeing a birth announcement for a Lita Marcy Potter, born to Lily and James Potter, December 5th 1979.” He blushed even deeper.

“That’s my birthdate alright,” Lita nodded. The look she gave Neville was much more friendly all the sudden though Ron nodded her eyes seemed a little gazed, as if she had heard something unexpected. So were Harry’s actually, but why…?

“Marcy, eh?” Harry said in a small voice.

“I had always thought it was Lily,” his sister muttered and Ron suddenly felt very awkward. It hadn’t occurred to him that green-eyed girl might not know if she had another name -- and from
the look on Hermione Granger and Neville Longbottom’s faces, it hadn’t occurred to them either.
Lita finally shook her head. “Glad to see I at least make a footnote somewhere, even if only on a
newspaper birth announcement. I guess authors don’t always check their sources,” she joked. It
felt a little forced.

That at least seemed to make the bushy-haired girl contrite and she excused herself quickly, taking
Neville with her -- but not without first telling Ron and Harry to change in their school robes.

“Whatever House I’m in, I hope she’s not in it,” Ron grumbled, only for Lita to lightly swat him
on the hand. It was light and it didn’t really hurt but he yelped all the same and accidentally
dropped his wand. “Hey! What was that for?!” he asked crossly as he bent to pick it back up.

“For being an inconsiderate idiot,” Lita stated calmly. “She’s a genius hard worker. A nervous
genius hard worker,” she added. “She’s bound to be awkward and accidentally rude or haughty.
Try and get to know her when she’s more relaxed, and I’m sure she’ll be very different from what
you think.”

Ron felt dubious. That Granger girl hadn’t left him with an impression so good he’d felt charitable
enough to give her another chance. But, he reminded himself, Bill and Charlie had told them
Percy had been like that too when he had entered Hogwarts -- nervous and awkward but brilliant
and eager to show he was. And then he had turned into a pompous git when he was at home. Ron
made a face as he realized that Hermione Granger was most likely a junior, female version of
Percy. Great. Not that he disliked Percy, but Percy wasn’t the coolest or the nicest of his brothers.
He was, well, Percy.

“Guess so,” he muttered, but without conviction. Lita frowned and looked ready to argue but
Harry quickly intervened before the two could argue.

“What House are your brothers in?” the green-eye boy asked.

“Gryffindor,” Ron replied, shoulders dropping as his temper settled and he started to feel
gloomier. “Mum and Dad were in it too. I don’t know what they’ll say if I’m not. I don’t suppose
Ravenclaw would be too bad, but imagine if they put me in Slytherin.”

Harry and Lita exchanged a look. “That’s the House Vol -- I mean, You-Know-Who was in?”

Ron nodded grimly. He could have said a lot about the subject, but Lita interrupted him before he
could. “So, what do your oldest brothers do now they’ve left school? Did they go to an university
or did they start working right away?”

Ron blinked. “University? What’s that?”

After that, they resumed their conversation as if the Granger girl interlude had never happened.
Ron was proud to speak of Charlie and Bill’s works -- Curse-breaker was an impressive work and
there were only so many wizards or witches willing to work in close proximity to dragons of all
magical creatures. From there, they derived on Gringotts and the attempted robbery -- which Ron
found incredibly awesome because trying to rob Goblins? Wicked! -- and then on Quidditch, with
the youngest Weasley son astounded to learn his newfound friend had no idea what Quidditch
was or about the League.

Of course, nice things couldn’t last forever and of course their trip to Hogwarts was going to be
interrupted again.

Thinking back, Ron would have prefered a new apparition from Hermione Granger or Neville the
toadless boy. What he had instead was three boys he had never met before but who immediately
put him on edge; the one in the middle, a pale boy with blonde hair, looked at Harry with a lot of
“Is it true?” he said. “They’re saying all down the train that Harry Potter’s in this compartment. So it’s you, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” said Harry. He quickly glanced at Lita, who had stiffened and was watching the new arrival with narrowed eyes, before letting his gaze slide at the other boys. Ron could understand why. They looked, well, thick and rather mean. Framing the pale blonde boy like that, they kinda looked like the Aurors who escorted the Minister of Magic in his official trips.

“Oh, this is Crabbe and this is Goyle,” the pale boy added after noticing where Harry (and Lita, but he didn’t seem to be paying attention to Lita) was looking. “And my name is Malfoy, Draco Malfoy.”

Alright, so perhaps it hadn’t been very mature of him to snigger and try to hide it under a cough but honestly, Draco? And the way he presented himself? It reminded Ron too much of Percy when he was trying to sound all grown up and mature. Even if the pale boy hadn’t been a Malfoy, Ron wouldn’t have been able not to snigger. Probably. Possibly.

“Think my name’s funny, do you?” Well, he was, though Ron didn’t had a chance to tell it aloud. “No need to ask you who you are. My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles and more children than they can afford.”

The… the prat! Ron thought as he felt his cheeks redden. That was a low blow if he had ever heard one! So what if his parents had decided they had wanted a big family and what if money was stretched a little thin sometimes (often)? At least Ron’s parents were good folks -- the same couldn’t be said from the Malfoys!

“You’ll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don’t want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there.”

He held out his hand to shake harry’s but to Ron’s relief, Harry didn’t take it.

“I think I can tell who the wrong sort are for myself, thank,” he said coolly.

By his side, Lita nodded in approval. “You tell him, Harry.” It earned her a narrowed gaze as the blond boy looked her up and down, probably trying to decide if she was from a wizarding family or not. Lita stared right back at him, perfectly calm.

Harry’s refusal and Lita’s stare didn’t make Draco Malfoy go red but a pink tinge appeared in his pale cheeks.

“I’d be careful if I were you, Potter,” he said slowly. “Unless you’re a bit politer you’ll go the same way as your parents. They didn’t know what was good for them, either. You hang around riff-raff like the Weasleys and that Hagrid and it’ll rub off on you.”

Ron wasn’t quite certain of what happened afterward. One moment he had been ready to get up, livid and appealed at both the way that git was talking about his family and also about the implicit threat he was hearing, the next he knew he was sitting heavily in the train’s seat, pushed back by a tall, looming, angry Lita Potter.

A tall, looming, angry Lita Potter who was holding Draco Malfoy by the collar of his robes and… The red-haired boy blinked and did a double check. No, he was seeing that right; Lita Potter was indeed holding Draco Malfoy in the air, a good feet above the ground and without breaking a sweat. What the hell?!

He looked at Harry, but the green-eyed boy just smirked knowingly. So his sister being strong
enough to lift a kid off the ground was nothing new to him?

“Re… release me immediately!” the blonde chocked, eyes wide. Obviously Ron wasn’t the only one surprised. “Crabbe, Goyle!”

The two thick boys took a step forward. Calmly, Lita released her hold on Draco’s collar with one hand -- Ron was privately surprised to only see her drop him a few inches -- and punched, actually punched one of Malfoy’s two goons in the face! The guy, Crabbe, went howling as he held his nose as the other also howled, but because he had brushed too much against the Chocolate Frogs that had been piled next to Ron and awoke Scabbers in the process. And Ron’s pet rat wasn’t happy at being woken up apparently, because he was hanging off Goyle’s finger, his sharp little teeth sunk into his knuckle.

“You listen to me here, Draco Malfoy, and you listen to me clearly,” Lita was speaking, uninterested by Scabbers’ heroism and now holding Malfoy with two hands again. She sounded incredibly calm despite her thunderous expression. “You speak like that to Harry again, you speak like that about our family or Ron’s again, and the two of us are going to have words. Got it?” She brought Draco’s face closer to hers, making him look into her bright green eyes, so similar to Harry’s -- did he realize the two were related now? “Got it?” she repeated a little more forcefully.

“G… got it!” Draco Malfoy squeaked. Lita let go of his collar, making him fall to his knees, his balance lost even as Goyle’s finally swung Scabbers round and round until he flew off and hit the window. Draco stared at Lita for a moment, eyes sliding over the scar on her forehead (it looked a little like a 4, Ron thought, but not quite), over her bright green eyes and brown wavy hairs as he quickly got to his feet and him and Crabbe and Goyle disappeared at once. Be it because Lita’s display of strength had scared them (could Crabbe or Goyle lift a person like that? Ron wasn’t sure), because they thought there were more rats lurking in the compartment or because they had heard footsteps down the corridor, they still did.

Lita glared at them and closed the compartment door with a ‘bang’. “What an horrible boy!” she exclaimed. Then she shuffled, looking uncomfortable, passing a hand over her face. “I can’t believe I did it again; I just can’t keep weight-lifting bullies!”

“Oh, I dunno Lita,” Harry commented with a small smile, eyes twinkling. “You’ve always been good at it and we wouldn’t want you to get rusty from lack of training.”

“Laugh it up Harry, I won’t always be behind you to take care of the problem for you and… Ron? Something’s wrong?”

Ron stared at Lita, eyes wide. Great maker of sandwiches, self-admitted cook, rant-cutter, so strong she could lift a boy Malfoy’s size and weight of the ground and able to punch jerks like a champion?

“You,” he said slowly but distinctly, his voice high-pitched from the awe he felt, “are the most awesome person I ever met.”

Lita just blushed. And of course that was the moment Granger came back in...
Chapter Summary

It is the moment Pluto has been longing for...

There was something different in the air today, Trista Silvanus thought as she passed through the barrier between platforms nine and ten at King’s Cross, pushing her trolley. She smiled as she caught sight of the familiar scarlet steam engine; the Hogwarts Express always managed to bring some joy out of her, because it meant she was going to see people, and people her age to boot.

A lifetime spent standing vigil at the Doors of Time had left the former Sailor Senshi a new appreciation for company.

In his cage Charon, her toad, croaked loudly, gathering Trista a few condescending looks from the students who had already arrived on platform 9 ¾. Trista tried not to bristle; so what if toads weren’t in style anymore? That was no reason to mock those who had chosen to take one as pet! Charon was a good pet, because so long he was around, Trista saw a neat decreased in Hogwarts’ dungeon’s cockroaches population. She tried not to shudder as she remembered the shape of the hideous creatures. Brave Charon, she thought as she gave her toad a fond look. He merited to be defended by his owner.

Chasing away a lock of greenish dark hair from her forehead, she just looked back at the mocking students with a raised eyebrow, making them shuffle uneasily before they looked away; Trista tried not to feel too satisfied. For most people, it was always hard to look at Trista in the eyes thank to her unique eye color. Even in the wizarding world, red eyes were rare though Trista was hardly the only person currently attending Hogwarts with some unusual coloring. Case in point with Madam Hooch, the Flying Instructor, or fellow student Mylene Michel -- once known as Sailor Neptune.

Her eyes scanned the crowd, but there was no blue-green crowned head in the mass of people starting to gather around the train, and she couldn’t make catch a glimpse of short dirty blonde hair either so Amara ‘Fred’ Heles, better known to Trista as Sailor Uranus, wasn’t here yet either. Not too surprising, Trista supposed. It was still early and most of the student population had yet to appear.

“Well, Trista, you see there was no reason to rush. We have plenty of time before the train leave,” a man said behind her.

“Oh, Mylor, leave her alone,” a woman replied. “Our little Trista just want to honor her new responsibilities as a Prefect, don’t you Trista?”

The green-haired girl absentmindedly toyed with the shiny silver badge on her chest -- she already was in uniform, which was covered by a long coat that didn’t look out of place with the Muggles for the moment they had to pass through King’s Cross station -- and tried not to sigh before turning to smile at her parents. “Exactly, Mother,” she replied calmly. “I thought it best if I could converse with the other Prefects to evenly distribute the train’s surveillance early on. It seemed sensible.”

“Well, too sensible if you want my advice,” Mylor Silvanus grumbled, eyeing the Hogwarts
Express distrustfully.

Trista tried not to blame him; her father’s last experience with Hogwarts before Trista entered the school hadn’t been a good one, thank to Professor Kettleburn’s errand creatures.

Of course, in a way Trista supposed her father had earned being attacked by a group of raving Erklings for having tempted fate; anyone with two knuts of reason could see the rumors about the Defense Against the Dark Arts position being cursed were true. But for an Auror, Mylor Silvanus was strangely reluctant to believe in curses -- or at least curses on a teaching position and when the occasion to go teach in Hogwarts had been offered to him, he had jumped on it. Cue his ‘little problem’ at the end of the school year which had landed in in St Mungo for two months and had dissuaded him to try for another year. Personally, Trista thought her father had been lucky it hadn’t been more serious. Some teachers in the last thirty years had actually died on the job!

(The old issues of the Prophet had been a gold-mine to retrace the history of the wizarding world since the last two centuries. Dealing with Madam Pince wasn’t nearly as nice, however, and Trista still tried not to get bothered by her watchful eyes on her back whenever she asked to have access to the newspapers reserve.)

Whatever. Suffice to say, Mylor Silvanus’ poor experience had made him seriously consider sending his only daughter to Durmstrang instead; his wife hadn’t appreciated the idea and after several rows where their respective wands had been used, Sidia Silvanus had prevailed and Trista had been allowed to come to Hogwarts.

And given who she had found there, she didn’t regret it the slightest.

Sidia Silvanus chuckled, reaching out to caress her daughter’s hair. “My daughter, the Prefect. I’m so proud of you, Trista.” She leaned forward conspiratorially. “And if you keep your grades high and do a good job, perhaps in a few years I’ll be able to brag about my daughter the Head Girl, won’t I?”

Trista had a terse nod and a frozen smile as an answer. She briefly caught her father’s eyes, who just shrugged but didn’t say anything. Mylor Silvanus appreciated to have a smart daughter and nodded in approval at her good grades, but he didn’t care either way what Trista did in her spare time so long she seemed happy. Trista’s mother, however, always was the ambitious one (she wasn’t a former Slytherin for nothing, after all) and she loved to brag about her daughter’s accomplishments.

Of course, given she was an Unspeakable and couldn’t or wouldn’t talk about her job, Sidia Silvanus had to find a subject of conversation, and Trista’s school life was just the thing.

She wondered what her mother would say and what she would be able to share with her friends and acquaintance once she learned Trista planned to become an Unspeakable herself. While she still dreamed of becoming a seamstress today (oh, how she wished she could live up her passion, for magic had opened so many possibilities in shapes and textures and colors that it made Trista’s head dizzy), Pluto just had to find out why she was in England and what went wrong with the Senshi’s reincarnation pattern and despite the extensive time she spent in the library (to the point her classmates jokingly claimed she should have been a Ravenclaw instead) and she was still no closer to find any true answer.

Her studies of Magical Theory had held no answer so far and she had dropped the subject with disgust -- which wasn’t her smartest moment, Trista confessed. It made her thankful that one of the Shitennou still continued to pursue this venture; should he manage to find anything of worth, she’d have to give Jadeite a kiss.
For now, Trista put all of her hopes on Ancient Studies; old branches of magic might contain leads she hadn’t even thought about yet. The problem was, she would only be able to take it next year -- and only if enough people signed in for it. Now, Trista had good hope it would happen, for she had managed to slowly nurture the interest for the subject in a few of her fellow Slytherins as well as a handful of Ravenclaw -- and one Hufflepuff. If she was lucky, she might even be able to sign up for Alchemy as another elective.

Those two electives, couples with Ancient Runes and Divination, should make her resume stand out when she applied to the Department of Mysteries after graduating.

Adding Head Girl to the application might get her an additional boost… but she could do without as well. Prefect was already good enough, and she foresaw no small amount of troubles in the future keeping an eye on the more mischievous students, be they in her House or in another. She almost pitied the Gryffindor Prefects who would have to deal with Fred and George Weasley.

… And she had the sneaky feeling she knew who the Headmaster and Professor McGonagall had nominated this year.

“We shall see,” Trista evaded neatly when her mother prompted her. “There are many students who could pretend to the title, and I first need to pass my OWLs and show I can do a good job as a Prefect before anything else.”

“True, true,” Sidia sighed. “Now, I hope you don’t mind if we leave now Trista, but I’m running late for my appointment and since your father had to take an early shift today of all days…” she glared at her husband, who raised his hands in surrender.

“Hey, it’s not my fault! It has been planned for a long time, and I had no way to know your boss would also decide to hold a meeting first thing in the morning!”

“Please, don’t argue,” Trista sighed before she forced herself to smile widely. “And it’s alright, I know you’re both busy. I’ll send you an owl as soon as possible, don’t worry.” She took a few steps forward to hug her parents and kiss them goodbye. After a few more minutes of chat and exchanging goodbyes, both took off, going back through King’s Cross station -- you couldn’t Apparate directly from the platform, much to the most vocal Purebloods’ annoyance.

Shaking her head, Trista climbed on the train and made her way to the front, where two compartment were usually reserved for the Prefects. Sure enough, there was a card on the doors. Trista just entered the first and sat down after making sure her trunk and Charon’s cage were secured before taking a book out of her travel backpack and started to read. There was no point in patrolling the train when students hadn’t come in in droves yet, nor without having received instructions from the senior Prefects who would coach them.

She stayed like that for the better part of an hour as more and more students and their families drifted to the platform and crowded around the train. Trista had to interrupt her reading after a point, but compensated by warmly greeting the other Prefects, old and new alike. It was no surprise for her to see Penelope Clearwater and Marcus Turner for Ravenclaw, nor to see her fellow Slytherin Prefect was Mervyn Wynch -- he was popular in Slytherin and even if his notes were average, he was quite good at relating with younger children, having several kid siblings of his own. For now he was in deep discussion with Gemma Farley, the Sixth year Slytherin Prefect; bossy girl, and who had already stated that she would give the welcome speech to the new Slytherin First years after the feast.

Trista wasn’t about to fight her over this, but honestly, she’d have prefered someone else to do it; Alex Sykes would have been a much better choice in her opinion.
Hufflepuff proved to be more surprising, between Robert Hawking and his cousin Dana Hawking; while she understood about Robert, Dana had never struck Trista as Prefect material, the girl being so shy her voice barely rose above a whisper in class. Gryffindor had Felicity Wilkinson, another surprise -- Felicity had always sounded disdainful about Prefects but here she was, her cheeks red from embarrassment and excitement and just behind her came her male counterpart who, as Trista had suspected, was…

“Hello, Percy,” Trista greeted with a nod and a small smile to which Percy Weasley answered pompously and she had to refrain herself from laughing.

Percy was nice, though he always took himself far too seriously. He was, however, a brilliant student who was taking all five main electives at Hogwarts (Divination, Ancient Runes, Arithmancy, Care of Magical Creatures and Muggle Studies), which was no small task given how busy it made his schedule. It was lucky for the red-headed boy that three other students in their year, including fellow new Prefect Penelope Clearwater, had also signed up for all electives and the staff had been able to give them a schedule that didn’t force them to choose between classes. How they would deal if there was only a single student asking to follow all the classes, Trista had no idea.

(When she learned about Time-Turners and how Hermione Granger had used one all year long to be able to get to all her classes thank to being unable to organize a special schedule for a single student after a hushed conversation with Lita during her last school year, Trista would facepalm, moaning she should have seen it coming. It only reinforced her determination to get in the Department of Mystery.)

Trista couldn’t say she envied Percy’s position. It was clear to her why he had been chosen; it was, at least, a weak attempt at trying to make him assert more control over his younger brothers Fred and George, the already infamous twins. Perhaps Professor McGonagall hoped they’d respect their brother’s authority more, but Trista would be surprised if they did. They were more the sort to turn their brother’s nomination into derision -- which, arguably, couldn’t hurt Percy either because he seemed already far too proud of himself.

Oh, well; wait and see, Trista supposed.

With the arrival of the Gryffindors, the unofficial Prefects reunion started as the Head Boy and Head Girl and older Prefects exchanged at length over what they expected of their younger members as well as which duties they preferred to give them for now. As per usual, the Fifth year Prefects would be the ones who would guide the First year to the dormitories while the Sixth year would bring the rear to make sure nobody got lost and the Seventh Year would take the first night of patrol alongside the teachers.

Sixth years and Seventh years as well as the Head Boy and Girl would take care of patrolling the train as well, allowing the Fifth year to catch up with friends if they wished so (and brag about their nomination to those who didn’t known already, Trista thought privately).

It didn’t take long for the compartment to clear up, leaving only two occupants; Trista herself and Percy Weasley.

“Not joining your friends, Trista? You won’t get a chance to hang out with them as much once we’re at Hogwarts.”

“Oh, I’ll get plenty of chances to see Mylene and Amara once we’re at Hogwarts,” Trista replied, though the argument was valid; hanging out with a Ravenclaw and a Gryffindor two years her junior was not as easy as Trista wished it was. Still, Hogwarts was not so large she wouldn’t get an occasion to regularly catch up with them and they had owled each other all summer, so they
could stay separate a few more hours or a few more days. “And you? Not joining your brothers, then?”

Percy made a face. “I know better than to travel with Fred and George, thank you. Last year was a nightmare -- besides, they made my summer very difficult and I need a breather before we arrive. They have no respect for authority. Perhaps I’ll try and see how Ron is doing later, but I think it’s best if he’s left on his own to make friends during the trip; he wouldn’t feel too at ease to talk with other children if I was hovering over him, you see. Prefects can be intimidating for First years.” His chest puffed.

“One more brother coming? My, it must be the… sixth already, isn’t it?” Trista smiled, hiding her amusement. “Will there be an end to the line of Weasleys prowling the corridors of Hogwarts?”

Percy chuckled, shaking his head. “Almost with my generation. With the last of my cousins having graduated the same year as Charlie, the only Weasley child remaining is my sister Ginny, and she should receive her letter next year. Mother is counting on me to give Ron and Ginny a good example to follow.”

“And not Fred and George?”

Percy smiled ruefully, losing his serious demeanour for a moment. “I think she knows it’s hopeless already.” To which Trista giggled. As the countryside unravelled, the two Prefects chatted amiably about their respective summer, the upcoming OWLs, and what they had thought of the reunion. When he wasn’t trying to impress someone, Percy could be very charming, Trista mused as the train came to a halt and the red-haired boy gallantly helped her lower her trunk -- just because the House Elves would bring them to the castle didn’t mean she couldn’t simplify the task for them, something Percy nodded appreciatively at when she explained her reasoning.

“It’s a busy day for them as well, between the welcoming feast and the bagages and the cleaning. Though an Elf is usually happier when he’s busy,” he pointed out as they left the train and stood on the platform, watching the crowd of students part toward the carriage while Hagrid bellowed for the First year to come to him, agitating a lamp. Trista almost envied them; crossing the lake was exhilarating and she treasured the memory.

“True, but that’s no reason to add to their workload if we can simplify their lives. I think…”

She paused brutally as she caught sight of someone familiar. Her heart started to beat faster and suddenly she knew, yes she just knew what had been different in the air today. It was only a flash as Hagrid raised his lamp higher, but Sailor Pluto could have never mistaken those long, golden blonde hair tied back by a striking red ribbon. Even at eleven years old, she could have never mistaken that lithe silhouette that run toward the gigantic man, nor she could have mistaken that clear voice yelping ‘wait for me’!

And she could have never mistaken that white cat that was hanging on the blonde girl’s shoulder for anyone else.

Dear Lord… “Venus,” she murmured.

“Trista? Everything alright?” That was Percy, sounding worried. With great effort, she turned toward him and if he was surprised by her beaming smile, he didn’t say anything.

“Perfectly alright, Percy. Actually, I don’t think I ever felt better.”

Because where Venus was, the Princess and the rest of her Guardians were sure to follow…
Severus Snape, 1991

Chapter Summary

Lita doesn’t resemble her mother much, to Severus Snape's relief...

Asides of the eyes, which were exactly the same, the girl looked little like Lily.

That much gave Severus Snape relief as he sat heavily on a sofa a drink of Firewhiskey in hand in the privacy of his quarters, thinking back about the first Gryffindors/Slytherin First Year class he had had the dubious honor of dispensing.

Severus had prepared and steeled himself for years in prevision of this moment -- the moment Lily’s children would enter Hogwarts. Facing Lily’s girl had admittedly made him more nervous than facing her son for he had feared, for an awful moment, that Lily’s daughter would be her spitting image. If that had been the case… years of preparation and Occlumency wouldn’t have been sufficient to keep him sane.

His heart had almost skipped a beat when he had called her name aloud and she had raised her hand to signal her presence -- even more so when he had noticed she was sitting next to a Slytherin girl student as if it was the most normal thing in the world, the two of them looking like true friends in the making. It was like a painful flashback.

But thankfully for the Potions Master, Lita Potter didn’t resemble Lily Evans (he couldn’t bring himself to call her Lily Potter in his mind, and avoided to say it aloud if he could) asides of her bright green eyes. And she didn’t look like James Potter either, Severus mused as he recalled the tall eleven-years old girl with wavy brown hair’s appearance; there was nothing of Potter in that girl, nothing. Perhaps she took after her grandparents instead? But that wasn’t quite true; Mrs Evans had been rather tall (so had Petunia) but neither she nor her husband had had brown hair (blond and red, like their daughters). And Severus was hard-pressed to match Lita Potter’s face with their owns. Perhaps she did take after the Potter side after all. But nevermind; so long she wasn’t a clone of Lily, he could handle facing her in class.

Her brother, though… Severus couldn’t help but sneer. It was like facing James Potter resuscitated. James Potter resuscitated… with Lily’s bright green eyes.

He sipped at the Firewhiskey, trying not to scowl as he thought of the boy. Lita Potter was one thing; unless she started to exhibit the same personality as her obnoxious father, Severus could probably stay neutral toward her. Probably. People never thought much about the eldest Potter child, Severus had noticed; she didn’t share her brother’s fame and many books on the events of Halloween 1981 even forgot to mention the Potters had had a daughter as well as a son. She was virtually an unknown. Unless the scions of Death Eaters’ families started to treat her with enmity like they did with the Boy-Who-Lived, then Severus saw no reason to treat her poorly in order to further his cover.

Harry Potter, on the other hand,... Severus' lips curled; Harry Potter, he couldn’t help but loathe immensely at first glance. And it wasn’t just because of his appearance either, no; he loathed Harry Potter the same way he loathed Neville Longbottom for without those two boys, then Lily would have still been alive.
Neither boys were at fault. It was his and his alone, his guilty conscience whispered; he buried it down and stomped on it as much as he could.

Severus pressed his head against a cushion, closing his eyes.

If only Harry Potter hadn’t been born at the end of July… If only he had only considered Lily could have been a target! But the idea had never occurred to him, simply because he had been aware she had given birth to a baby girl a few weeks prior to Sybil Trelawney’s prophecy. There was no way she could have fallen pregnant again so fast!

But she had. Thank to a good potions regimen, a few health charms and probably pure dumb luck, another child had been conceived in Lily’s womb in a time lapse that would have been impossible for Muggles. But even so, Lily shouldn’t have had her second child before September at the earliest, and despite his growing nervousness, Severus hadn’t seen the danger, Not fully.

Then Lily had entered labor early, giving birth to a premature son on the last day of July, right after Alice Longbottom. A premature son who must have been barely a few days short of seven months old, but who was perfectly healthy and had showed signs of magic before he was even three months old.

Was it any wonder the Dark Lord had decided to target the Potters under those circumstances?

That boy’s birth had signed Lily’s death warrant by association and to add humiliation to the injury, he looked like a clone of his father (minus the eyes, his conscience pointed out). Even if he didn’t have a role to play, Severus felt he was entitled his hatred of Potter.

And still… Lily had died to save him. To save both her children, the Potions Master reminded himself. As it was, he found himself very curious of the scar on Miss Potter’s forehead. Harry was the only one hit by the killing curse, was he not? So why did his sister had such an unique shaped scar as well? Could she too have been touched by the Dark Lord’s spell?

No, such thoughts were ridiculous; if the other Potter child had survived an Avada Kedavra as well, it would have been known… right?

Severus frowned, eyes snapping open. There was only one wizard who would know for certain. With a surprising grace, he put his now empty glass of Firewhiskey down and rose, smoothing his robes over before walking to the doors.

Headmaster Dumbledore and him needed to have a serious discussion.
Hogwarts might be a great school, but it was missing some core subjects or extracurriculars to Lita’s taste. Thankfully, Percy Weasley has some suggestions.

To Lita’s defence, she didn’t actually start freaking out before the end of the first month at Hogwarts; before that she had been fidgety, of course, but it had gone relatively unnoticed except by Harry and her roommates. Not having had the chance to truly strike a friendship yet, her roommates hadn’t commented on Lita’s increasing nervousness and the way her smile was starting to waver.

(Well, not quite; Hermione had tried to speak with one of the Gryffindors girl prefects, but had been gently rebuked. First years tended to be nervous and awkward the first few months, so there was nothing to worry about, she was told.)

(Hermione was less than impressed when Lita’s nervous breakdown finally happened, suffice to say.)

Harry hadn’t thought much of Lita’s monosyllabic answers and dropped shoulders at first, mainly because he was too busy settling in school life and he had assumed Lita’s tension came from facing the same problems as him. Since they had started making friends of their own, the two siblings weren’t joined at the hip anymore. Harry had Ron (and it was really nice to have a boy his age as friend for once) and Lita had started to be glued at the side of a Hufflepuff and a Slytherin girls whenever they weren’t in class.

Matilda Heartfield, the Hufflepuff girl, was alright but Harry had some reserves about Rei Hino, the Slytherin. At the sorting feast, Slytherin students had looked like an unpleasant lot and the few classes the Gryffindors had shared with the Slytherins hadn’t made Harry revise his opinion. Until he met Draco Malfoy, Harry had never believed he’d hate another boy more than Dudley but here he was.

Rei Hino was a quiet, almost regal-looking girl and she never joined Malfoy in his taunting -- if anything she seemed very unimpressed with him -- but Harry worried anyway. He didn’t want his sister to have bad frequentations. If Ron hadn’t vouched for Hino, he probably would have worried even more.

(“The Hinos are alright or at least my parents say so. They moved in Britain a couple years ago so they weren’t You-Know-Who supporters.”)

Lita was a big girl, Harry had decided. She could make her own choices. He trusted her to take care of herself.

That’s it, until Lita dropped on her knees in front of the fireplace in the middle of the Common Room and started bawling. After that, there was no hiding the fact there was a problem.

Which was why Harry Potter was currently sitting on a couch next to his sister, squeezing her hand in comfort while she sobbed, her other hand wrapped around a steaming mug of hot cocoa the Weasley twins had brought in (where had they gotten it was a mystery to Harry, and he was
too busy trying to comfort Lita to ask about it -- though Percy Weasley wasn’t as distracted as him and from the looks he was giving his unrepenting brothers, the twins were probably in for a lecture).

“I can’t help it, Harry, I’m sorry,” Lita hiccuped uneasily, cheeks stained with tears tracks. “I’m just, I’m missing it so much!” Her green eyes glazed over. “The way flour packages weight in your hands while you measure the quantities, the soft sound sugar makes when it rains down over the ingredients you’re mixing, the way the knives cut into the vegetables as you mince them, the sweet scent of the cupcakes slowly rising in the oven, the taste of homemade scones,...” she listed off, her voice almost pathetic. “I miss it!” she wailed again.

“I know, Lita, I know,” her brother replied uneasily, still squeezing Lita’s hand and trying to ignore the Gryffindor students who were staring at them (they probably would have tried to come closer to overhear, but the Weasley brothers, all four of them, were acting as a living barrier. Ron’s glares weren’t very impressive but between the twins smiling too widely and Percy using his ‘I’m a Prefect’ speech, nobody had dared to cross the line yet).

The Potters could have gone without more interests from their fellow students, but Harry was starting to have the sneaky feeling that no matter what he would do or say in school, he’d immediately be judged on it. Great. Just great. But for now, the rest of the world could wait. Harry’s priority until further notice was his big sister.

Harry had always known Lita loved to cook, but he had never imagined she loved it THAT much; his strong, courageous sister had been reduced to a literal wreck and it was both worrisome and painfully embarrassing at the same time. It was like as if Lita was a junkie who had just hit withdrawal -- an unflattering comparison, but it was the first one that came to the Boy-Who-Lived’s mind.

A nervous breakdown over cooking; he’d have expected that from Dudley, but from Lita?

“I hate this school,” Lita bemoaned between two sobs. “I’m happy we don’t have physics and I like Herbology, I like it very much and I have Rei and Matilda back and Neville is a sweet boy but… no Home economics, and no access to a kitchen to cook the delicious dishes I saw the recipes of in the Daily Prophet and I think I’m going to go crazy. I want my kitchen back Harry!”

Harry patted her back but wisely kept silent knowing that if he tried to say anything, it would sound awkward and probably worsen the situation. “And I miss gardening,” Lita continued, starting to babble. “While I like Herbology and learning about magical plants, it’s not true gardening, I can’t plant seeds and take care of flowers and cultivate vegetables and pull out weeds and I never thought I’d said it but I’m missing Privet Drive.” Her face was twisted into a look of confused horror and Harry wondered if he was making the same face. Missing Privet Drive? That was like, like… blasphemy!

Then again, from the phrasing, it was obvious Lita missed the HOUSE and not the Dursleys themselves.

“That’s, that’s okay Lita,” he mumbled, increasing his comforting pats, trying not to stiffen when Lita leaned against his shoulder and buried her face against his torso. “I’m sure we can find something to make you feel better…”

“Unless your wand can conjure up a kitchen on the spot, I don’t think so,” Lita answered, her voice muffled as she kept her face pressed against Harry’s robes. “Or a nice garden to take care of and arrange to my tastes. I never liked the gardenias Aunt Petunia put in front of the house but now I’m missing them!”
“Well, I don’t think conjuring a kitchen is possible, but what about you try and join out the Herbology Club?”

Both Potter siblings jumped a little as they recognized Percy’s voice. The oldest Weasley sibling had come closer to the couch Harry and Lita were sitting on and was watching them both and Lita in particular with a frown. His eyes, however, looked much kinder than usual.

“Herbology… Club?” Lita sniffed as she rose her head to look at the Prefect with wide eyes.

“Well, yes,” Percy answered stiffly as he moved around the couch and came to sit in one of the chairs next to it. “I hope you won’t mind if I listened closely to your conversation, but my role as a Prefect is to look after the younger students, and not just to make sure they know the rules and how to navigate the castle.” His chest puffed a little as he said ‘Prefect’ but his eyes remained soft as he gazed at Lita. “It seems obvious to me you have a hard time coping with being away from home. Now, it’s perfectly normal, many First years and some upper years have trouble dealing with the first weeks of school -- languishing and homesick, and thinking they’re too big to complain. Normally, I’d recommend an increase of letters to home but…” he trailed off, biting his lips.

Harry could appreciate Percy not finishing his sentence. Harry and Lita being orphans, writing home was impossible for them unless they decided to write to the Dursleys, which was laughable. And if Percy truly kept an eye out for the younger students (and Harry hadn’t even noticed he did!) then he probably had noticed neither Harry nor Lita had received anything from their guardians, be it a package or a letter (and Harry had to wonder if Ron had ever shared what he had told him about the Dursleys with his siblings).

“Since mail could be an issue,” Percy continued diplomatically, “then the next thing I’d recommend would be to go back to hobbies you normally enjoyed at home or find a club or activity to occupy your mind and mingle more closely with your fellow students. Clubs and meetings are often sparse in September but if you check the board near the entry, you’ll see that a few have already put notices on the noticeboard.”

He nodded toward the corridor leading out of the Tower then leaned back in his seat with his fingers intertwined together. “Now, Lita, Hogwarts covers a vast array of extracurricular activities. Some Clubs have been established steadily for years while other are ephemeres; some are House Clubs while other are school-wide clubs or activities.” Was it him, or was Percy trying to drop a hint Lita could do club activities with her friends? “There are Chess Clubs, Art Clubs, Charms Clubs, homeworks help meetings, an orchestra, Art and music classes, Gobstones Clubs, Wizard Card Collectors’ Clubs, a choir, …” he listed off at the top of his head, to Lita and Harry’s fascination.

He hadn’t known so many things existed in Hogwarts!

“Now, I don’t think we have a cooking club,” Percy continued, “but maybe one can always be created.”

“Really?” Lita asked in a breath, sounding so hopeful it made Harry’s heart leap.

Percy paused, stroked his chin. “Maybe. I can’t say for certain because as far as I know, nobody tried -- at least not in the last ten years. Cooking require serious supervision, especially for younger students, and an appropriate room if you can’t have access to Hogwarts’ kitchens. Should you want to create a cooking club, you’d have to make a list of interested students wishing to adhere to present to the Headmaster -- and you’d also need to have a supervisor, preferably a teacher though a Seventh year may be considered appropriate.”
“But it’d be possible?”

“Provided the Headmaster agrees, maybe,” Percy confirmed. “Though in the meanwhile, perhaps you could join another club? As I said, we have an Herbology Club going -- mainly manned by Hufflepuff students and upper years, mind you, but everyone is welcome so long they like plants. It’s not pure gardening, but maybe it’d be a first step in the right direction?”

Light glinted off his glasses and Lita beamed. “I guess… I guess I can try? Where and when do they meet?”

Percy gave a chuckle. “Well, you’ll have to check the noticeboard; I know the club exist, that doesn’t mean I know the details.” He smiled, and Harry was struck by how much his smile resembled the twins’ owns. Here came the family resemblance. Then his face became serious again. “And you Harry? Everything alright for you I hope?”

“Oh, uh, yes, yes,” Harry quickly assured him. Percy might have been less pompous than usual today, but that didn’t meant he wanted the Prefect to take too much interest in him. “No problem for me.”

“If you say so. But if you need anything, don’t hesitate to come see us Prefects; that’s our job,” he puffed before rising from his seat. “If the two of you are feeling better, I suggest you move somewhere else to discuss. Fred and George and Ron may have tried to save your privacy, but many students would like to use those couches.” And with a brisk nod, he was gone.

Harry just nodded and murmured thanks as he watched the oldest of the red-haired brother leave before glancing at Lita. Her eyes were still red from all the crying she had done, but she had stopped sobbing and she seemed truly hopeful. “Maybe I should ask Neville to come with me, perhaps he’d be interested… Eh, did he really mention a choir and music classes? Man, Matilda and Rei are going to like that!”

*_*_*_*_*_*_*_*

Rei and Mina learning of extra-curricular activities like the Frog Choir or music classes by Mylene and get scandalized they’re not open to first year (who have to concentrate first on getting the bases of magic before getting into other stuff)

“What do you mean, choir or music aren’t accessible to First year students?!”

If Mylene Michel, once known as Michiru Kaioh or Sailor Neptune for those in the known, had been a lesser person, she would have chuckled at the indignant look on Minako’s face. Well, Matilda now, she mentally corrected herself while trying not to show just how amused she was. More surprising was the look on Rei’s face, which mirrored Venus; Mars had never struck her as being interested in arts. The Rei she remembered had been an aloof girl, reserved and almost cold (ironic, for one who was born under the sign of fire). But then again, she also remembered another Rei, more… spicy. It certainly was a surprise to see her in Slytherin… and then not.

Mylene shrugged. “Just like I said; First years aren’t allowed on the Frog Choir or to take extracurriculars like music and art, just like they aren’t allowed on Quidditch teams.” She patted the younger girl’s shoulder in sympathy. “I know, I know, it’s unfair; I had more or less the same reaction when I entered Hogwarts and found out. Apparently, it’s to allow First year to ‘better concentrate on learning the bases of magic’.” She pouted disdainfully, an expression mirrored by Matilda and Rei alike.

“That,” Matilda growled, “is bullshit!”
“Like she said,” Rei added, nodding vehemently.

Now Mylene did laugh, though it was short and accompanied by a shocked gasp. The explanation hadn’t convinced her the first time around, and it still didn’t. At least nobody had made a fuss because she had brought her violin in First year and repeated by herself in empty classrooms or in the dorm and she had managed to take Music and Muggle Music the moment she had started her Second year.

“Stupid or not, it’s the rule and you won’t be able to officially join either class,” Mylene said after she managed to calm her laugh. “Though nothing stops you from practicing on your own,” she winked.

Matilda and Rei deflated and exchanged a look. “I suppose so,” the black-haired girl murmured. “But it’s not the same thing. You’re sure there is no way to…?”

“None,” Mylene shook her head. “Officiously, I think it’s because most clubs use hours where First years have Magical Theory classes to hold their meetings,” she confided.

Matilda groaned. “Ugh, please don’t mention that class, it gives me a headache just thinking about it!” It made Rei smirk.

“Sounds like someone didn’t yet write her essay for tomorrow’s class,” the Slytherin sing sanged to her blonde friend’s annoyance.

“Because you did, perhaps?”

“No, it’s not that. I’m not waiting until the last minute to do my homework,” the dark-haired witch said, passing a hand in her hair. Matilda blew a raspberry at her and Mylene couldn’t help it; she laughed, loud and clear. They sounded so much like themselves that after all that time, the teal-haired girl felt that she could forget composure for a moment.

Merlin, it was good to have her friends back -- even if she hadn’t been as close to Princess Serenity’s Guardians as she would have wished, Neptune considered them kins.

“I can sympathise,” she said dryly when once again her laughter calmed down under the combined glare of Venus and Mars.

And she did, really. Just like Flying, Magical Theory was mandatory for all First year, then was used as an extracurricular class from Second year onward. In the Ravenclaw student’s opinion, Magical Theory wasn’t deprived of interest but the course was too vast and too badly defined at the same time to be useful with only a single year of study -- and since it wasn’t mandatory after First year, very few young wizards and witches decided to deepen their understanding of the subject.

The whole course should have been revamped, Mylene thought privately, and she could only admire the handful of students who had decided to continue to study the subject. Even Setsuna, no, Trista, who was the most determined among them to try and understand why they had been reincarnated as witches half-a-world away from Japan and why their transformation powers were seemingly locked, hadn’t been able to stomach more than two years of the subject before giving it up. As far as Mylene knew, the green-haired Guardian of Time was now bidding her time until she passed her OWLs and was allowed to take Ancient Studies, which she hoped would be more interesting to unravel the mystery.

Mylene had her doubts, but if Pluto wanted to try, she wasn’t going to oppose her. Neptune wasn’t unhappy with her current life and so long she had Uranus by her side and music to fill her
free time, she saw no urgency to try and find a ‘solution to the problem’. Besides, with the apparition of Venus, Mars and Jupiter in Hogwarts, she was certain it was only a matter of time before their Princess and Mercury showed herself as well.

And then, perhaps they would also see Saturne…

She hide her wince at the thought of the petite child she had helped raise and who had called her ‘Mama’ and smiled benignly at the younger Hogwarts students, leaning forward with a conspiratory look.

“Well, ladies, Frog Choir and Music might officially be out for you this year, but if you want to revise your solfeggio and your scales this year and try a bit of singing accompanied by a violin…”
Lita, Harry, First Flying Lesson and Consequences

Chapter Summary

Whereas Flying awakes old trauma for Lita and Harry is bemused by one of the Gryffindors Reserve Quidditch team player...

“Lita?”

Something was vibrating under her. Vibrating a lot. It was scary. The little girl looked around and saw only vague faces. Worried faces. The vibrations picked up and something jerked. People started to scream in fright. Someone was talking fast, words she couldn’t quite understand.

“Lita, are you alright?”
“Miss Potter? Miss Potter, do you…? Oh dear. Everyone, step back!”

Someone grabbed her hand and she looked up, crossing gazes with green eyes as bright as hers. Her mother (it was her mother? But her mother had red hair, right? But no, her mother had black hair. Red. Black. Red. Black. Her name was Lily Potter. Her name was Kino Yukiko. Her name was… Mom) tried to smile at her reassuringly, but she could see the fear in her eyes, the way she was almost biting her lips to avoid shouting like the others. A strong hand came to rest on the little girl’s shoulder. She couldn’t turn her head, but if she did, she knew she’d see her father.

Her mom was opening her mouth to speak...

“Lita, can you hear me?!”
“Miss Hino, step back, she’s going to…!”

The plane -- she was on a plane! -- jerked again and there was a loud bang and a SCREAM...

’’MAKOTO!’’
“LITA!!!!!!!”

… that was drowned by the rush of the wind and a myriad of screams. The world started to plummet.

There was nothing under her feet anymore; just air and fire and raining debris and she was falling. Falling. Falling. Falling...

Black.

 Staff meetings were what Dumbledore loved to call ‘an old Hogwarts tradition’. Personally, Severus considered them to be an insufferable chore he could have done without. Oh, he understood well enough why they were needed; there were so many students at Hogwarts and so few teachers that Head of Houses could only do so much to keep an eye on their pupils and their individual needs. By recutting what they had observed in their own classes, it became much easier to identify and keep an eye out for potential trouble and to invite a student in difficulty for a little chat.
Without staff meetings, Severus might have taken months longer to discover Duncan Avery’s dyslexia or how fast Saccharina Rosier’s eyesight had degraded, for the prideful with had refused to admit she now needed glasses.

And those were benign cases; last year alone the Hogwarts staff had to deal with two teenage pregnancies, a student cutting himself out of stress for his coming OWLs, three separate cases of bullying, an affair between one of the nurses and a Second Year student (the nurse had immediately been fired by an irate Madam Pomfrey and an even more irate Dumbledore; last Severus had heard, the woman had been brought on charges and was facing an Azkaban sentence) an attempt at growing up hallucinogenic mushrooms in one of the dungeon’s cells (and Snape had been utterly livid about missing it), an illegal duel which had almost turned deadly and, since the Weasleys twins had joined the student corps, an endless litany of pranks varying in severity.

Yes, staff meetings were needed and were pretty much essential to a good gestion of Hogwarts. Still, the Potions Master wished he could have skipped this one altogether in order to work on the next batch of potions Madam Pomfrey had ordered from him in prevision for the semester instead. The matron took no chance when it came to her patients’ health and believed in being well-prepared. Severus grudgingly admired her for that.

Currently, the older witch was finishing to give her report and observations to the rest of the staff, pointing out problematic cases.

“... his allergy isn’t deadly but it is still serious. As a result, I’d suggest telling the House Elves to provide Ravenclaw’s table with a greater range of dairy-free meals until Mr Rivers finish his education. I would also advise the teachers to keep an eye on possible pranksters thinking it would be a ‘jolly good idea’ to give him milk without his knowledge,” Madam Pomfrey finished, giving a pointed look at Minerva as she did so. The Transfiguration teacher didn’t quite sigh but her nod was quite telling.

From his seat, Dumbledore nodded amiably, eyes twinkling. “Thank you for your concerns, Poppy. Is there anything else you’d wish to signal us?"

“St Mungo is signalling a recrudescence of Green Thumbs since last month,” the matron said clinically. “Although it isn’t overly contagious, it is hard to treat on children. You might wish to make sure your students have their gloves on full-time in the Greenhouses, Pomona,” she added with a nod toward the Herbology teacher.

“Noted. Thank you for the warning, Poppy,” the round, smiling witch chirped back.

“Thank you once again for your prompt report Poppy. Now…”

“I wasn’t quite finished, Albus,” the matron said coldly, making several teachers pause, Severus included. Madam Pomfrey seldom cut out someone else when they were speaking and Headmaster Dumbledore even less so than others. The twinkling in the Headmaster decreased.

“Poppy?”

“As you may be aware, Madam Hooch gave her first flying lesson to the Gryffindors and Slytherins First Year yesterday. I’d like to go back on the incident or rather, the series of incidents that marked this particular class. If you would Rolanda?” the matron looked at the Flying Instructor, who was massaging her temples, looking distraught.

Severus tensed. Everyone on staff had heard of the flying lesson by now -- and of Potter’s status as the Gryffindor Quidditch team new Seeker, blatantly breaking the rules about First Year and
owning a broom. To say Severus was seething was an understatement.

“I admit, in nearly forty years of teaching, I hardly had a class as disastrous as this one,” Rolanda Hooch sighed, still massaging her temples.

“Surely it wasn’t so bad?” Dumbledore tried to smile, but Madam Hooch and Madame Pomfrey both gave him a look.

“I had a student brought in nearly catatonic, Albus; I don’t think you can define it as anything but ‘bad’, ” Madam Pomfrey let out in a clipped tone.

“Catatonic? I thought Mr Longbottom only broke his wrist?” Filius Flitwick squeaked. Severus himself raised an eyebrow. Now that was new; he certainly hadn’t heard anything about it.

“Oh, Mr Longbottom indeed broke his wrist but I repaired it in no time. No, I was referring to Miss Potter,” Madam Pomfrey let out and Severus tensed. “As Madam Hooch involuntarily discovered during the first flying lesson, the young lady suffers from a crippling fear of heights. The kind of fear that makes people black out in fright and faint.”

“It’s sadly true,” Rolanda sighed, raising her head to look at her fellow teachers. “And I’m afraid I didn’t help. To my defense, after dealing with Longbottom and learning what Draco Malfoy and Harry Potter had been up to while I was walking him to the Hospital Wing, I was so on edge I didn’t even notice she seemed unwell. I should have seen though; it was clear she was holding her broom too tight, even after I corrected her grip. She might have been shaking as well but I didn’t see. I didn’t see…” she lamented.

There was a moment of uncomfortable silence before she continued. “I gave the signal and she kicked off the ground with everyone. She even started to move a little and then she just… froze. She wouldn’t move anymore and her broom started to vibrate and fly higher. Miss Hino from Slytherin tried to talk to her and make her come back to her sense but without success. I had just realized her eyes were unfocused and that she was on the verge of fainting when she suddenly fell and I just had the time to use my wand to slow her fall before she hit the ground.” She shook her head sadly. “Two visits in the Hospital Wing in a single lesson; I hadn’t sunk so low in ten years.”

“At least you had good reflexes,” Poppy Pomfrey sniffed before she sunk back in her chair. “I tried to speak with the young lady about her fear, but she wasn’t very cooperative. An interview with her brother, however, revealed Miss Potter has always been afraid of the noise of a Muggle flying device called ‘planes’.”

“Oh, planes!” Charity Burbage, the new Muggle Studies teacher said as she sat straighter. “It’s a machine Muggles developed to fly. Personally, I liken them more to flying carpets than to brooms. There exists all sort models, some of which are big enough to carry hundred of persons at once,” she explained as her co-workers muttered between them, obviously incredulous.

“Quite,” Poppy nodded shortly. “Anyway, according to Mr Potter, Miss Potter is afraid of planes and apparently, of flying by association. However, nobody knew just how serious that fear was, with the consequences Rolanda just related.

“Is the child alright now?” Pomona worried.

“Oh, she was much better after a few hours of sleep and a Calming Draught, and she’ll continue to be well so long she’s not forced to go back on a broom. Which is the reason Rolanda and I agree Miss Potter should be dispensed from flying lesson until further notice. I trust you will agree, Headmaster, Minerva?”
The matron’s tone brooked no argument. Severus coughed slightly.

“How curious it is the rules about flying seem to always be broken when there is a Potter involved,” he murmured silkily, getting a glare from Minerva, Poppy and Rolanda in return for his efforts.

“That was perfectly uncalled for Severus!” Minerva snapped. “We’re not talking about Quidditch here, but about the continuous health of a young witch who is under our care!”

“Besides, it’s not like it hasn’t happened before,” Rolanda pointed out, frowning. “In 1969, Julius Robinson stopped attending flying lessons after the third class when it became clear he couldn’t stand on his broom at all without falling; to this day, he still can’t. In 1978, Hippolyta Downey was suspended from flying lesson because she suffered from vertigo and couldn’t rise higher than a few feet. In 1983, Iris Benbow injured herself after falling from her broom and was adamant about never trying to fly again; she ended up retaking the class two years later after she managed to overcome her trauma. And shall I remind you of Callum Perkins, Severus? Hmm? You remember, that Slytherin student who…”

“Yes, I remember,” Severus bite out. It was hard to forget a student banned from flying lessons for purposely racing with the school broom to the Forbidden Forest and disappearing inside for hours until Hagrid managed to locate him and drag him out. Suffice to say, Rolanda had flat out refused to grant him another chance after that and Mr Perkins had left Hogwarts without having graduated from Madam Hooch’s class. “You’re certain she has to be pulled out from class?”

“Quite,” Poppy nodded sternly. “I wish I was wrong, Severus, but if her reaction is anything to judge by, then her fear runs deep. Very deep. Why, I’ve seen people exposed to Dementors looking healthier than that girl when Rolanda brought her in my Wing! And no, I’m not kidding,” she added flatly. “It’s not the kind you can easily overcome and if she gets back on a broom before she’s ready for it, she’ll either hurt herself or accidentally hurt someone else. And that, I refuse to risk.” Besides her, Madam Hooch nodded sternly.

Dumbledore looked at one then at the other, then sighed. “Well, if it’s for the good of the child and since Madam Pomfrey is making it a medical matter, I see no reason to refuse. Miss Potter will be pulled out from Flying Class until further notice. Now, what is the next point on the agenda?”

“I’m sorry to have worried you so much,” Lita murmured as she leaned heavily against Rei’s shoulder. The smaller, black-haired girl was hugging her for dear life, something that was almost comical given their size difference and their respective tempers.

Well… at least what Lita remembered of their respective tempers which was messy and confusing because one moment she thought of Rei as a sophisticated, dignified and almost cold girl and another, she had flashes of Rei as a girl-crazy, cheerful teenager who got into arguments with… with… Sailor Moon?

Ugh. It was giving Lita a headache. So many things were adding and didn’t add up at the same time! Take Rei, for example; Lita had flashes of her with an almost purplish shade to her dark hair, and other times they had a grey hue, whereas the Rei in front of her had plain black hair falling to her hips. Lita remembered Rei with dark brown eyes or with purple eyes depending on the bits of memories that haunted her dreams; the Rei that hugged her are darkish eyes but they did have a purple glint to them…

And it made her glare very unsettling as she finally relaxed her grip on Lita and took a step back.
“Damnit, Lita,” the smaller girl growled with a mix of exasperation and worry. “Don’t ever scare me like that again!” She poked viciously at the Gryffindor girl’s side with a finger to emphasize her point. “Do you realize how frightened I was when you failed to acknowledge I was here, to answer my calls? How much it scared to see you fall and realize that you could easily kill yourself at that height? We… we lived through worse things once,” she murmured, her eyes lost in memories only she might remember before she shook her head to clear her mind and glared again. “But we’re not… we’re not Senshi here! If Madam Hooch and her wand hadn’t been there, you might have died!” She started to pace in front of Lita, making the taller girl blink as she was whipped by Rei’s long hair as she turned.

“I… I’m sorry, Rei. I… I never planned… I never thought I could…” Lite stumbled, fighting to find the right words. Rei had been scared? What did she think Lita had felt? She looked down at her hands, finding them tightened in trembling fists. She breathed deeply, in and out, in and out… “I never was afraid of heights before,” she murmured. “But on that broom, with my feet dangling in the air, I had this flashback and…”

The Slytherin girl’s gaze softened. “Lita? What did you see?”

“… I remembered my parents. My parents from… before,” Lita said after a moment of hesitation, avoiding Rei’s gaze. Her fists tightened again in a spasm, her nails digging in her palms. “I… the accident… I was in the plane… I was always in the plane,” she murmured, eyes suddenly gazed over as she remembered different seat colors, different seat arrangements, different faces around her… but her mother’s was still the same. “I remembered the crash… and the noise of planes… and the broom was vibrating so much and I couldn’t think and all I could see what the plane and feeling myself fall and…!”

Soft hands were gently put on hers and Lita looked up to see Rei’s comprehensive eyes.

“It’s stupid,” Lita found herself murmuring. “I should be afraid. I mustn’t be afraid. It’s not a plane. It’s just a stupid broom. And I… I levitated once, right?” she asked herself, remembering floating in the air above Tokyo. “But the broom… I can’t, I can’t, I can’t, I can’t,” she repeated helplessly. “Even if it’s just a memory, even if I never lived it as, well, ME, it feels so real! But it’s not, because I never went on a plane, but I can remember flying and and and…”

She wasn’t aware she was crying until Rei was rubbing a handkerchief under her eyes, wiping away tear tracks while murmuring soothingly in Japanese. The worse, though? Lita had never learned Japanese, but she understood every single word Rei uttered. Lita was british; whoever she had been in a past life… hadn’t been.

“I know the feeling,” Rei murmured. “The confusion of having several sets of memories playing. Of having a moment of déjà vu whenever something happen. To think you should feel a certain way, when you have no reason to.” She paused, looking like she was pondering something. “My father… part of me want to hate him, because I remember hating him. I remember a distant man who only thought of his career, a politician who had no place or time for his family, for his daughter. But my father here, he never did anything for me to treat him with coldness. He’s here for me, for my sister. And still sometimes I freeze as all the versions of him I remember seem to mesh together and I don’t know what is real anymore.”

Lita had a sad, bitter smile. “Do tell me. You think… you think Matilda feels the same?”

Rei waved. “I’d be surprised if she didn’t. Not that I had an occasion to ask her directly; Slytherins don’t have many classes with Hufflepuffs so far.” She seemed annoyed by it. Lita fidgeted.

“Is… is she in class? Is that why she didn’t come see me?” Rei had visited at the Hospital Wing. Harry too, and his friend Ron, and Neville had stayed with her until late so she wouldn’t be alone.
and they had talked about plants until she fell asleep, Madam Pomfrey having insisted to keep her
in observation for the night. But Venus, or whatever her name was (Matilda, Professor
McGonagall had called her; Minako, another part of her mind insisted; Venus, the more primal
part of her brain stated plainly) hadn’t come.

It hurt.

Rei coughed. “Actually, she’s on detention. She heard from some busybodies you were in the
Hospital Wing and tried to ditch classes in order to visit you immediately; Professor Snape wasn’t
impressed at all.”

Lita blinked. “Oh… oh dear.” She couldn’t help it; she giggled. She quickly hide her mouth
behind her hand, but her shoulders were still shaking as she tried to bring her amusement under
control. “I’m sorry, it’s just… it sounds so much like her,” she explained. She couldn’t be certain,
of course, because she remembered Minako and hadn’t yet gotten a real chance to speak in depth
with Matilda, but if she was Venus deep down, she couldn’t be that different, could she?

Rei’s lips quirked. “It does, doesn’t it?” Then she sobered up. “You know, rumors are going wild
about what happened during our Flying lesson. Some said you died, that Neville Longbottom
died, that Harry Potter is getting expelled,…” she listed off.

Lita groaned, heart sinking as she remembered the news Harry had shared with her when he had
come to visit and which he had confirmed again when she had gone back to Gryffindor Tower.
“Oh, I wish he had been. Now I’m going to get worried about him at every match.”

“Match? Don’t tell me…?” Rei asked, eyes widening.

Lita nodded grimly. “Oh yes; they put him on Gryffindor Quidditch team. I don’t know what is
Quidditch exactly, but knowing Harry? It’s going to be dangerous.”

Rei looked at her in horrified fascination. “You don’t know what is Quidditch?”

Lita made a face. “Muggle-raised, remember? I’m a bit new to the whole magical world thing and
sports weren’t high on my list of things I needed to learn first!”

The black-haired girl raised a hand. “Nevermind, nevermind. You know what position he’s
supposed to play?”

“Uh, Seeker I think?”

The Slytherin student blinked. “Seeker? Then it’s going to make him one of the youngest, if not
THE youngest in a century! And…” she winced. “Uh, Lita? You’re protective of your brother,
aren’t you?” The brown-haired girl nodded, her eyes narrowed. Rei winced again. “You, uh, may
need to check up a few books on Quidditch soon. Seeker tends to be a dangerous position to
hold,” she warned cautiously, taking a step back. She didn’t remember Lita (Makoto? Jupiter?) as
someone violent, but she remember how strong the other girl used to be (still was?). If someone
hurt her friends or if she thought them in danger, the display of strength and will she could display
were incredible. For someone who was family? Lighting was going to strike.

Lita paled briefly before she facepalmed, getting immediately what Rei was trying to say and not
say at the same time.

“Damnit, I have enough trouble already keeping Harry safe when he’s on the ground, now he’s
up in the air where I can’t follow!” Then she paused, and a contemplative look spread over her
face as she remembered something she hadn’t had the occasion to discuss with the other First Year
girl. “Which reminds me… Rei? You won’t believe who I met in Gryffindor Tower -- and who is
on the House’s reserve team!”

*_**_**_**

“So you’re Lita’s little brother, eh? Yeah, I can definitely see the family resemblance; you have the same eyes. Anyway, welcome in Gryffindor’s Quidditch team, kiddo.”

Harry blinked uncertainly at the boy in front of him… or was it a girl? For some reason, he wasn’t fully certain. The face was rather androgynous and the short-cut hair didn’t help. Plus, the girls’ uniforms included skirts, and the… person… in front of him wore pants.

However, skirts for girls weren’t an obligation. Harry only knew because he had heard Hermione discuss the matter with Percy the Prefect a few weeks ago; the bushy-haired girl had been worried about what she was and wasn’t allowed to wear, even on weekends and had sought out the oldest Weasley brother’s council. It turned out, there were things ‘Hogwarts: A History’ wasn’t covering, and the dressing code of the school was one of them.

As it turned out (and Harry had the impression Percy had been quite frustrated by the topic, as if it was personally offending him for some reason), Hogwarts didn’t truly have a set uniform. Plain black robes were a constant element, but the rest was left to the appreciation of the Headmaster and, in a lesser measure, to the appreciation of the Board of Governors. For example, under former Headmaster Armando Dippet, wearing the black pointed hat had been mandatory for class while under Headmaster Dumbledore, hats had become a part of the uniforms only worn for feasts and celebrations.

Wearing a skirt for girls wasn’t an obligation, but it was strongly encouraged. Still, so long what they wore under their robes was decent, nobody cared. Or almost nobody, Harry amended. For some reason, he had the feeling Snape wouldn’t hesitate to take points from students he felt were ‘violating the dress-code’.

His face broke into a tentative smile, pushing the matter asides for now as the older student looked at him with a glint of amusement in their eyes. There was something very relieving about being referred as ‘Lita’s brother’, even by a student Harry was unfamiliar with, and not being seen or called ‘the Boy-Who-Lived’. Just for that, he thought he liked… Uh.

“Did you say your name was Fred?” the green-eyed boy asked uncertainly.

“Yep,” the blonde said, shrugging before making a face. “Fred Heles. Or at least that’s the name I prefer to be called. That’s certainly better than my first name.”

Harry blinked, but decided not to ask questions. ‘Fred’ looked at him up and down with a slight frown; Harry had to stop himself from fidgeting. “So, uh, you’re part of the Quidditch team?” he said awkwardly, feeling stupid; of course ‘Fred’ was part of the team. Why else would he(?) have greeted Harry on the team if he wasn’t?

‘Fred’ nodded. “Of course! I play Beater -- or occasionally Keeper if the need arises.”

Harry frowned. “I thought Fred and George Weasley were the team’s Beaters? They told me so at dinner earlier. And Wood told me he’s the Keeper.”

Fred made a face. “Of course they are. Me, I’m just reserve team. All Houses keep a few reserve players when they can,” he explained at Harry’s questioning look. “That way we have someone to fill in when if someone gets sick or injured during a match -- but not during the match itself, unless it lasts so long replacement are needed for the main players. Reserve players train with the others though, so we’ll get plenty of occasions to play together.”
“Er -- do you have to replace injured players often? Harry asked, hoping he sounded offhand. Fred just smirked.

“Not as much as I’d like. Last year I only played two matches; one as Chaser during the flu epidemic which grounded half the team, and the other as Keeper when Wood took a Bludger in the head during training and Madam Pomfrey refused to let him back on a broom for almost a month.” He stretched his arms above his head. “You know, I had hoped I’d get to be part of the main team this year, but that won’t happen. Alicia Spinnet got luckier than me though; she was reserve too last year but Oliver decided she had grown good enough for the main team roster.”

“And not you?” Harry asked curiously. Fred Heles was a little smaller than Fred and George Weasley, and thinner as well, but his arms seemed just as muscular as the twins’ so if he had to guess, Fred was probably just as strong.

‘Fred’ shook her head with a self-depreciating smile. “Alicia plays Chaser, and we had two free Chaser posts after Callaghan and Holkham graduated at the end of last year. Wood recruited a very good Second Year, Katie Bell, to fill the other post. Me, however, I’m more a Beater type. I’m not lacking talent, according to our dear Captain, but I have the bad luck of having to compete with the Weasleys twins who are like a pair of human Bludgers themselves. Oh, they’re great guys, but they form such a good team together Oliver picked them right away during tryouts and I had to content myself with reserve.” He shook his head. “I suppose I’m lucky though; I’m polyvalent enough to fill for any position on the team -- and yes, before you ask, that includes Seeker. But I’m not very good at it; beating is what I’m best at. I make a decent Keeper and a passable Chaser, but I’m piss-poor at keeping track of that stupid golden ball.”

“Golden ball?”

“The Snitch,” Fred explained, blinking. His gaze became questioning. “Hmm, nobody taught you Quidditch rules yet, did they?”

“Well, no,” Harry confessed, rubbing the back of his helm in embarrassment. “Wood told me he was going to teach me during my first training session.”

“Right,” Fred muttered. “Anyway, if you have any questions, don’t hesitate to ask me as well.” A hand shot up and started to rub and mess up Harry’s hair, making him cry out in indignation and take a step back, protecting his head. Fred just laughed. “Oh, Lita was right, you’re just adorable when your hair are ruffled.”

“I’m not!” Harry sputtered.

“I’m not!” Harry sputtered.

“Totally are,” Fred teased as he rose up from his seat. “Okay, kid, I like you already, but I can’t pass the whole day with you. Got an Astronomy class coming up tonight and I’m not going out without a good cloak. See you around,” he winked, walking toward the dorms’ stairways.

Harry watched him leave. “Uh, Fred? That’s the stairs to the girls’ dormitories,” he said cautiously as he watched Fred put a foot on the first step.

The blonde paused, turned and winked at him again. “Yes, it is. And what do you think I am, hmm?” he -- no, SHE teased.

Oh. Harry looked at her leave, flabbergasted.

Well… at least now he knew for certain what Fred’s gender was. Although now it made him very curious about her real name. Perhaps he could ask Wood or the Weasleys twins?
The soft, repetitive ‘clicks’ of the camera were the only thing to be heard in the empty classroom. For once, Kunal hadn’t even tried to make the atmosphere lighter by putting on some music with the Wireless. Not that Lucian truly minded; the quiet was enjoyable… or would have been if Kunal had been more chatty. But his lover seemed strangely tight-lipped today; the only words he let out were suggestions for pauses Lucian should take or to ask him to move in order to try taking pictures under a different light or a different angle. Lucian obeyed readily, but it took everything the Hufflepuff student had not to frown.

Just what had bitten Kunzite today?

“You should raise your left hand a little higher,” the white-haired teen let out after he took a series of snapshots. Lucian obeyed, gracefully rolling his wrist as he did so in order to expose the perfect, creamy skin of the inside -- he had taken precautions not to expose himself to the sun and as such lacked the tan many students now spotted with the start of the summer. He let it rest against his golden hair while slightly arching his back against the wall, giving his whole posture more allure. The effect had too please Kunzite, because the darker skinned boy hummed pleasantly. “Hmm, yes, like that. Perhaps you could also swirl a lock around your finger?”

“If you want, but I find it a little too cliché,” the blonde shrugged delicately before resuming the pause.

“Probably,” Kunzite approved with a playful smile that finally broke his austere demeanor, “but it’s a classical and I’m not about to leave Hogwarts without a picture of you toying with those beautiful locks.”

“Oh, so that’s what is bothering you,” Lucian realized with a startle before he started chuckling.

“What’s up?” A shudder of pleasure went down the wavy, blonde-haired boy. Having Kunal -- no, Kunzite, he was always Kunzite to him when they were alone -- say his name, his true name always managed to drive him up the wall. Lucian had never fitted him, the former Aide of prince Endymion thought with a mental pout. Of all the Shitennou, he had certainly ended with the less fitting name; Jaden, Maxfield and Kunal all sounded so much nicer than Lucian Zois!

The moment he was turning seventeen, he was officially going to change his name.

“Zoisite?” Kunzite repeated, raising an eyebrow and Merlin, wasn’t he beautiful when he did that?

The blonde waved his hand. “Oh, don’t mind me; it’s just, you had been so broody recently and I was wondering if perhaps I had done something to upset you -- I know you hadn’t liked the way I tried to flirt with Diggory the other day -- and now I discover it’s just because you’re having
kittens over leaving Hogwarts.”

The white-haired older teen bristled indignantly. “I’m not having kittens!”

“So you say, darling; it looks suspiciously like it to me,” Zoisite countered as he left his perfect pause against the wall and strode toward his lover, easily sliding and sitting over a desk in a faux relaxed position. Even when arguing, he just had a change of spectacle and didn’t want to appear as less than perfect.

People kept comparing him to Gilderoy Lockhart, but the comparison made Zoisite scoff. The (fraud) best-selling author and former DADA teacher may have had a certain style and an above average smile, but he was but a pale copy of Zoisite’s magnificence and beauty. Five times winner of Witch Weekly's Most Charming Smile Award? Please, that was nothing! Zoisite had been too young yet to participate, as the award required contestants to be adults (it would have been too creepy otherwise, according to concerned people), but once he hit seventeen? He was going to break that record trek, mark his words!

Just wait until Kunzite’s pictures started to hit the magazines; once they did, it wouldn’t take long for Zoisite to receive proposition from various wizarding designers to present their products. It made him giddy with anticipation. Modeling was his dream career and although he knew it’s be harder than in the Muggle world, he was determined to make it through. Of course, if it failed, he already had contingency plans; a few but lengthy discussions with Sailor Venus (though it was hard to think of her as such; his memories of the blonde Senshi were scarce when compared to the four years he had just passed in the same House as Matilda Heartfield) had made Zoisite consider a passage by the Wizarding Academy of Dramatics Arts should he need to.

Stage acting didn’t pick his interest as much as being photographed, but Matilda’s idea of making radio dramas ‘trendy’ in the Wizarding world (where they were virtually unknown, much to the blonde’s confusion) had definitely picked his interest. It would certainly help him make a profitable career…

But he was getting sidetracked. All that was in the future and the present was taking care of his ruffled lover’s nerves. Gently, he took Kunzite’s chin in his hands and kissed him on the lips softly. He almost purred when the white-haired boy licked his lips before deepening the kiss.

“Strawberry lip gloss?” Kunzite murmured after he broke the kiss, the taste of the discrete, almost invisible makeup Zoisite loved to use to make his lips shinier on the tip of his tongue. The younger student nodded eagerly.

“New recipe, with longer lasting taste; it’s a limited edition. You like?” he asked, still holding Kunzite’s chin in his hands, thumbs rubbing little circles over the Slytherin student’s cheeks.

“I don’t think there is anything about you I could dislike,” Kunzite replied as he put his hands over Zoisite’s. The camera hanged from a strap around his neck, completely forgotten for now. “I’m not having kittens,” he repeated. “However, I admit the thought we’re going to be separated for a whole year is sitting uneasily with me. And if you add our Prince graduating as well…”

“Nothing bad will happen to him,” Zoisite replied firmly. Prince Endymion… Darien Shields was in no danger that they knew of. Besides, if he managed to get his internship demand validated by Madam Pomfrey, even if Kunzite was away the other Shitennou would still be able to keep an eye on him. Not to mention the Senshi who, even if they weren’t bound to his safety as the Shitennou were, had no interest to see harm come to the Prince if only for their Princess’ sake. “Don’t worry so much about him or about us, love. This is England, and this is the wizarding world; the Dark Kingdom is but a memory and if anything threatened the Earth, the Senshi would let us know.”
“If they don’t get blindsided by it as well,” Kunzite muttered, sounding unconvinced.

“Why must you always worry so much?” Zoisite asked fondly, letting Kunzite massage his hands.

“Because someone has to,” the white-haired teen replied before he released his lover’s hands and looked away. “Something is going to happen Zoisite. I don’t know what, and I don’t know when, but… I just know it. Things have been too calm lately,” he stated.

“You call having the school host an international competition calm?” Zoisite replied. “Or having a monster prowl the school’s corridors? Or having those dreadful creatures around last year?” He shuddered; the Dementors were still haunting his nightmares. No Youma in the Dark Kingdom had ever make him feel like that and he doubted any of them ever would if they still existed.

Kunzite made a face. “Yes, yes, I know, but those events didn’t exactly happen to us, did they?”

Zoisite’s lips twitched as he nodded. “Well, what can I say? Jupiter’s brother has the worst luck.” Kunzite nodded in agreement; it was obvious to them Harry Potter had no luck. They couldn’t help but also think: better him than them, as uncharitable as it was. But better not let Jupiter knows it; the brown-haired Senshi was incredibly protective of her younger brother. “Perhaps you’re just wary because his surprising participation as the Fourth Champion asides, nothing very spectacular truly happened this year?” he offered.

“Perhaps,” Kunzite allowed. “Though to be honest, I’ll feel happier once the Third Task is over with. Nephrite didn’t seem very reassured by the shape of stars recently; he worries as well.”

“Well, I’ll worry when he’ll have more than star maps as proof; I swear, he could be a centaur the way he believes about those things,” the blonde made a face. He never understood what Nephrite thought he could see in the stars; the stars never told anything. Astronomy and Astrology were, in Zoisite’s opinion, garbage just like Divination.

“Centaurs are cryptics, but they are rarely wrong,” Kunzite pointed out.

Zoisite sighed. “Yeah, yeah, I know. But it’s not like we can do much about it, can we? Now relax, let me kiss you again, and let’s spend the rest of the afternoon cuddling, shall we?”

And they did just that.

(When, three days later, the Third Task happened and Harry Potter reappeared in front of the students with the body of Cedric Diggory, fellow Hufflepuff Sixth year and Hogwarts Champion, Kunzite gave him a look and Zoisite had to refrain to hit his head against a wall; he really had jinxed it, hadn’t he?)

Chapter End Notes

Concerning the Shitennou:

Kunzite

Name: Kunal Malachi
Surname: Seitz
Blood status: Pureblood
Family: Mother and Father
Birthdate: November 1st, 1976
Entering Hogwarts in: 1988
House: Slytherin
Wand wood: Blackthorn
Core: Dragon Heartstring
Size: 14 inches
Description of wand: Quite bendy
Best Subject: Defense Against the Dark Arts
Worse Subject: None
Electives: Arithmancy, Ancient Runes, Anciens Studies (sixth and seventh year)
Extracurricular activities: Duelling club (1989-1990 school year), Art, Muggle Art, Photography Club
Dream: Undisclosed

Zoisite

Name: Lucian
Surname: Zois
Blood status: Half-Blood
Family: Wizard father, Muggle mother
Birthdate: May 8th, 1978
Entering Hogwarts in: 1989
House: Hufflepuff
Wand wood: Ebony
Core: Dragon Heartstring
Size: 11 inches
Description of wand: Slightly springy
Best Subject: Herbology
Worse Subject: Astronomy
Electives: Arithmancy, Ancient Runes
Extracurricular activities: Art, Muggle Art, Photography Club
Dream: To be a model
Chapter Summary

Maxfield Stanton-Lund had tried very hard to avoid Litz Potter; of course he'd fail in the end...

“I thought I’d found you here.”

Maxfield Stanton-Lund paused as he heard the unexpected voice, his arm still outreached to allow his owl to jump on it. His fist tightened minutely around the letter he was ready to send before he relaxed his hold and let his shoulders drop. Of course, he thought quietly and wistfully. He had managed to avoid her so far, but even if Hogwarts was a large castle, students were still bound to run into each other at some point, even if they were in different years and different Houses altogether.

He tried to relax and adopt a casual attitude as he glanced over his shoulder at the tall, brown-haired girl with green eyes in Gryffindor marked robes that was standing nervously in the doorway of the owlery. His breath caught a little, because those eyes… Merlin, those eyes he could never forget.

“Did you, Miss Potter? Or did your friend Miss Heartfield help you track my moves?” Having the former -- current? It was sometimes hard to say -- Venus in Hufflepuff alongside him made it hard to avoid the Senshi altogether, though different schedules and extra-curriculars helped to reduce the exposition. He had nothing against Sailor Venus (not anymore; he wasn’t standing with the Dark Kingdom in this life, wasn’t even sure a Dark Kingdom still existed in some shape) but facing a Senshi and facing the memories they brought forward, tangled and confusing, was never fun.

And facing Jupiter after so long was just too much. Perhaps it made Maxfield Stanton-Lund a coward, but… he couldn’t face her. Had never been able to, ever since he first crossed gaze with Harry Potter’s sister and the rush of memories had left him stumbling as he remembered the Moon...

Of course, his attempts at avoiding her were now reduced to moot. She had him cornered, and he doubted she would leave without them having a serious conversation about, well, about everything.

Green eyes narrowed at him and his heart started to sink. The face was wrong, still too round and youthful to perfectly match the one in his memories, but the eyes were exactly the same, from the shade to the shape, shining with an inner light that had drove him to them the first time around…

“Mina,” Miss Potter replied slowly, deliberately, “has nothing to do with it. You send letter once a week home; of course you were going to come to the owlery sooner or later. Don’t try to make me pass for an idiot, Nephrite.”

He flinched. “That,” he murmured, “is a name I haven’t heard in a long time.” Even the other Shittenou avoided calling him Nephrite, like he avoided calling them Jadeite, Zoisite and Kunzite. To him they were first and foremost Jaden, Lucian and Kunal -- even if between them, Lucian and Kunal prefered to refer to their original names; it was an open secret. “Please, Miss Potter, I prefer
you’d call me Maxfield.”

“Lita,” the grey-eyed girl replied with a sigh as she made a few steps into the owlery. “My name is Lita, and you should as well use it. You... always were very formal, weren’t you?” Her stance was awkward and she tried not to look at him in the eyes, but that was alright. Him too was trying to avoid crossing her gaze if he could avoid it. Maxfield -- and he would always be Maxfield in his head -- preferred to pay more attention to the hooting owl perched on his fist.

“I’m sorry girl, but I think the delivery is going to be delayed for a moment.” The red-tinged scop owl flapped her wings and snapped her beak at him but didn’t seem angry. She flew to another perch quietly and Maxfield watched her go with a soft smile. She was beautiful, something Miss Pot… Jupiter… Lita, he corrected himself awkwardly, echoed readily.

“She’s beautiful. Does she… does she has a name, Maxfield?”

He breathed. “Naru,” he found himself replying as he watched her duck her head under her wing, hooting softly. Jupiter… Lita came nearer and he could feel her startled.

“Naru? Naru… as in… Usagi’s friend?” she murmured and a quick glance over his shoulder revealed her eyes had glazed over, not unlike any of his brother-in-arms whenever they came to grip with a memory that came from nowhere.

Reincarnation, Maxfield decided, was not as fun as people thought it was. The constant need to untangle what once was and what was now could get very frustrating, especially when your memories never seemed to replay right -- or you had different sets of memories which contradicted each other, but which were nonetheless very, very real.

Nephrite (and here Maxfield conceded it was indeed his name once) could sharply remember dying by youma’s blows under the twisted, hateful gaze of a corrupted Zoïsite, with a red-haired girl crying and afraid for him. Suffice to say that his interactions with Lucian had suffered a heavy blow, one Maxfield wasn’t sure they had completely recovered from.

But Nephrite had also died at Sailor Jupiter’s hand, thunder ripping him apart from the inside out as the newly awoken Senshi invoked her powers for the first time, those green (then unfamiliar) eyes radiating fury.

It was paradoxical, because Nephrite could only have died once. But he remembered both death, and he knew they were real.

Which made the conversation he was going to have with Jupiter, with Lita, very awkward as well. Maxfield swallowed dryly.

“The very same,” he let out cautiously. “I wasn’t aware you knew her.” He didn’t dare to look at the green-eyed witch, focusing instead on Naru the owl while remembering about Naru the human girl. Red wavy hair cut at shoulders length and teal (or was it blue? He was never certain anymore, the haze of too many memories variants making the details fuzzy and only leaving the clear certainty of the main facts) eyes were looking up at him from an age past. Unless it was the present? Nephrite never knew anymore and trying to make sense of it all just ended giving him headaches.

Naru had bandaged his wounds, babbling all the way. Naru had been in love with him… and Nephrite, curse his heart, had started to feel something for a girl who was supposed to be nothing more than a commodity, a way to reach his goals of unmasking Sailor Moon. It hadn’t been love, or at least Maxfield didn’t think so. But something about Osaka Naru had awoken a protective side in Queen Beryl’s General and had eventually helped to redeem part of his soul, making him
feel like one of Prince Endymion’ trusted aides again.

Merlin, his Prince…

His Prince who had looked at them all from the top of the stairs, his gaze unyielding as they all stood frozen (well, not all; Kunal -- Kunzite had just nodded and stood at ease, the bastard) while Endymion no, Darien mouthed the dreaded words: ‘We Need To Talk.’

Facing Darien Shields had been one of the hardest thing Maxfield Stanton-Lund had had in this life, but he had managed it. If he could face his Prince and his disappointment, then he could face a Sailor Senshi for whom he had once entertained tender thoughts about.

(Come to think, hadn’t Zoisite, Jadeite and Kunzite entertained the same kind of feelings for the other Senshi? Zoisite had been crushing on Mercury, one thousand years ago, while the tension between Kunzite and Venus had been badly disguised. That… made no sense, because Nephrite remembered Zoisite and Kunzite as being an item -- and Lucian and Kunal definitely were an item, he had caught them kissing behind the greenhouse last week.)

(That… was going to be interesting to witness. Weird and possibly explosive especially with wands and magic spells involved, but interesting. So long he could see it happen from a safe distance and with a camera to record some blackmail material.)

(Just because he had been Sorted in Hufflepuff didn’t mean Maxfield didn’t have a cunning side or a wicked sense of humor, especially when the other Shitennou were concerned.)

“I did,” Lita murmured next to him. “A little anyway. But the time I… found my destiny, Usagi and Naru were already drifting apart. I think… I think a version of me knew her more than the other; most of the time, she felt like a ghost,” she confessed.

“She would have been one for me as well, if my first conscious memory of a past life hadn’t been of hers,” Maxfield confessed in turn as he watched Naru the owl flap her wings. “I don’t think I loved her; I don’t think the man I was then even remembered what love was. But something in me jolted when she found herself in danger.”

“And it didn’t when you met me?” Lita asked, her voice deceptively light.

There was a long moment of silence, only broken by the hoots and screeches of the owls as they flew in and out of the glassless windows. One of them, a beautiful white owl Maxfield could only admire, immediately flew to Lita and perched on her shoulder without a care, making the brown-haired witch giggle. “Why, hello there Hedwig; how are you girl?” she asked as she patted the white bird. “Yes, yes, I’m happy to see you too. Sorry, I didn’t bring you a treat and no, I don’t have a letter for you either.”

Maxfield had to suppress a chuckle at the indignant expression on the bird’s face; he had never known an owl could be so expressive. But he became serious once more when Lita glanced at him again, giving a shrug to make Hedwig fly away, which the owl did with ill grace.

“... did you feel anything when I died?” he found himself asking despite himself, wincing. Smooth, he thought dejectedly. He usually was better than that.

“I, I can’t say I did,” Lita finally murmured, and was it a sob he was hearing in her voice? Maxfield moved a hand over her shoulder. “It was such a rush back then, the transformation and the feeling there was danger, that there was an enemy in front of me who had tried to harm me and to harm my friends, and I was so angry didn’t even look at what he… you truly looked like. Then the memories came crashing, vague but precise at the same time and never once I thought about
she whispered.

She breathed loudly and Maxfield didn’t say anything as he watched try and regain control of her emotion. His own were rolling uneasily and he wasn’t sure what to say or what to do.

“Do you know,” Lita finally said, “that it is the first time I remember my past life, no, my past lives so clearly? But strangely enough, I can never remember much about the Silver Millennium; I remember the shape of the palace, I remember the frozen lakes on which we went to skate. I remember the gardens filled with so many flowers and bushes I had helped plants — did you know I was teaching the Princess about botany back then? I remembered recently, it never came up before until Serena told me about something she did during her class with Professor Sprout and I remembered she did the exact same thing when it was me teaching her — and I remember the Queen, but for the rest…” She waved her hand with a sad smile.

“... I don’t remember much either,” Maxfield sighed. “For the longest time, I couldn’t remember our own Kingdom’s name. The Dark Kingdom and Queen Beryl were the only things that stood clearly in my memories and for the longest time, I thought I had always been part of it. I didn’t even remember my Prince!” His voice went high-pitched with this last admission, and this time it was Lita who put her hand on his shoulder and squeezed.

“There, breath in, Nephrite… Maxfield,” she corrected herself in a soothing voice.

He did. Naru the owl hooted softly at him and Maxfield had to forcefully suppress the urge to grab her and hug her like he would a plush toy for comfort.

“Reincarnation,” he murmured after a moment, “sucks.”

“Agree,” Jupiter replied. Gently, she tugged at his arm and started to drag him along, out of the owlery; Maxfield still held the letter he had been planning to send, but he couldn’t have cared less at this point. He needed fresh air -- well, fresher air.

Five minutes later they were both sitting on the steps leading to the owlery, the cold winter wind whipping their faces. The sun was setting behind the Forbidden Forest and the watched it go down in a relatively comfortable silence. Well, until Lita decided to break it, though Maxfield couldn’t say he was surprised. There were still plenty they had to share, but he had the feeling today they would only scratch the surface.

“We… had something, didn’t we?” Lita asked uncertainly. “Back then, on the Moon… and in Elysion?”

“Not… exactly as such,” Maxfield replied just as much uncertainty. “We met, when you came to drag your Princess away from our Prince. I found you beautiful.” Lita blushed. “We chatted, sometimes. There was some mutual attraction, I can’t deny it. But I don’t remember how much we may have shared. I can’t remember if we were truly lovers, or if…”

Lita faltered. “Oh, I see.” She looked away. “Duty first and foremost, hey? Whatever we had, it couldn’t stop you from doing what you thought was best for your Kingdom.”

“I don’t know; if we had put our duty first, then we would never had joined Beryl,” Maxfield shook his head, pushing the argument aside. It wasn’t duty that had pushed them under Beryl and Queen Metalia’s thrall. Just... too much ambition for themselves and their Prince. A Prince who couldn’t have cared less about those ambitions, happy with what he had an untempted by power. Such fools they had been…

He hesitated for a moment before speaking again. “I can’t tell you what we truly had, but...
perhaps we can always try to build something new?”

He didn’t know why he proposed it; Lita was barely thirteen, he wasn’t fifteen yet. They were basically children.

(But they hadn’t been much older than that when the Dark Kingdom had ravaged the Silver Millennium the first time around, and when it showed up again on Earth.)

Still, he had to make the offer, if only for his peace of mind.

Lita was quiet for a long while, until the sun had disappeared and the torches lining up the paths from the owlery to the castle magically lighted up.

“Perhaps we can,” she finally nodded. “However, I need time, Nephrite… Maxfield. I can’t… I can’t give you a true answer yet.”

Maxfield just nodded in silence. He understood; how could he not? He watched her rise and leave without a word, never turning to look at him. A heavy sigh left his lips. Oh yes, they had barely scratched the surface today;

And still… still, he felt hopeful. Perhaps everything would be better now…

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