Harry Potter and the Dukes New Clothes

by TigerShark

Summary

On his first trip to the Wizarding World Harry turns left instead of right. Its amazing how much one little thing can change the world.

Notes

This is reposted after editing. Please refrain from annoying the author with comments on grammar, spelling, tenses or what have you. Its free, its fanfic. Enjoy it or go away.

Commentors:
It is not in my nature to respond to most comments unless asked a direct and specific question. You might have more luck corresponding with me directly on livejournal via tigershark666. I do thank you for your comments, like most authors it helps to convince me to continue writing.
“Might as well get yer uniform,” said Hagrid. “Listen, Harry, would yeh mind if I slipped off fer a pick-me-up in the Leaky Cauldron? I hate them Gringotts carts.” He did still look a bit sick, so despite feeling nervous, Harry entered the closest robe shop alone.

The sign over the door was very small and discrete; it said merely 'Plettwicket & Co, Outfitters. Est.' The small windows held nothing as crass as merchandise, merely a very elegant portrait of a crowd of impeccably dressed wizards in a huge room and a large vase with exotic cut flowers in the other. Harry could have sworn he saw one of the flowers stretch lazily in the sun.

Inside the shop looked more like the waiting room of a very expensive dentist than a clothing store. Several large bookcases lined the walls, and some extremely large books, chained to their pedestals, were on the side of the room opposite the door. An ornate screen blocked the view into a side room. At the back of the shop sat a large wooden desk, overflowing with papers, and behind it were several doors.

The waiting chairs were at a comfortable distance from the very large fireplace, which oddly enough had a Welcome mat in front of it, as well as a small table with what looked like gray towels and a small bowl of green powder.

“Good morning young man. And how may Plettwicket & Co serve you today?” While Harry was looking in bemusement at the room, feeling ever more certain he was in the wrong shop, a man had snuck in.

The wizard, for that was unmistakably what he was, wore a very simple long brown robe trimmed in panels of velvet the same colour with a tracing of pale brown embroidery like vines. The rich brown matched his hair exactly, and his glittering blue eyes stood out like a child’s marbles in the sand.

“Er…. I'm…. Hogwarts… everything…”

“Ah. The young sir is getting ready for Hogwarts then? Well we do not do school robes. For the basic kit you can go to Malkins or Meubles who have the school contracts.”

Harry got the impression of a faintly curled lip

“However if sir needs a full wardrobe, which I see sir does, then Plettwicket & Co would be pleased to assist.”

Harry was now certain he was well out of his depth…. Where on earth is Hagrid? How long does it take to get a drink anyway? Feeling brave, he struck out with the truth.

“My parents were wizards, but I was raised by my muggle relatives since I was small. I don’t know anything about wizard clothing and I never shopped for muggle clothing either and I'm afraid this shop must be very expensive.” Harry blurted it all out in one long breathe. 'Great, now he thinks I'm mental' he thought to himself.

The man laughed. “I had wondered, but I think we can help you. If this isn’t the right store for you, I'd be more than happy to send you along to a suitable haberdashery. In the meantime, since
this is your first time, let me call for some refreshments and a Fitting potion.” Suiting actions to words, the man picked up a small bell and rang it. A tiny silvery chime pealed out.

With a sharp “pop” a small, big eyed, big eared creature appeared next to the man’s desk. It was wearing a very small, elegant dark green robe embroidered with teacups and a long purple and green sash that trailed on the floor.

“Mimsy, could you bring us some refreshments? Plus a starter kit if you would.”

“Of course mister youngest Tacket sir” the creature chirped and disappeared with another “pop.”

The wizard noticed Harry's dumbfounded expression. “That is a House Elf, one of several sworn to my family. Terrible that they have to be bound to survive, but they do so love being useful so it’s no hardship.”

“Now my name is Horatio Tacket, and my grandfather was Plettwicket. Alas, he had no son and my mother chose to marry a wizard named Tacket. And then there’s me, a sad disgrace or so Grandfather keeps telling me. Now what is your name young sir?” The wizard swept out from behind his desk and gestured Harry over to a chair near the fireplace.

Harry settled himself on the plush velvet upholstery, while hoping his grimy clothes didn’t leave any marks. He wasn’t sure he’d ever sat on something so obviously expensive in his life.

“Harry Sir. Harry Potter”

The wizard froze in place, as he was halfway in the chair. After a pause, he continued to settle himself. With an air of contemplation, he waved his wand at the coffee table and it scuttled closer to them on its small, carved wooden feet.“Harry Potter. Son of James Potter, son of Charlus Potter?” He asked Harry, staring very intently into his eyes.

“Yes, sir. Well I know my father’s name was James, Hagrid told me that yesterday, but I don't know my grandfather’s name. Er is he alive?” Harry had a bright moment of hope, but then reminded himself that if his grandfather was alive, he probably wouldn't have been raised by Petunia. “Never mind, sir. I'm sure he couldn't be.”

“Young Sir, are you telling me you never knew your own father’s name until yesterday?”

Now the wizard seemed concerned, and possibly a little angry. But for some reason Harry wasn't scared of him in the slightest. Maybe it was the blue eyes, and maybe it was the way the man talked to him like an adult.

“No sir. My mum’s name is Lily… does that help? They died when I was little, I don't remember them at all.”

“Well, well, well. Harry Potter.” Horatio steepled his hands and looked at Harry, with his head cocked like he was measuring him up already.

Harry fidgeted uncomfortably.

Mimsy reappeared carrying a tea tray with a hot pot of tea, small jug of cream, sugar pot, two teacups, and a plate of biscuits. Also on the tray was a tiny book that would have been suitable in a dollhouse, a small corked jar full of a swirling green liquid, a large dish, and a small, white handled silver bladed knife.

Harry stared at the platter in bemusement. For one thing, no one had ever served him tea before. Certainly, he had served tea for Petunia’s friends hundreds of times, even before he could see over
the kitchen counter. And for another thing, he couldn't understand what the book and dish were for.

“Well then, Harry. I'll start from the beginning for you. First, a cup of tea.” Horatio gestured at the teapot with his wand and it floated gently up and started pouring a rich, brown stream into the cup closest to Harry. “If you want sugar or cream, simply say so Harry. The tea set is enchanted and will pour out for you, so no worries about spilling on my carpet.” He said with a smile.

As Harry collected his teacup and muttered at the cream and sugar, Horatio continued explaining.

“Like most of the older established shops, we use a custom Fitting potion. Now it doesn’t actually take your measurements, I'll do that myself with my measuring tapes and things. How it works is that you add a drop of your blood, and then we soak the book here in the potion. As it soaks in, the book will expand, and will contain all the designs selected by your forebears and all the ceremonial clothing required for your rank, station, and masteries; once you have them of course. Now most of them are terribly out of date and that’s where the rest of the potion comes in… all the design books are linked so that when a new fashion for Lords or Ladies, or Barons or what-have-you is created, then any design in your book can be updated. With the Heredity potion in the mixture, the design automatically picks up not only your family colours and assigns, but also your own coloring so hopefully…” and here Horatio laughs “… The designs will be flattering to you personally. Mind you sometimes it misses by a bit.”

Harry nodded. Magic was simply amazing. The tea was the perfect temperature, rich and smooth. He was reminded he hadn’t eaten since… eh couldn’t remember when. Certainly before the boat to the old shack on the rocks. He carefully collected some biscuits onto a small plate and balanced the plate on the arm of his chair.

“So Harry, if you could, just gently prick your finger with the knife and let the blood drop into the dish. Then I'll add the book and potion and say the incantation. You may feel a little cold; that’s why I always like to give my customers a cup of tea first.”

Harry nodded. That seemed very reasonable to him. He reached out and picked up the knife. It wasn’t very heavy being no bigger than a table knife, but he could see it was sharp as a needle. He looked at Horatio.

“Sir? Does it matter which hand I use?”

“Very good question, Harry. For this purpose no, but generally a right handed wizard would hold the knife in his right and take the blood from his left medius or middle finger and of course the other way ‘round for a left handed wizard.” Horatio gestured with his hands as he spoke, somehow never slopping his tea out of the cup.

Harry gently pricked his finger with the knife and leaned forward to let a drop fall into the tray.

Horatio placed the book on the drop and then slowly poured the potion over it while incanting and gesturing with his wand.


Harry stared at the name. Harrison? His name wasn't Harry?

“Well my Lord Potter, I think that answers your question.” Horatio said gently
Harry looked at him with wide eyes. He was a Lord? He was a DUKE? How on earth?

“It seems that this is definitely the proper shop for you.” He handed Harry the book. It was wide enough that when Harry opened it the covers stretched from arm to arm of the chair.

“So you have a look in that, and with your permission my young lord, I'll call up Gringotts and arrange for a line of credit for you. Would that be good?”

Suddenly Harry is worried. He pictured the vault he had seen that afternoon and gulped. He can’t possibly have enough money.

“But sir, I can’t possibly afford this, can I? I mean, I saw my vault and it’s big, but not that big and I'm sure your clothing is very expensive and….”

“Oh Merlin’s beard. Harrison. I'm sure that all you saw was your allowance vault. Your school funds will be drawn from the family vault, as will your basic wardrobe and uniforms. Now, anything NOT in that book of yours and not on your official Hogwarts list will not be counted. So, your allowance needs to cover anything else you buy, like extra books or fancy quills.” He said reassuringly.

Harry nodded mutely. An allowance? Uniforms?

Horatio bustled away to the back of the shop, and rummaged about on the desk. He returned with a form to ask Harry for a signature. “Now Harrison I'm going to use the floo at the back of the shop to call Gringotts and you just have a look. Most of this will probably have to be updated, but there are some ceremonials I'm afraid you will be stuck with”

Harry slowly started paging through the book.

The front page has a large coat of arms. It seems very complicated, with many small squares and different animals and items in them with lines going left and right and even wavy ones. Over the shield is a wavy banner held up by a large snake looking thing on one side and a lion on the other, with a motto in what he assumed was Latin over it. Or it looked like Latin… could be Swahili for all he knew.

He flipped aimlessly through while the book waiting for Mr. Tacket to come back. He could dimly hear voices from the back room.

He stopped at one page, astounded. The page showed an older man and a younger one, about his age, in similar outfits. They both had on a long dark red robe, trimmed with white fur and a coronet. Underneath they had layers of complicated looking red and gold robes, with black belts, boots, and gloves all richly ornamented with gold. Harry shuddered. A bit much. Very Christmas-y.

“Oh not bad. At least it’s only four colours” A young voice said suddenly

Startled, Harry looked up… at some point another boy had come in. The young blond was leaning over the side of Harry's chair. He wore his white blonde hair slicked back from his smooth, pale forehead. He was grinning as he looked at Harry's book.

Harry pulled away. He was not sure he liked a stranger that close to him. He'd never had much luck with children he didn't know, or even children he did know for that matter.

The boy must have seen a change in his expression. He straightened up from the chair “Pacem! Sorry, sorry. I didn't mean to startle you.” He circled ’round to the empty chair across from Harry and dropped into it. “It’s just been simply ages since I saw anyone my age in here. It’s my father’s
robes shop, he insists. Tradition you know.”

“No I wouldn’t know. My first time.” Harry blurted out, mesmerized as he watched this strange young creature. He is definitely a young wizard, from the tips of his pointy green boots to the top of his smooth, gray collar.

“Really? So that’s not your da’s book?” The boy leaned forward

“Oh bother. I’m so sorry, forgive me. I think all my manners left my head this summer. Draconis Malfoy, son and heir of Lord Malfoy of Malfoy. But my friends call me Draco.” He smiled, showing off perfectly even, perfectly white teeth as he held his hand out to Harry.


Draco was stock still and transfixed, his hand still in Harry’s. “Duke Lord Harrison Potter? Harry Potter? Really?”

Harry retrieved his hand, blushed and looked away. “Yeah they tell me I’m famous. First, I’ve heard of it. I was raised by muggles.”

“Muggles!” The other boy yelped. “Raised by Muggles!” His expression looked horrified and shocked, like he’d just seen a snake.

Harry grinned “Yeah, they were pretty awful. I didn’t know until yesterday I was a wizard. And the duke thing…. I just found out. I mean, right here, now. I don’t even know what it means. I mean…” He gestured at the book “…aside from a very silly hat and robe it looks like.”

Draco laughed. “I know! Some of mine are just ridiculous. Someone in my lineage favored pink and someone else green and that’s never going to end well. Here let me get my book out.” He hopped out of the chair and went to the bookcase. “Draconis Malfoy,” he intoned with his hand out. A single volume floated to his hand.

“They leave the books of current customers up front here. Only the customer or a relative or the clerk can look at them though. So nobody else gets to see what horrible thing your ancestors wore I guess.”

Harry giggled and then covered his mouth. When Draco grinned at him he laughed again.

“C’mon look at this one… it’s my favorite. I can’t imagine anyone could ever wear this without tickling themselves to death.” Draco paged through his book and triumphantly thrust it at Harry once he’d found what he was looking for.

“Wow! That is a LOT of feathers!”

Sometime later Horatio returned from a drawn out discussion with Gringotts. They were MOST unhappy about Harry’s lack of information. However, the line of credit was approved, and Harry will just have to settle the rest later. As he entered the front of the shop he heard two young voices, chattering and laughing.

He stopped in the door, and watched Lord Malfoy’s son, Draco and Harry. Harrison he corrected himself, laughing and looking at two large books on the table. They seemed to be trying to best each other’s horrible hereditary robes.

“Well, My Lords,” he paused as they looked at him. “It seems that Gringotts is perfectly happy to
settle your bill later, and they urge you to return to their bank as soon as possible, preferably with a solicitor.” He looked at Sir Malfoy. “And you, Sir Malfoy will be ordering some new robes for school? Something suitable for Scotland in merino? Or perhaps heavy cotton?”

“Exactly. Mother says I'm growing out of everything. I might even be taller than Father someday.” Draco beamed, smoothing the front of his robe.

“I uh…. I have no idea what I need. Everything?” Harry questioned. “I mean for school and uh… week ends and stuff.”

“No worries, My Lord.” Horatio half bowed. “I have a very good idea what a young gentleman your age needs. Robes for daily wear, something comfortable for weekends, sleep robes, no quidditch robes till second year. Shame that, you're a seeker if I ever saw one. A selection of nice cloaks, hats, and scarves. Scotland can be brutal cold if you aren’t used to it.”

Horatio bustled around Harry with a measuring tape which crawled along Harry's arm like an inchworm, and also waved his wand, shooting rainbows of sparkles over Harry's head and shoulders. “And if you don’t mind my lord, I’ll take the liberty of sending your measurements over to Malkins for a regular school kit. You'll just need to pop in for a final fit. And that will be work robes, school robes, and cloak covered.” Horatio trailed off as Harry started looking more and more overwhelmed.

“Don't worry about it Harry,” said Draco. “That's all the same as what I have. Plus, of course, Maman took me to her robe makers in Paris… but you can get your dress robes here too. Like Father does. You can even pick out one from the casual section of your book… that bit in blue and gold chiffon should really suit you.” He said wickedly and dodged as Harry went to poke him in the shoulder, laughing. At that the bell over the door tinkled and a tall, slim blonde woman with impeccable hair entered.

“Lady Malfoy” Horatio said and bowed “As always a pleasure to have you in my shop.”

“Horatio, darling. Has my son been troubling you? He was supposed to be at Malkins and done already.”

Draco stood up. “I'm very sorry mother. I ran into Harry and he was all alone and we were talking.” he stopped and looked at Harry questioningly. “Actually, Harry why are you all alone? Diagon Alley is pretty safe for most people, but….”

“I was with Hagrid, from Hogwarts? And that is funny… he said he’d just be a minute but that was ages ago and he hasn’t come back.” Harry looked at his watch, though the face was cracked and the band a little too small it still kept good time. He hadn’t realized he'd been at the robe shop for nearly an hour already.

He looked at Horatio anxiously “Do you think he's okay?”

“I'm sure he's fine My Lord” Horatio started worrying inwardly, 'oh dear'.

“Oh Mother, may I introduce Duke Lord Harrison Potter, of Potter, of Black, of Misslethwaite. Harry, this is my mother Lady Narcissa Malfoy.” She curtseyed gracefully to Harry and panicking, he looked at Draco for help. Draco realized his complete lack of knowledge and nodded his head in a bow and Harry bowed to Lady Malfoy.

“Pleased to meet you, Lady Malfoy” He murmured, hoping he got the title right.

Draco jumped in, with his hand on Harry's elbow. “Can you believe he only just found out he's a Duke? He was raised by muggles, mother, isn’t that the worst thing you’ve ever heard?” Draco let
it all rush out, letting himself act young for once. He had a feeling Harry hadn't had all that many people on his side, not even those his own age.

“Muggles? Gracious. And they never told you of your responsibilities? At all?” Narcissa was shocked. ’Not tell a lord of his estate? What on earth was going on with that poor child?’

“Not at all. I only even learned I was a wizard yesterday when my letter came.” Harry said a little dolefully. He was starting to understand that his life wasn't what it was supposed to be. At least, according to the Malfoy's it wasn’t.

“Well Harry I was going to take Draco off to luncheon, but I can't very well leave you all alone in Diagon Alley. You must come to luncheon with us. I can owl my husband. Lucius is at the Ministry right now, and since he’s on the Hogwarts Board, he can sort you out. And by the time luncheon is done all that will be settled.” She smiled brightly, plans whirling through her mind.

“Is everything settled here Horatio?” She smiled at the clerk. ’What a helpful young man. If an alliance comes of this we may come here more often.

“Well Madame, I need to verify some designs, and then send out his orders for accessories and the school kit and that should be that. Gringotts will want him round to initial the form and look into his estates. They seemed quite… disconcerted when I mentioned he'd no idea and his account manager hadn't told him this morning.”

“Actually Lady Malfoy, I'm getting a full wardrobe for the first time. Do you have any advice?” Harry shyly asked her. As beautiful as she is, she must know loads about fashion. All Harry knew was that he hated gray.

“Well Harrison, may I call you Harrison?” Narcissa smiled at him gently

“Oh, of course, Lady Malfoy. I do hope that's the right thing to call you. The muggles never told me how to speak to a Lady. Or a duke for that matter.” Harry was shy about it, but the fastest way to figure some things out was to just ask. If she laughed at him, then he wouldn't trust her… but even adults deserved a chance to prove themselves.

“Lady Malfoy is just fine Harrison, as I am of an age with your mother. Actually, you mentioned you are of Black? So you are the current Head of the house of my birth, which I think makes us some sort of cousin at the very least. You may call me Cousin Narcissa if you want to be less formal. But we can go over all that at after we have eaten.”

“As for your wardrobe, the formal garments colour and current suitable styles will be chosen from your Book. Aside from that, most everything else can be colours of your choosing. I think for now you can be safe with the colours of neutrals, such as blacks, blues, and browns. After you get Sorted at Hogwarts you can order extra robes in your house colours. But Horatio I’m sure will do you very nicely.”

Narcissa smiled at Horatio, who took mental note to make Harrison's new wardrobe similar to Draco’s, not mistaking Lady Malfoy's intent to make certain Harrison was launched as a proper young pureblood.

“Horatio, can I trouble you for some parchment and your owl for a brief message to my husband?”

“Of course, Lady Malfoy.” Horatio gracefully indicated the small writing desk set beside the fireplace. A long fluffy plume sat next to an inkwell, with a small candle and stick of sealing wax
laying at the ready.

Narcissa gently perched herself on the small carved wooden chair and taking care not to smudge her hands, wrote a short letter to her husband.

“Dearest Lucius,

During our errands in Diagon Alley, Draco has made friends with Duke Lord Harrison Potter-Black-Misslethwaite. However, young Lord Potter was being escorted by Hagrid and seems to have been abandoned at Plettwicket’s. Since it is time for luncheon, I am taking both boys to Sky On Fleur for a leisurely meal. Afterwards we will most likely proceed to Madame Malkins for the boys’ school kits and then their other school needs.

In addition to this troubling news, Duke Lord Harrison has only just now, from Plettwicket’s Book, of all things, heard of his estate. Something most troubling is afoot. I may need to escort Lord Harrison to Gringotts to speak to the head of the Bank at their request, so our errands may run Especially Long this evening.

Hoping you are in the best of spirits,
Your Loving wife
Narcissa Black Malfoy

Narcissa cast a quick drying and privacy charm on the parchment, rolled it up, sealed it with the wax and gave it to the owl. Once the owl was winging its way to Lucius, she rose. Arranging her skirts carefully and checking her hair, she gestured the boys towards the door.

“Now boys come along, and we can have a nice luncheon before the rest of our shopping. Oh! One moment Harrison. Let me change that muggle costume for something a bit more becoming.” Narcissa gestured with her wand, careful never to point it directly at Harry, and transfigured his hideous misshapen jumper and stained trousers into a neat black button down shirt and slacks; his ratty trainers became soft leather boots.

“Now a nice robe and cloak over, and you should be fine for the rest of the day. It won't last I'm afraid, but I'm sure Horatio will have something ready for you by morning?” Narcissa looked towards Horatio, who was already coming forward with a simple dark blue robe and black cloak slung over his arm.

They left the shop Narcissa herding the two young boys along in front of her. Harrison kept glancing around, obviously unused to the bewildering variety of creatures and sights in Diagon Alley. Draco, always willing to show off, pointed out especially interesting things and was carefully explaining them to Harry.

Sky On Fleur turned out to be a small cafe, decorated with a theme of skies and flying creatures. Painted dragons, fairies and birds adorned the cloud studded walls and fluttered here and there around the room on the murals.

The gray haired hostess greeted Narcissa at the door with a wide smile “Lady Malfoy! I had thought you’d be by today, it being so close to start of term for young Draco.”

“Thank you Madame. Yes we still have many errands to run today, Draco has run a bit behind I’m afraid. However, since he made a fast friend while doing so I can’t be too upset at him” Narcissa smiled. “We do have company with us, so is there any chance of a quiet table, well away from the crowds?” She indicated Harry, with a very subtle gesture.

The hostess looked at him and then noticed the scar on his forehead as he turned to watch a brilliantly painted phoenix fly across the wall in a flutter of gold and red feathers. Her eyes
widened “Of course Lady Malfoy. Matter of fact, let me see if one of the lady's lounges upstairs is free, the luncheon rush should be coming in and you wouldn't want all that racket”

A few minutes later Harry and the Malfoys were settled in a small private room, with a bay window looking down onto Diagon alley. The aerial motif was continued here, including some of the rare floating plants and flowers.

Harry looked at the intimidating array of silverware on the table. He gulped. He was going to make a complete idiot of himself, he just knew it. And in front of this nice lady and Draco and everyone.

“Harrison darling, I don't want to be forward,” Narcissa leaned towards him, speaking softly “Please ask if you think muggle manners are not suitable. I'm sure the muggles didn't think to educate you properly for your station, since they didn't even mention it.”

“Actually Lady Malfoy I don't think they knew ... if Uncle Vernon thought I had any money he would have taken it already. And yes, I would be very grateful. There are an awful lot of forks.” Harry smiled shyly at her.

After a very pleasant meal of hot tea, delicate sandwiches, a hearty bowl of soup and some truly sublime tea cakes, Harry and the Malfoys were ready to start the rest of their errands. Luncheon had been interspersed with comments about tableware and manners. After all that Harry felt much easier about his table manners. As long as he didn’t stuff his face like Dudley, he wouldn’t embarrass himself. Madame Malkins was awash with redheads so they skipped along to the wand store.

“Now Harrison. Ollivanders is one of the most well known wand makers in Europe. His wands are excellent, but he does have a tendency to try to tell your future from the wood that chooses you. As if the wand makes the wizard. So pay no attention to anything strange he mutters. Draco already has his wand, from an old family friend in Belgravia so this stop is just for you.”

“Thank you Lady Malfoy.” Harry muttered. 'A wand! He really was a wizard! A proper wizard!'

They entered the shop. Even to Harry's eye it was old and dusty. Rows of cracked and peeling boxes lined the shelves, were stacked precariously on the counters and the tables along the back wall and even on the floor. Someone must have just left because there were still patches of glitter on the floor and one forlorn butterfly looking for something to pollinate.

“Lady Malfoy. What a surprise! Finally come to me for a proper wand?” “We are here on behalf of Duke Lord Harrison Potter-Black-Misslethwaite” Narcissa stared him down with a raised pointy chin and honed pureblood pride.

“Misslethwaite? eh. Haven't seen one of them in quite some time., Quite some time.” He straightened his glasses and stared down at the boys. Harry stepped out in front of the counter.

“Harry Potter? Under all those titles. Indeed. What a … conundrum. I sold your parents their wands you know.”

Harry did not appreciate the old mans tone towards Lady Malfoy. Unconsciously imitating her stance, he raised his chin and addressed Ollivander.

“I never knew my parents. I am here for a wand Sir.”

“A wand, indeed you are. Well let's begin, then.” Then summoned a long series of wands. Ollivander retrieved them, shelled them from their boxed and carefully handed them over hilt first. After the first few Draco and Narcissa took cover by the door well out of range of further sparks,
showers of confetti, smoke, gouts of flame and drops of rain.

The series of wands slowed down. Ollivander finally brought Harry three last boxes.

“Well my boy I can't think of any others in my stock that might suit you. So if one of these last three doesn't do the trick then I may have to concede defeat and send you to old Gepetto in Italy.”

Harry picked up the longest wand first. It was a smooth dark wood. It seemed almost ... heavy in his hand. He waved it and there was a warm glow in his heart.

“No don't stop my boy. Two more to go, and you might find a better fit”

Harry tried the next wand. It was slender and of a pale wood and almost whippy. When he waved it sparkles shimmered along the wood and crept down his hand.

“Almost almost. Last one Harry!” Ollivander watched with undisguised glee

Harry picked up the last wand and dropped it immediately in horror.

“Harry? Are you alright?” Narcissa rushed forwards.

“Ow. Yes Lady Malfoy. I was just startled. Not that one. That felt ... nasty. Prickly and slimy all at once. I think this one” he said picking up the long wand again.

“What an interesting reaction my boy. The last wand you tried has a very unique core, a phoenix feather. The phoenix who gave that feather gave only one other, just one. It is interesting you have this reaction to this wand, when its brother. Its brother gave you that scar.” Ollivander said pointing finally to the scar on Harry's forehead.

Harry smoothed his bangs down over the mark.

“Well if that’s like … You Know Who's wand. Can I buy it too , so nobody else can? I don’t want to ever touch it again. But I don’t want anyone else using it either.”

“That's a very unusual request my boy. But I think, I think it is a wise one. I'll wrap it very carefully for you.”

“Now back to this oak wand. The core is roc feather. Very strong, very stable. Shrunk down to fit of course, so a core for a very strong wizard. But it doesn't quite seem to fit you yet. I think …. mm a focus crystal might help when your core is more stable. Come back to me in your third year and we'll see if you need to add a focus. In the meantime, keep an eye out for any stone you feel especially drawn to.”

They leave the shop with the two wands, one carefully wrapped and shoved in the bottom of Harry’s bag of packages. Harry is a little nonplussed about the whole thing.

“Well Harry that’s a very promising wand. The oak stands for bravery, power and nobility. A tree of very strong character. And the Roc of course is the King of Birds.” Narcissa paused and smiled at Harry.

“That's great Harry! Mine is olive-wood and unicorn tail-hair. Mother says it means peace and purity” Draco wrinkled his nose at the thought.

“Now Draco” Interrupted a deep voice “Peace is always something to be sought” Harry turned to see a tall man in sleek black robes. White blonde hair pulled back with a black ribbon and from
the great silver gray eyes Harry knows at once this must be Draco's father, Lord Malfoy.

“Father.” Draco is smiling widely. He checked himself from rushing forwards, with a self conscious glance at the people nearby and simply steps forward to clasp his father's hands in his.

“Draco” Lord Malfoy turns and briefly embraces Narcissa “Narcissa. I see you and the boys are well? No further ... incidents?” Lord Malfoy's voice is deep and smooth and so very dignified. Harry could never picture him screaming at Draco and he relaxed a tiny fraction.

“Of course not darling. Actually we had just finished at Ollivanders. Lucius, may I introduce to you Duke Lord Harrison James Marcellus Potter-Black-Misslethwaite? Harry this is my husband, Lord Malfoy.”

“I'm quite pleased to meet you Harrison”, extending his hand to Harry

Harry shakes Lord Malfoy's hand and bows slightly “I'm very pleased to meet you Lord Malfoy. Please excuse my manners. I might have been better off if I'd been raised by wolves and not muggles”

Narcissa giggled and covered her mouth, startled. “Why Harry”, She says laughingly, one might think you didn't care for your muggle relatives notions of childcare.”

Lord Malfoy smiles, just barely, with one side of his mouth lifting in subtle amusement. “Well Harrison, Narcissa let me know of your predicament. I suggest we retire to Gringotts, to clear up your accounts and I will tell you what happened to Hagrid.” Lord Malfoy gestures with his snake-headed walking stick towards the marble facade of Gringotts.

The party proceeds towards the bank; Harry and Lucius in the lead with Draco gallantly escorting his mother on his arm.

“Is Hagrid hurt? Is he ok?” Harry asked anxiously. The big man had been intimidating but seemed nice. If a little... uncomplicated.

“He will be fine. It seems that after Hagrid left you at the tailors he ducked into a pub in Nocturn Alley for a drink. While he was there, after his second or third drink apparently he bought an illegal dragon egg.” Harry goggled in amazement. An illegal dragon egg?

“However, one of the other patrons was a disguised Auror” Lord Malfoy continued.

“Like a muggle police man Harry”, interjected Narcissa.

“And both Hagrid and the other man were arrested by the Auror. However something happened and for some reason Hagrid fought them. He's been stunned and is awaiting sentencing for illegal trafficking and assault on an Auror, and delinquency from his duties towards you of course”

“Him leaving me was illegal?” asked Harry, puzzled. He'd been left alone dozens of times before and nobody had ever cared

“Of course it was. He was escorting you as an officer of Hogwarts. As a Peer of the Realm and a minor, your safety should have been his top priority. Not getting drunk and buying illegal eggs in a pub.” Lord Malfoy's voice was strong and resolute.

“Oh.” said Harry softly. ‘Well yes, he could understand that. If a teacher had left a class of kids to go get drunk he'd think they ought to be punished and it was about the same thing.’

“How am I supposed to get back to my relatives tonight then? He was supposed to take me. Oh
and he has my Gringotts key too.”

Lucius looked displeased. “Your key should only be in your hands, or your magical guardians or your next of kin. I suppose amongst everything else no one has mentioned a magical guardian to you Lord Harrison?”

“I'm afraid not sir. In fact I only found out I was a wizard yesterday, and a Duke and Lord today. I don't even know where I'm a duke of, or how I can be a duke.” this was all starting to be a bit much for Harry. He had taken it in stride at first. After all 'Harry Yer a Duke!' Wasn't any stranger than 'Harry Yer a wizard' but all together it was a lot to take in.

Lord Malfoy pursed his lips and said with sharp distaste. “Well Harrison I can say that the handling of your case has been very slipshod. While I was at the Ministry I asked about your guardianship and they could find nothing on file. So the minister himself is looking into it. In the meantime, since I am on the Hogwarts Board of Governors, and the Headmaster is out of the country, if you are willing, my family will look after you for the next few days. Possibly even right til the start of term.” Lucius says it all so smoothly it takes Harry a moment to understand.

“I'm sorry sir, you mean I can stay with Draco and you and your wife til I have to go to school? I don’t have to go back to Surrey?” Harry can hardly believe it. 'Not have to go back to fat Dudley and purple Vernon and sullen snappy Petunia?'

“Indeed Harry. We have plenty of space at the Manor, and from what Narcissa told me you and my Draco seem to get along well. In the meantime the Minister himself is looking into who exactly is your guardian and how you ended up with Muggles. Not the least, why you never received account statements or summons to the wizengamot, as you should have.

They reached Gringotts, the doorway Hagrid had taken them through earlier in the day was round the other side of the bank but Lord Malfoy led them straight up the long low sloped steps at the front of the building, under the great portico. Clusters of people stand about chatting with one another. They seem in no hurry to go anywhere. Occasionally one moves from one conversation to another and sometimes two people break away and go into a shop or into the bank.

At Harry's curious looks, Narcissa leans toward Harry “Gentlemen doing business Harry. Its very common for causal conversation here at the bank to lead to casual business, and so its become a kind of a tradition. It was common with the old Romans as well I understand.”

Lord Malfoy sweeps majestically up to and through the suddenly wide open doors of Gringotts, with Harry a step behind. The goblin guards nod at Lord Malfoy, who ignores them entirely. Glancing at Narcissa, she indicates with a movement of her chin to keep looking ahead and he follows her lead. He has been very grateful for her guidance so far this afternoon.

They sweep right past the line he and Hagrid had stood in that morning in the large open atrium and right past the row of desks and the clerk they had spoken to that morning. They continue through the common lobby to a second set of low steps inside and up around to a second level. Here there are more finely dressed wizards and some few older witches speaking in clusters. Groups of tall backed armchairs and settees with small tables are also sparsely populated with more wizards with stacks of papers, newspapers and even owl perches with a flutter of owls coming and going over head.

Lord Malfoy continued right to a goblin in a rust colored velvet suit with three bands of gold trim at the collars.

“Honorable Marshal, we are here on behalf of Duke Lord Potter-Black-Misslethwaite, I
understand the Lord of The Bank wishes to see him? The Ministry has requested that I, as a member of the Hogwarts Board of Governors, look after him for the next few days, and have appointed me pro tempo guardian at his recognizance.”

The goblin nods and ticks something down in a ledger. “Good Afternoon Lord and Lady Malfoy, Sir Malfoy. Your Grace. Please come this way.” The Marshal hops down from his chair and leads them past the open space and into a large doorway, festooned with more goblin guards. These are, if possible, even brawner and more heavily armed than the guards downstairs.

They follow the goblin into a large room. There is a large desk, surrounded by shelves, with a clerk on a stool, a tall stand and a perch full of sleepy looking owls. Another desk closer to the massive fireplace, holds a very old very wrinkled goblin.

“Lord and Lady Malfoy, Sir Malfoy, his Grace Duke Potter-Black- Misslethwaite on matters of his Grace's accounts at your request sire.” The Marshal states and then retreats to stand by the door.

The old goblin looks at Harry over his tiny wire framed glasses, perched on the bridge of his nose. “Well young lord. Why have you never responded to your correspondence? We have sent many owls over the years.”

Harry gulps. The goblin sounds very annoyed. “I'm sorry sir, but I have only ever gotten one owl and that was from Hogwarts, just yesterday. I didn't know I was a wizard or a lord or magic or anything. So I'm sorry if I made any trouble.” By now Harry is gulping down a hot rush of tears. He looks down at the floor and his fancy black boots awkwardly shuffling on the carpet, almost wishing it would swallow him up.

The old goblin leans back and puts one hand flat on the top of his desk. “You mean to tell me that you had absolutely no knowledge of your estate and duties? The wizard family raising you had never said?”

Harry looks up, startled. “Wizard family? What wizards? I was raised by my muggle Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon. I didn't know wizards existed until yesterday. I didn’t even know my parents names.”

“It was sworn to us that you, Heir Potter, were being raised as befitted your station by Wizards. And also, he said raising his hand to stop Harry's retort “that you refused to answer our letters, saying that 'boring business is for boring goblins'.”

Harry gasped and said hotly “I would never say such a thing! I don't know anything about Goblins but you can't possibly be boring. Muggles are boring! Goblins have magic and banks and business … that’s got to be loads better than a bunch of stupid muggles. And I never got any letters at all. I bet the Dursleys never saw them either or they would have tried to steal my money.”

Harry is now ablaze with fury.

“Whoever said that is a liar! And probably a thief! You didn’t let them take any money from my accounts did you?”

Harry turns to Lord Malfoy. Lord Malfoys eyebrows are nearly hidden in his hairline at this point, he is so surprised. Harry gets the feeling that nothing is happening as the man expects today.

“Did someone tell you I was being raised by Wizards sir?” he demanded, his new manners abandoning him.

“Indeed Lord Potter.” Lord Malfoy said evenly, his face smoothing out to an expression of almost
calm except for the very minute tension at the corners of his mouth. “I think you will find in the minutes of the Wizengamot, Headmaster Dumbledore stating that very fact. Indeed, swearing to your safety and happiness in the magical home of your relatives.”

“Well then he was lying! I've never even been in a magic home. Before last Monday I'd never even slept in a proper bed or bedroom. If you have a truth spell or something then use it. I swear I never said anything like that. I never want to go back there.”

Lord Malfoy looks at the goblin. The goblin looks at Lord Malfoy, his withered old face screwed up in an angry and disgusted expression.

“These are very serious allegations Lord Malfoy”

“You heard the boy. He volunteered for Veritaserum if needed. That is not the action of someone with anything to hide.”

“Indeed.” The goblin steepled his fingers and contemplated Harry.

After a moments thought he leaned over and struck a small bell on his desk. Shortly a group of goblins entered the office.

“We have a serious crisis. Please send for the Head Auror and the Minister. Also Lord Potter-Black-Misslethwaite's family solicitors if they still exist. And we will need a dose of Auror class veritaserum from our stores and one from St Mungos.” A considering glance at Harry's thin frame. “And a Master Healer, I think as well.”

He addressed the Malfoys. “Pray be seated. It may take some time. Lady Malfoy, you may take your son home if you wish.”

Harry looks at Draco, who looks stricken and leans towards him. Then they both look pleadingly at Lady Malfoy. Narcissa frowns minutely and looks at her husband. He nods.

“I think it would be best if we stayed. Draco darling, why don't you and Harry have some tea while we talk to the Lord of the Bank?”

Draco pulled Harry to the small sofa by the fireplace. Harry is nearly shaking with anger and fear and some unnamed burning emotion. Draco looks at him and then suddenly hugs him. “Harry it will be okay. My parents will fix this, you'll see.”
Harry sat next to Draco on the sofa, staring into the flames of the fireplace, his mood getting darker and darker. 'Someone' he thought 'didn't want him to be happy. Didn't want him to have money or a family. Someone' he paused 'hated him'.

"Harry?" Draco asked "are you all right?"

"I'm just thinking Draco ... that someone wanted very much for me to be miserable. Who would want that? I'm just a kid ... I haven’t done anything to anyone."

"Well" Draco said seriously "You are the last of your line. That's something. Then everyone says you defeated the Dark Lord ...which I think is silly, how does a baby defeat anyone? But people think it anyways. So something you are or something you could do is a threat. What you have to consider." Draco pauses for breath and continues a little pompously "Is not only the effects an action has on you but on everyone else." Harry can definitely hear echoes of Lucius' intonation.

"Well if I'm kept away from my money and my titles, what happens?" Harry asked

"First off how it effects you … you would have limited money for school. For fun stuff like candy and for schoolbooks and robes and things which would help you in school and help you make a good impression. If the muggles don’t have enough money to feed you properly then you may not grow up as strong as you should have. I know mother talks about how I need to eat up 'Food fuels magic' she says.” Draco wrinkles his nose. “But I still don’t think lima beans should count.”

"Also no money means you can't change things if there’s a problem like the roof leaks or you get sick.”

"I know the muggles had enough money to buy my cousin thirty birthday presents and feed him til his buttons popped... So they had money just not for me.” Harry says matter of factly.

"So that means less friends, less social influence later, less power over your daily life, less food which means less health. Then there’s whatever else those muggles did. That can't be good for you either.”

Harry nods mutely, thinking of his cupboard and the hard smacks and days without food.

"Very good Draco. Now what would denying his titles do to affect him personally?" Lord Malfoy asked, settling regally in a chair opposite the boys.

"Well Father, first off if the titles are acknowledged by Gringotts or the Ministry and not accepted before the recipient turns twelve, then the inheritance will pass to the next possible heir. In case of an end of line, to the next generation.”

"You mean if I hadn't found out this year I'd lose them for good?" Harry burst in.

"I'm afraid so Harrison” Said Lucius.

"Also public opinion ... a lord who refuses his titles is well ... not many people want to associate or do business with them or marry them.” Draco continued.

"Good Draco, now Harry. The Malfoy home estate has the manor house with the family, various grandparents, cousins and so forth and various family servants. Then the people working the land,
and of course the village Malfoy Intrinsica just nearby which is a mixed village. Our other estates have similar dependents, taking care of the properties and so forth. It is the Lord's right and duty to look after the welfare of his people. Housing, well being in times of famine and war, healers, all those things. What do you think happens to an estate if the Lord won't look after it?” Lucius asks, coaxingly.

Harry thinks for a minute “In the muggle world they'd all have to look after themselves, or the crown would. Er do we have a … government that isn't the nobility sir?”

“There’s the Ministry, but then the Ministry was supposed to be looking after your interests all this time.” Lucius stated delicately. “On hereditary estates its the Lord or nothing I'm afraid.”

“So then ... they’d probably have a lot of trouble. What does a magical lord look after? In muggle school they said how lords and things hardly have any responsibilities anymore but the estates.”

“Magical titles work slightly differently Harry. As the land is the Lord, the Lord is the land. Your health and happiness, informs the health and happiness not only of your lands, but of all your retainers and of magic itself inherent in your estates. In addition to that there is the finances and trade of course.”

Lady Malfoy added, standing behind Lucius, her hand delicately poised on the back of the chair. “In order for a wizard to claim a title, not only must he be the blood heir, but he must have the power to claim it. There hasn't been a magical duke in decades as there has been no eligible wizard strong enough.”

“Indeed your Misslethwaite title came as a great surprise” Said Lucius “The Potter lordship was expected and the Black title as well. Though if you had not claimed it by your next birthday then it would have fallen to Draco.”

“Harry! You did me out of a title. Thank Merlin!” Draco exclaimed mischievously.

“Draco!” Narcissa scolded.

“Sorry mum but I think five ought to be the limit. Right father?” Draco appealed to a higher power.

“I'm not related to the Black family am I?” Harry asked

“I think there's a great grandmother that is a Black, but that wouldn’t make you eligible in itself. I can only assume that my feckless cousin Sirius left it to you, his best friends son.”

“He's dead too? Er sorry Lady Malfoy.” Harry asked

“No, but he is in Azkaban with no chance at parole, and so you can claim the title as the next acknowledged heir. He must have signed off that when he was imprisoned though.”

“Which leaves the puzzling Misslethwaite” Said Lucius “Tell me Harrison. How did you discover your titles exactly?”

“Well I went to the robe shop, Plettwickit's I mean and he used this potion to make a book with all my family robes and things in it. On the cover page it said 'Duke Lord Harrison James Marcellus Potter of Potter, of Black, of Misslethwaite' I didn't even know my name wasn't just Harry.”

“Of course. They use an Heredity potion as the base for that.” Said a quavery voice near Harry's ear. Harry turned to see the Lord of the Bank, leaning on an ornately carved cane.
“If you do not object Lord Harrison, we will use a full Heredity potion to ascertain your line of descent? It's been some time that we've seen a Ducal title claimed.”

Harry nodded. He felt like a puppet with cut strings.

The procedure is the same as for the potion at the robe shop. Harry pricks his finger with the knife and drops blood into the potion, which is poured onto a parchment this time instead of a book.

“The parchment is enchanted to grow long enough to accommodate all the generations back to the Awakening if you have to go that far. Title holders get indicated with a golden laurel wreath, magicals are in bright blue, muggles in black and squibs somewhere in the middle depending on their degree of power. But I shouldn’t think we should need to go back more than five or six.” The Lord of the Bank said, settling himself on a chair sized to fit his small frame.

“That’s only about a hundred years?” Harry was surprised.

“A hundred years? Oh dearie me no. You're thinking Muggle generations dear boy. A wizarding generation is closer to a hundred years. So five wizard generations is about five hundred years give or take. Further back than that and we'll be calling in Gringotts Roma and I'm thinking Misslethwaite is an English title.”

Harry watches his name appear at the end of the parchment, with all his various titles strung out under it. Slowly lines wriggled their way up to his parents James and Lily. A dotted line led to Sirius Black 'Heir Passant Black'.

More branches formed above James and Lily's names with their parents, his grandparents names. The tree slowly grows, adding branches and flourishes.

“Lord Malfoy? If I'm a wizard how can my mum have a muggle sister?”

Lord Malfoy almost looked pained. Narcissus answered the question “Well your mother is muggleborn,” she started.

“No she isn’t” Said Draco and pointed. Sure enough where one of his mothers parents is in black the other is in a deep blue. “His grandfather was a squib see?”

Everyone cranes to see. The Lord of the Bank traces one gnarled figure up the line of dark blue names. The descent follows from grandfather to great grandfather and on up the male line. Finally he comes to a bright blue name with a shining gold wreath. “Lord Percival Harrierson Misslethwaite” Harry reads.

“His sister Calluna, that’s a kind of heather, Harry and then his Father Duke Misslethwaite Colin Harrier Misslethwaite. Well I'll be mogodored” breathed the Lord of the Bank. “A duke from a squib lineage.”

Harry stared at the shining name “Harrierson. That is where my name comes from. See its been passed down all this time. And my mums name was Lily and Aunt Petunia. They always name the girls for flowers. Wicked.”

He looked at the Lord of the Bank “But will there be anything left? I mean it looks like hundreds of years now.”

“This is an inactive account, indeed they may not have a vault here at all but at Misslethwaite itself. We are going to have to send some people along to look into this for your grace. Our genealogists are going to have a time of it as it is.”
“Would you have discovered this if my mother had used the heredity potion sir?”

“Indeed we would have. In fact I think that we are going to have to check some things. If your line bred true all this time to produce your mother as a full fledged witch then what of other muggle borns? Are they really muggle born? Have we other misplaced Lords running about?”

“There’s every chance that the estate has either been taken over by muggles, or if the wards have held that it has simply stayed ungoverned all this time. Which means you may have a right mess. But the title I think is the real treasure here.”

“I’ve just ... I don’t have anything from my mum and dad. I don’t even know what they looked like.” Harry looks down. “A family manor means ... something from my family. That I have one, people that... that...” He stumbled to a stop. ‘How can he say how much this means to him without sounding like a complete goop?’

“Family matters.” said Narcissa gently, and laid one hand on Harry's arm.

“Aurors? Healer?” The Lord of the Bank said suddenly.

Harry looked up. The Healer was examining a long scroll, scowling intently, pointing out lines to the Auror. His already black expression got worse with every line.

“In my opinion these muggles should be put down. A broken bone every year before he was six? Burns, cuts, starvation... he is not going near those creatures again.” Growled out the healer. His bushy grey brows bristled as he scowled thunderously at the Auror. “You lot are supposed to have wards on him aren’t you?”

The Auror looked flabbergasted. “I have the alarm scroll here for Potter. None of this is listed. Some scraped knees, a sprained ankle. We check it every morning. That's it.”

“An alarm scroll? May I see this?” Lord Malfoy held out one imperious hand.

“Indicitus Locus. Indicatus Nomen”

A blurred out series of words appeared on the scroll under the handwritten ‘Harry Potter’.

“Claricateo” he snapped, tapping it again with his wand. The words shimmered blurrily and then cleared. “Ronald Weasley, The Burrow, Ottery St Catchpole”

“I think you will find if you examine Mr Weasley, that his medical history will match. Someone has been fooling you Auror. Where did this scroll come from? Who conjured it?”

“It was Dumbledore” Harry said bitterly. “He's the one who sent me to the muggles Hagrid said, he’s the one who told the goblins I didn’t want my titles. I do by the way,” he said “I accept my titles, all of them. Lord Malfoy said Dumbledore told the Wizenwhatever that I was being raised by wizards and that’s a lie. So I bet he gave you that parchment which showed you some other boys perfect life. I hope he falls in a ditch and drowns.”

“Harry” Narcissa scolded “That boy may have had nothing to do with this. That’s a terrible thing to wish on anyone.”

Harry scowled down at his feet. 'I have every right to be angry at this Dumbledore person he thinks. A horrible thought occurred to him.

“Is there more than one Dumbledore? I mean ... is this Headmaster Dumbledore?”

At the affirmative nods Harry turned to the Auror. “You're a law keeper right? A cop? I don't
want to go to a school run by that man. He tried to steal my inheritance. Can you have him fired or suspended or something? Or I won't go.” There was a ringing silence in the office. The Auror turned very pale and closed his eyes.

The healer was cackling with laughter.

Narcissa rose smoothly to her feet. “I think all this has been a bit of a shock for him. I think unless the boys are needed for anything more that I should see them home. Harry darling,” she turned to him “Do you accept my husband, your cousin Lord Malfoy's authority to gather information on your behalf?”

“Yes Mrs Malfoy. As long as he doesn’t sign anything in my name or try to say I want something when I don't, like Dumbledore did, I'm fine. Can I sign something saying how much he can do?”

A few pieces of paper later a very dazed Harry and a concerned younger Malfoy are being whisked along to Malfoy Manor.
Chapter 3

“Harry I would like to welcome you to Malfoy Manor.” Narcissa bowed to him gracefully, smiling. Draco bowed in turn. They are spotless after coming through the floo. Harry though had some smudges of soot on his face and clothing.

Narcissa frowned and cast a muttered spell at him that whisked his clothes clean. “That’s strange. You should have had floo protection charms cast on you as a baby at St Mungos” She mused, delicate eyebrows drawn together.

“Mother, wasn’t Harry born at home in Godrics Hollow while the Potters were in hiding? And then Dumbledore took him right to those muggles.” Draco pointed out.

Narcissa gasped in horror. “Then he has none of his wards and charms for childhood diseases and accidents. And he was walking around Diagon like that! Damn that man!” she snapped and promptly sticks her head back in the floo. The automatic privacy spell shimmered up around her.

Harry was ... well. He had no reason to be afraid of Narcissa. He kept telling himself that, but long years of experience made him very careful around adults in a temper.

“Wow Harry. I’ve never heard mum swear like that before” Draco said, in a hushed reverent tone.

“What did you mean about the charms?”

“C’mon Harry. We can go wait for mother in the lounge and I can try to explain ...” Draco led Harry out of the dark paneled Floo receiving room through the tall paneled doors. The hallway they entered still had the same heavy oak wainscoting, darkened by age. The floors now are a matching dark wood plushly muffled with thick dark green carpets of ornate design. Harry thought he could see snakes and birds in the flowers and leaves of the vines sprawling all over the fuzzy surface.

The hallway was a good ten or fifteen feet tall and wide enough for at least four people to walk abreast without bumping. There are doors every few feet and candle studded fixtures hang from the ceiling. The doors are punctuated by tapestries, wall hangings, paintings in heavy gold frames, mounted weapons, the stuffed head of something Harry can’t even begin to describe, and the occasional console table with a giant vase of fresh flowers.

Draco caught harry looking at the flowers.

“Night blooming Sun Stars ... mother's specialty. She's gotten first spot for nocturnal blooms at the DL Womens Auxiliary Flower show three years running.” Draco said proudly.

Harry is fascinated … the flowers resembled sunflowers, but are pale white with a silvery blue luminescence that clings to the petals. He reached out to touch the petals and their glow brightens slightly. Draco doesn’t notice, but stepped further on and pauses, impatient for Harry to follow.

The lounge probably should have been called a drawing room more properly. Large couches cluster around the fireplace and small tables. Again the floor has several thick, old, fancy carpets laid down any which way sometimes across each other. The walls are the same wood paneling but now painted white with mint green trim. The tall windows let the late afternoon sunlight in through billowing gauze curtains. Harry hadn’t realized they spent so much time at Gringotts, but then he guessed that being that angry was distracting.

Which reminded him. He scowled.
“How come you know I was born at home?” He asked

“Well…” Draco looked almost embarrassed.

“Hagrid told me about my parents and Voldemort and all that. And I know people think I'm some sort of celebrity. Is that why?”

“Well part of it yeah. I mean, you know Father trained me in politics and all that. Part of that is knowing the people in the game. And you are going to be in my year at Hogwarts.” Draco said, looking diffidently at his hands. He leaned forward from the couch and tapped a silver bell in the table twice.

“You studied me? But I'm not anyone important! I'm just ... I'm just Harry!” He blurted out.


“Oh. But nobody knew about that.”

“Doesn't matter. The power is still there, title or not. And everyone knew about you being Lord Potter and everyone thinks you defeated You-know-who. That makes you a factor in the game like it or not.” Draco said fiercely.

“Oh.”

Harry deftly .. okay. Clumsily. Changed the subject. “So what was that about floo protection charms?”

A house-elf appeared with a pop, placed a large silver tray full of tea stuff on the table and disappeared again. Harry realized that’s what the silver bell must have been for.

Draco deftly poured out tea for Harry and himself and settled in with his cup elegantly held in one hand as he explained.

“When a baby is born to a witch, a healer, either at St Mungos these days or at home, casts a bunch of spells and charms on them. Hereditas to verify parentage for the inheritance scrolls, some Indicitas to show creature blood or other inheritable conditions and then a bunch of spells for oh … good luck, minor fire resistance, luck against drowning, to ward off diseases like dragon pox and vanishing sickness. A lot of those illnesses killed people before those spells were invented.”

“At any rate, one of the spells is to make Floo and portkey travel easier, less disorientation and nausea. And a soot repelling charm. Most wizards have all sorts of spells on them all the time, little stuff like keeping their hair smooth or banishing blemishes or anti-tripping jinxes. So I bet Mum is yelling at the Healer for not noticing that you don't have any immunizations against wizarding sicknesses, especially just before going to Hogwarts.”

“Oh. That's strange.” Harry frowned. “Do you think … that man … did that on purpose? D'you think he wanted me to get sick?”

“I don't know Harry. You might have some of them on you if your parents were any good at charms and could do them themselves.”

The door was flung open with a bang. Draco was at his feet immediately, hand on a heavy bracelet studded with gems. Harry was halfway under the couch before they both realize it was just the Healer from earlier.

Harry straightened up with a jerk. He still didn't like loud noises. Draco took his hand off the
bracelet and then slid it back up under his sleeve, nonchalantly.

“And don’t tell me how to do my job woman!” the healer yelled at the open door, and then turned to Harry and muttered another series of diagnostic spells.

Lady Malfoy was standing regally, radiating a chilly disapproval. “If you had checked the first time, I would not have risked Harry via Floo.”

“I was more paying attention to the ten years of abuse and neglect woman.” The healer growled between wand waves. He scowled at a strange flicker of green orange light.

He repeated the last wand motion. This time he got a shower of green sparks.

“Botheration. Lady Malfoy I need to call in a curse-breaker and a diagnostic expert. Harry has some damned odd spells cast on him.”

“What was that last one? Harry asked, worried.

“That was a spell to check for spell residue, what has been cast on you and by whom if a registered wizard. And as you can see it was blocked. And that is very illegal.” the Healer explained.

Harry sighed.

Draco elbowed him. “Stop that.”

“I'm sorry. It's just that …. today has almost all been bad news.”

Lady Malfoy glided gracefully across the room and elegantly dropped to one knee. She took Harry’s hands in hers.

“It hasn't entirely been bad news Harry. You have found your heritage at last, and your family. And as family Harry,” she squeezed his hands gently “We Malfoys will do our best to help you overcome your enemies and be the wizard your parents would have wanted you to become.”

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A week later Harry woke up at the first glimmer of dawn. He had barely gotten any sleep the night before. Today is the day they go to the Hogwarts express and their first day at school. They had spent most of the previous day packing, unpacking and repacking. Last minute errands to Diagon, twice. Frantic rummage through the Malfoys library, and of course all sorts of owl delivered packages arriving from tailors and book sellers and parchment stores. The Malfoys were determined that Harry be as much of a proper pure-blood heir as they could manage in a weeks time.

Harry was determined to make a good impression at school. The Malfoys had spent a great deal of time drilling him on proper manners, names and families and wizarding history and all sorts of things. The goblins still hadn’t sorted out exactly where Misslethwaite was, but with everything else Harry wasn’t much worried. Just the paperwork for Potter Hale and the castle was days of work at Gringotts. He wasn't looking forward to winter break, which promised yet more paperwork and more time with the Healers.

Harry stood in his small-clothes, contemplating his robes for school. Even the small clothes took a while to get used to … the tight black cotton garment was more like tight shorts than any underwear he had ever seen before. But with automatic drying, warming, cooling and all sorts of spells on it, it was the most comfortable he had ever been. He could live with the buttons.
Draco had explained that though many of the muggle-borns wore school uniforms, most Purebloods wore merely the required black academic robes over their usual robes. Which meant Harry was determined to get used to wearing robes as well. As a duke, even in casual day to day wear, all his clothing was just the littlest bit fancier than Draco’s. Pletwickket’s had done a magnificent job, incorporating Harry’s family colours and emblems into the decorations on almost every garment. Even the buttons on his pointy wizard boots had the Misslethwaite hawk on them.

A pillow hit Harry in the back of the head.

“Go back to bed you mopey git. We don’t have to get up for hours” Draco muttered in a sleep thick voice.

Harry started guiltily and went back to his bed. Last night he had been so jittery and woken up so many times from nerves that Narcissa had finally with a huff just levitated Harry, bed and all, down the hall and told Draco to deal with it. Draco of course had simply bored Harry to sleep by reading out lists of names of famous wizards they were both related to, calming both their jitters.

Harry lay quietly in bed, staring at the underside of the canopy. White winged angels blew trumpets, sending clouds skidding across the early dawn sky pictured. Harry thought about how different this was than where he was a week ago.

He closed his eyes just for a moment and woke to Draco shaking him. “C’mon sleepy head. Go get get ready. Mum has breakfast ready in the Slightly Offwhite Early Morning Room.”

An hour later and they were ready, clean, dressed, fed and watered. Their trunks were shrunk down to matchbox size in their pockets. Harry and Draco’s matching eagle owls, a gift from the Malfoys, had been sent ahead.

Harry had shiny fresh floo warding charms applied, as well as a long list of others that Gringotts and the Malfoys felt was a needed precaution. In addition to the usual, Harry had alarms for any spell or charm being cast on him, potion warnings, mental attack warnings and in short every defensive and monitoring charm they could think of. Most people couldn’t power the weight of so many spells at such a young age, but Harry barely noticed the difference. The healers still hadn’t peeled off some of the spells already on him, but had managed to deactivate a bunch of tracking and monitoring spells with Dumbledore’s signature. Dumbledore was still at Hogwarts, but every step was being dogged by watchful Aurors.

Harry’s under-robe for today was a lush black velvet, embroidered in black on black designs from the house of Potter, Black, and Misslethwaite. Underneath was a simple tailored white shirt, black waistcoat and black breeches over black dragonskin boots. Every item had been enchanted six ways to Sunday by the very enthusiastic Plettwickets. From head to toe, Harry was the very picture of a modern young wizarding duke off to school.

Over all that he wore the school mandated black academic robe, plain but with the enchantments to transfigure it permanently to match his House once sorted. Privately Harry was hoping for Slytherin with Draco. Ambition and drive to achieve he had in spades. Other than that he was hoping for maybe Ravenclaw. But really he’d take Hufflepuff before going to That Man's old house. He didn't care if his parents were Gryffindors … all their bravery hadn't done them a lick of good in the end. Bravery without cunning is a recipe for disaster, Lord Malfoy said, and Harry had to agree.

“Ready boys?” Narcissa asked, as charming and poised as ever. She was dressed in a cool blue robe today, with silver and gray over-robe and accents. Neutral and Malfoy colours, and a nod to her Slytherin house past. Around her neck was a necklace with a pendant bearing the Black family arms, a gift from Harry as a promise of their future alliance. Well, once Gringotts got the
amazing snarl of his paperwork sorted out.

“Yes mother” said Draco
“Yes Lady Malfoy” said Harry, teasing her. “Narcissa” he added with a smile at her minute frown.
“Your father will be meeting us at the station. He was called in early this morning to the Ministry.”

Harry took a deep breathe, drew his shoulders back and marched into the floo after Narcissa and Draco. “Platform nine and three quarters, Kings cross station” he called out in a firm voice and was gone.
Chapter 4

Platform nine and three quarters was a madhouse. It was swarming with parents, children, luggage, familiars, luggage carts wandering around by themselves, owls flying overhead. A pandemonium of noise and motion. Into this mess the Malfoy's advanced serenely. The crowd melted away before them. Draco had prodded Harry a half step in front of him. No matter how many times Draco had explained the protocol; Harry still felt weird about it.

Narcissa made a beeline for Lord Malfoy. He was chatting companionably near the farthest floo exit, with a cluster of other pureblood parents. Their children were chatting a short distance away, as many of them had known each from years of garden parties and the like.

“Narcissa. I see you made good time.” Lucius greeted his wife almost warmly.

“Of course darling.” she smiled at Lucius.

“The boys didn't give you any trouble? No last minute packing?” He inquired politely.

“Well Draco suddenly desperately needed some books from the library, but that took just a moment.” She smiled.

Lucius looked over Draco and Harry, their solemn demeanor and fine clothing bringing just the hint of a smile to his face.

“I see you are prepared for your first day at Hogwarts.”

“Yes Father” Said Draco.

“I hope so Sir” Harry murmured.

Lucius turned to the people he had been speaking with.

“Lord Greengrass, Lady Bulstrode... You know my son Draco. At the request of the Ministry, while some legal details were being handled, we have been hosting my wife's cousin Duke Lord Harrison Potter of Potter, of Black, of Misslethwaite.” He gestured to Harry.

Harry, as he has been drilled for the last week, bowed to the adults. Draco bobbed a more restrained greeting, as he had known them for years. Harry had met their children already at a 'little get together before school' for Draco's friends. Harry kind of guessed it was more of a 'Meet Harry' party. Not that he minded. It was good to know he'd already know some people when he got to Hogwarts.

Narcissa waved them off to join the other children their age. Like Harry and Draco all of them were impeccably dressed in modest wizarding robes. Silk, velvets, sensible wools, cotton under-robes. Demure necklines for the young ladies and floor length gowns with their robes. Harry has been stuffing as much knowledge of wizarding customs as he could into his head the last week. So now he can tell that the group here is wearing neutral colours - blacks and greys and whites with a hint of their expected Slytherin green here and their and their family colours and devices. All very subtle and understated, but like Harry's, there if you look for it.

Protocol at school was surnames only and no favoritism by ranking. So though everyone would carefully ignore ranks and alliances ... it was still expected that subtle indicators remained so you would at least know what you were carefully not acknowledging. It seemed a little silly to Harry, but he figured there had to be some kind of reason for it.
Harry was so glad he had the time to learn all this ... who knew what sort of stupid things he might have done if he couldn't tell at a glance that the Parkinsons for example were allied to the Malfoys? Or that Crabbe and Goyle were vassals of the Malfoys but the Greengrasses had been cordial enemies for ages.

“Harry! Draco!” Pansy advanced on them, hands out palms down to greet them. For a pureblood she was practically bubbling with enthusiasm. Harry lightly grasped her hands and greeted her and let go for Draco to do the same thing. Its a good thing Narcissa had drilled him on little social things like this ... after all his rank gave him precedence in almost every social situation with people his own age, so its not like he could imitate Draco.

“I'm so excited” Pansy said with a sweet smile, leaning into Draco's side as she dragged him into place in the group, leaving a large gap for Harry at his side. 'Of course,' Harry thought, 'it helps that everyone has been carefully coaching him.'

“So did anyone get a full nights sleep?” she asked with a sly smile.

Blaise laughed. “I certainly didn't. Mother was back and forth half the night packing and unpacking my trunk. I finally went and hid in the library til morning.” The others smiled and laughed and joined in. It seemed anxiety about their first day of school was normal.

“This one” Draco motioned to Harry “Was up half the night and then before dawn.”

Harry raised an eyebrow at Draco. It hadn't taken him long to get used to Draco's teasing. “Well at least I didn't try to bore you to sleep with stories of great great great Uncle Algernon's seashell collection.”

As usual Theodore, who had been only half paying attention to the conversation, asked Harry a question out of the blue. After the first few times at the garden party Harry had realized that Theo was just thinking about something else when he was quiet, until he needed information. Which was when he asked things like...

“Do you know which house you'd rather Harry? You know we won't hold it against you if you end up in Gryffindor. You can't help inherited tendencies.” He said in his slightly deep voice.

They all look at Harry attentively. “Well I don't think I'd suit Hufflepuff. Gryffindor, well... I don't think bravery is a bad quality, but well. I don't think I'd get along with Dumbledore's loyal family followers right now.” He makes a gesture indicating, you know, that whole reporting him to the Ministry and falsification of paperwork accusation and all. “So I'm hoping for Slytherin, or maybe Ravenclaw.” He thinks about the amount of reading he's done the last week and laughed.

“After all, the last few days I've been practically glued to the library ... I wouldn't be surprised by Ravenclaw.”

“My father still can’t believe that you had no idea about your place in our world til last week.” Said Theo thoughtfully.

“I know!” said Pansy. “Can you imagine? With muggles all this time.” She sounded horrified and fascinated.

“Well” said Harry, shrugging “The mediwizards are fixing what they can, and the Aurors are all over absolutely everything with my name on it, after that last parchment was a phony. So far I think I have lawsuits stacked up for the next five years. They've been halting or breaking agreements right and left. Someone was certainly busy spreading my name around.”
“Pletwicket sent him three sets of robes for court.” Draco added, amused.

“Well I sent the first set back. Purple velvet and feathers. No, just, no. The purple brocade and white fur is bad enough, I feel like a twit. But that's apparently the least I can get away with for formal regalia as a Duke at an official event.” Harry said.

“Honestly, it's nice to know what I'm supposed to be wearing when, but wow.” he laughed

“Well Harry most formal events have historical and traditional precedents that go back thousands of years.” Theodore explained in his deep slow voice.

“Oh I know that Theo. But I still don't think that means I should personally have to wear feathers for eight hours at a go. For one thing they tickle.”

Draco poked him in the side discretely. 'oh. Time to change topics. This always the leader thing gets old', he thought. 'Good thing Draco knows to help me. What would I do without him.'

“So” he says brightly “Does everyone know what subjects they'll like the most yet?” Not the best conversational salley, but hey.

They devolve into a long conversation about the classes at Hogwarts and the teachers and their various tutors. Soon enough it's time to start boarding the train. The cluster of pureblood children say good bye to their parents, in restrained but heartfelt fashion.

Harry stood to one side, politely mostly not watching as Draco and Lord Malfoy have one last private sound nullified chat. Narcissa stepped in and hugged Draco firmly, much to his embarrassed blushes. Then Draco stepped out of the privacy ward with Narcissa and Lord Malfoy motioned Harry in unexpectedly.

Harry gulped inwardly, but raised his chin and stepped in. He hadn't expected anything like this at all. This whole last week the Malfoys had been, to Harry, strangely helpful and kind. 'But then,' he thought, 'compared to the Dursleys, almost anyone would seem kind.'

“So young Duke. All set for Hogwarts?” Lucius asks

Harry looked up at him. Lucius is always so regal and calm, it was much more intimidating than Vernon's purple faced bellowing. 'Perhaps this is what its like to respect an adult', he thought.

“I think so Sir.” he said and then bit his lip nervously. “Sir? I'd really like to thank you and your family, for well, for everything this last week.”

“Harry Potter. You must believe that it was our duty, and our honour to assist you.” Lucius abruptly knelt down on one knee, so he is closer to Harry's height. Harry flinched back slightly, restrained by Lucius' gentle hand on his lower arm. “No wizard who honored and respected our traditions would have treated you in any other way.” Lucius continued.

Harry inwardly squirmed and glanced for a half second at Draco, uncomfortable with Lucius' posture.

“Harry.” Lucius said warmly “Even though our families have been at odds in many wars, both recent and far past, children are to be protected and cherished. Even the children of your enemies.”

Harry stilled. “Am I, am I your enemy Lord Malfoy?” he pulled back a bit

Lucius almost looked sad, but just barely. “Circumstances in the last war did not favour an alliance of the Malfoys and the Potters. Your father's choice of bride ensured that. But know that we
would never hold that against you Harry.” His face was as cold and controlled always but his words were reassuring.

Harry was thinking furiously. The last war was about muggleborns and wizarding traditions. He knew that much. Since the Malfoys were Pureblood and his mum was muggleborn … well that made sense didn't it.

Harry looked carefully at Lord Malfoy. “I personally bear you and yours no ill will for anything that happened before my birth.” He said slowly tilting his head to the side slightly. “But I don't know enough of what happened and why to make any decisions.”

Lord Malfoy smiled. “All I ask Harry, is that you make your choices based on your own opinions after you have considered all the sides of the issue. There are those who will try to tell you what to think, what to say and what to do. Be careful. Cousin.” He finished.

Harry was surprised. Lord Malfoy had never called him that before. Acknowledging kinship meant a great deal to an old family like the Malfoys.

“I intend to be very careful. I have enough protective spells on me that I ought to jangle when I walk...” Harry turned to Narcissa and then paused

“Cousin … about Hagrid. He had something with him he'd retrieved from a high security vault for Dumbledore. I don't know what it was, but someone had better make sure its safe. It's small, the Aurors may have overlooked it.” He was going out on a limb, trusting Lord Malfoy with something that could be dangerous,. But frankly, Harry didn't have a lot of options and somebody needed to know about the thing.

“I will look into it. If nothing else the goblins should be notified so the item can be returned to its vault.” Lucius said with a frown.

“Now you had better say good bye to Narcissa and get on the train before Draco bursts with excitement.” He said and gently turned Harry towards Narcissa.

Harry was glad to get away from that without anyone bursting into tears. He and Draco met in the corridor of the train with the other Slytherins.

“We usually ride in the back of the train.” an older student with a silver and green badge said, motioning the younger ones along.

“Seventh years in the first of our carriages, sixth at the end of the train and the rest by year from fifth on. Which puts you firsties near the end.” He waves them on. They squeeze past other students in the narrow passageway as Harry thinks about that arrangement.

'Well it sort of makes sense ... the oldest best trained students between Slytherin and the rest. Then the next oldest at the end of the train to guard from an outside attack. And the youngest ones furthest from the rest of the train. Paranoid,' thought Harry, 'but better safe than sorry.'

They gathered in the second to last carriage in an otherwise empty compartment. Though they technically weren't actually Slytherins yet, most of them were fairly sure where they would sort. And at any rate, Purebloods liked to stick together.

Harry flopped onto a seat in the compartment. Draco gave him a look so indignant that Harry laughed.

“Pacem Draco. I'll behave” and sat up properly.
Chapter 5

The Hogwarts Express chugged its leisurely way through the countryside. London had been a series of unexpected tunnels and strange jumps in scenery as the enchanted rail line had jumped from station to station and sometimes even line to line.

Harry had only snatched a few glances out the windows, most of his attention captured by Draco and his soon to be classmates. Their compartment door had remained open, and there was a slow but noticeable trickle of visitors. Each one with the ostensible reason for visiting of being a friend, family friend or relative of one of the other people in the compartment. Draco had warned him that everyone who could possibly scrape up an acquaintance would do so just to talk to Duke 'Boy Who Lived'.

That comment had prompted Harry to push Draco into the ornamental koi pond.

“Good afternoon First Years.” Greeted a young lady. Harry noted the Prefect badge pinned to her robe. “I am Gemma Farley, one of the Slytherin Prefects, and I'd like to welcome you all to Hogwarts and sincerely hope that you join our great house. Are there any concerns I should bring to the Prefects meeting? I'm about to make my way up the train. They must insist on holding it in Gryffindor territory.” she wrinkles her nose slightly as all the other students laugh.

“Miss Farley I'm very pleased to see you again.” Draco handles yet another round of introductions, as he obviously knows Miss Farley already.

“Potter if I may speak with you in the corridor?” she asks quietly. Harry nods and follows her, motioning Draco to come with him. Lady Malfoy had repeated over and over that Harry must never ever be alone in the company of any unmarried person. Not just the threats against his person but well ... ‘a duke is a catch well worth doing anything’ she said.

“Potter. I understand there were some ... frictions between yourself and the Headmaster?” she asked delicately.

“If by that you mean he falsified my guardianship and paperwork and blocked all my owls my entire life then yes. He's being investigated by the Ministry and by Gringotts for possible fraud.” Harry stated baldly.

“So regardless of what House you are sorted in you'll have Aurors following you around I trust.” She asked, raising one delicate black eyebrow.

“Yes Prefect. The Ministry is quite concerned that I feel safe and comfortable at Hogwarts. Beaubatons, Durmstrang and the Salem Institute have all waived tuition if I should choose to pursue my education elsewhere.” Harry says in a very offhand tone.

Harry has come to realize that a certain kind of conversation is like chess. He had had many long conversations and debates with Draco and Lord Malfoy as practice. Show a little, hint and tease but never state outright. That's how to play the game. It could take a lot of work but after years of being screamed at to be quiet, Harry kind of liked the exhilaration of fencing with words.

“Well Potter, if there’s anything that I can do to be of any help at all, please just ask” she said, with a deep smile and hurried off to her meeting.

“Well Harry that’s going to be interesting.”Draco said thoughtfully.

Harry looks at Draco quizzically.
“The Farleys are fairly well respected, for a family in trade. There’s every chance Miss Farley there will be marrying up. So they have a lot of reasons for currying favour.” Draco had continued explaining about the background for the prefect and for some of their other visitors when they both notice a disturbance up the corridor.

A first year girl, in the 'official' drab gray school uniform and black robes with a barely tamed mane of brown hair is barging into compartments along the corridor with closed doors, much to the annoyance of the occupants. Harry winces.

“Miss?” he calls. “Miss.”

She stops and looks at him.

He steps closer, Draco stepping along behind gamely despite his hissed “Harry what are you doing”

“er Miss … when the door is shut they aren't receiving.” He stumbles and nearly blushes.

“Receiving?” She asks

“Receiving visitors Miss. And even if the door is open its somewhat ... improper not to be introduced by a mutual acquaintance”

The girl blinks at him, cocking her head and says slowly as if comparing what he said to an invisible checklist. “Those are Victorian visiting rules.”

Harry nods “From what I understand Wizarding culture is a bit more old fashioned still.”

She purses her lips. “Well it would have been nice if anyone had mentioned that!” She takes a deep breathe “Thank you very much for your advice.” and bobs a very passable curtsy.

“No problem at all miss.”

“I was trying to help a boy named Neville find his toad. Have you see one? I think its name is Trevor.”

“You should ask a prefect to try a location spell for you, but I think they are all at the front of the train in a meeting.” Harry offers.

“It should be safe enough though. Wizards know not to mess about with someone elses familiar.” Draco drawls. He has apparently given up about dragging Harry out of this conversation.

“I hate to be terribly forward, but are there any other ... cultural rules I should be careful of? Now I do intend to find a proper book on etiquette as soon as we get to school.” The girls brows are drawn together and she has a very determined tilt to her chin.

“Hermione!” called a boy from the other end of the train corridor. “I know where Trevor is.”

Harry and Draco turn to look at the new boy. He is short and well ... slightly podgy, but dressed as properly as Draco and Harry. That is to say Harry can see all the little hints in his wardrobe that he is a standing Lord, hopes for an herbology apprenticeship and is politically neutral.

“Afternoon Longbottom.” Draco says, with just a slight hint of frost in his smooth voice.

“Afternoon Malfoy.” Neville responds with a hint of quaver. Harry guesses there must be some history there.
“Lord Neville Longbottom, of Longbottom may I introduce Duke Lord Harrison James Marcellus Potter of Potter, of Black, of Misslethwaite.” Draco does the obligatory proper introduction with all nine barrels as suited the elevated ranks of his subjects.

Neville gulps. “Please to meet you your Grace. Miss Hermione Granger, his honor Draconis Malfoy, son and heir of Lord Malfoy of Malfoy.”

“Well that’s everyone.” Hermione chirps. “I'm very sorry to have been so rude earlier er … should I still call you Neville or is Longbottom more proper?”

“At school we go by surname only, since in theory all students are equal. Well except for Prefects and the Head Boy and Girl.” Harry blurts out and then flushes red.

“You can call me Neville, Hermione I don't mind. And my Gran warned me that muggles haven't any manners.” Neville says all in one breathe.

Draco suppresses a smirk.

“Er I meant that they have different manners than Wizarding folks.” Neville rushes to add.

“So you found Trevor?” Hermione asks, helpfully changing the subject.

“A prefect I met told me all loose familiars are sent to the baggage car and he'll be in my room when we go up after supper.”

“That’s very good Neville. Potter was just telling me what a complete idiot I was making of myself barging in to all these compartments, so I was asking them what other rules I really needed to know right away.” Hermione smiled at Neville. Harry was impressed, she had slid into an almost passable level of formality almost instantly.

“Well the most important right away is never be alone with any unmarried person in private.” Neville offers.

“Traditionally Victorian muggles required not being alone with the opposite gender.” Hermione mused.

Draco answered, as Harry knew he would. He liked having the answer. “Since we have always had marriage between all genders, that means anyone is as much of a danger to ones virtue. Except married persons of course, even though we all know that’s hogwash.” Draco finishes.

The train lurches suddenly and they all sway. Hermione reaches a hand out to catch herself on Harry's shoulder and at the last second grabs at the wall instead.

“I say Potter. We should probably sit. I think we're at the Chesingham crossing and father warned me it's always terribly rough.” Draco says warningly.

Harry glances into their compartment. He judges there should be enough space for two more at least.

“Would you like to join us Granger? Longbottom?”

“I'd be delighted, if Neville wouldn't mind.” Granger smiles prettily at Neville.

“Ah. Hermione, if I … if I could have just a moment?” Neville stammers, and pulls Hermione up the corridor just a few feet. Far enough away so they couldn't be heard but still close enough not to be 'alone'. Harry guessed that years of being raised as pureblood made Neville follow the social
rules without thinking.

He can see from Neville's emphatic hand gesture and Hermione's pursed mouth and sudden stubborn expression that they are discussing something not entirely comfortable.

Draco looks at Harry. “I'm going to guess that Longbottom is telling her all about his and my family history. Recent Events and all that. Ah … so you may expect her to suddenly come over with a headache or something.”

“Oh” Harry said. “I'm going to guess his family and mine were on the same side?” He asked quietly, hanging on despite the shaking of the train,

“Yes, allies in fact I believe. You may wish to ask him about that later in private. Longbottom House is nearly as ancient as yours, but they've been allied with Dumbledore for ages.”

Harry frowns. 'Well that just won't do.'

Granger and Longbottom return up the swaying corridor.

“Thank you for your patience Potter, Malfoy.” Hermione says sweetly. “Neville just wanted to clear up some politics for me. My this is a bumpy bit isn't it.”

Even Harry can see a broad hint when its delivered. He gestures Hermione into the compartment. He followed right behind, leaving Malfoy and Longbottom to sort themselves out. Being a peer certainly took a lot of quick maths, he thought glumly.

After a round of introductions they settle on the comfortably upholstered seats. Granger and Longbottom choose seats closer to the door, Harry can only guess because they aren't certain of their welcome.

Granger starts the conversation out boldly, “I'm terribly sorry if I offended anyone earlier, I wasn't aware that wizarding society held to a higher standard of etiquette. Muggle manners are much more informal these days.”

Pansy looks slightly taken aback by the topic but responds gamely. “We were warned that muggleborns had ah … different standards than many of us. However your manners are very pretty, considering.” And smiles sweetly.

“Mother had a school friend who was in the French peerage, so she made sure I learned the proper forms. I always found it fascinating, all the rituals and rules pertaining to ranks so I did some of my own research.” Hermione adds.

Blaise looks over from his and Theo's leisurely game of Snap, “Continental propriety is slightly different as well, even for wizards. My tutor made sure to mention certain things.”, he says with a sly grin.

“Well I think Harry has the worst of it” Pansy leans forward confidingly. “He only just discovered his true rank. He's been studying like mad.”

Hermione and Longbottom both look at Harry startled, but apparently for different reasons.

Harry takes a deep breathe. “I was raised by my mothers non magical sister after my parents were killed in the recent war. She disliked wizards, so my heritage was kept from me until very recently. Lord Malfoy and his family have been assisting me in getting my bearings.”

“I was told you were being raised by an obscure wizarding family.” Neville's nervous stutter has
faded, Harry can guess that he has relaxed a bit more.

“I'm afraid not. Extremely unpleasant and prejudiced non magicals.” Harry said. In his head he hears Lord Malfoy, 'Always understate your own personal plight, you wouldn't want to seem to be bragging'.

“That must have been very challenging Potter.” Hermione says demurely. “I know my first few days visiting Mamselle Vallette were nerve wracking. Would you like to borrow some of my books on formal muggle etiquette. Oh dear, is that a rude term? What is more proper?”

Theo responds in his usual pedantic manner. “That is the commonly used term, although it is slightly informal. Non magical is the more formal, but lesser used since it's cumbersome. There are other terms which are not used in polite company. Muggle is perfectly suitable in most situations, but if you are uncertain always use the more formal terms.”

“Where does the word muggle come from?” Hermione asks.

“I'm not certain.” replies Theo and as he takes a breath he and Hermione say in unison, “I'll have to research that.”

Blaise says almost mockingly “Well that’s Granger and Nott for Ravenclaw then.” and they all laugh, including Granger and Theo.

“Do most have preferences? I understood that the sorting was handled by an artifact.” Hermione said

“Oh most of us here expect Slytherin.” drawled Draco. “I think my parents would be very concerned if I sorted almost anywhere else.”, he finished with a sly smile

“My family hopes I'll sort Gryffindor” Neville offers shyly. “But I think I'm more likely for Hufflepuff.”

“My parents were both Gryffindor.” Harry offered. “But I'm hoping for Ravenclaw or Slytherin.”

“Many peers end up in Slytherin” Theo added. “Power and ambition tend to lend themselves to the house of cunning.”

Longbottom looks uncertain and Hermione simply considering.

“Well if its by parentage, both of my parents are surgeons specializing in maxilo facial injuries. Healers of a sort. So that would be Ravenclaw?”

Theo answered. “Most likely. My bearer is a Healer, but my sire is in the Ministry. I'm interested in Ravenclaw or Slytherin. Knowledge and power have always been the goal of the Nott family.”

Harry turns to Neville, who hasn't said very much, “If you are seriously interested in herbology you may end up in Ravenclaw as well.”

Hermione looks confused by this apparently non sequitur. Neville smiles shyly. “Professor Sprout is Head of Hufflepuff house. Either sorting would do well.”, his smile fades. “But I'm a sitting Lord so Grandma, my regent, says I should try for Gryffindor.”

“I don't see why that should be a concern Longbottom. Lord Ogden was a Hufflepuff and spends all his time at his brewery but no one would say he isn't a strong Lord in his own right.”, Pansy answers.
“Beg your pardon, but how did you know Longbottom was interested in Herbology?”, Hermione asks Harry directly.

“Oh. His cloak pin has a plain metal ivy leaf on it ... that’s the symbol for an apprentice, if it was in copper and silver for a journeyman. Since its plain metal, that means he's looking for an apprenticeship. There are a lot of little clues like that in traditional wizarding clothing.” Harry is proud to be able to show off his new knowledge.

“Oh. Oh! Is that why none of you are wearing the uniform?”, Hermione asks innocently.

There is a complicated pause. They all look at Harry to explain.

“Well its not a uniform like you have in muggle schools. Granger. The Hogwarts dress code is plain black work robes, over regular wizarding clothing. The gray outfit that a lot of students wear is actually a symbol of an alliance of mainly Light affiliation wizards, with muggle sympathies.”

“Which means by wearing it, I announce my affiliation to a cause I know nothing about. Lovely.”, Hermione scowls, “Excuse me. I suddenly desperately need to go and change.”

Pansy giggles.

“Wait.” Blaise said, “You mean nobody told you that?”

“Not at all Zabini. I went to Madame Malkins and when she asked if I needed a first years kit, this is what she gave me. She certainly said nothing about them not being required, or any sort of political affiliation.”

“Which means there’s a very good chance that none of the students wearing them know what it means.”, Concludes Theo. “What an underhanded way to bolster support. By the time they know enough to know better everyone already thinks they are affiliated.”

“Indeed. I am going to write to my parents immediately and ask them to send me new robes so I can send these back. I will not be tricked into supporting anyone.” Hermione seems to be spitting mad. Harry is kind of amused by her stiff backed indignation, but can see why.

“Well I'm sure you can find someone to loan you robes for a few days until you can get those exchanged.” he states mildly.

“I'm not terribly surprised though ... I've had some run ins myself with the leader of that group. A Gryffindor by the way.”

Check and mate. He gets the feeling the Hermione is no longer interested in Gryffindor at all if that frown is any indication. Malfoy hums very quietly and catches Harry's eye and smiles.

“I have a spare casual robe set if you need something for the next day or so ... just plain neutral colours and everything.” Pansy offers. Hermione smiles in response. “My trunk is in the girls compartment down the corridor, I can introduce you around.” The girls leave, already chatting amiably about the meaning of various robes and styles.

“You know shes going to tell each and every first year she meets about that right?”, Draco says in an amused drawl.

“Really?”, says Harry, “What a shame.”. and grins

“My grandmother wanted me to wear that uniform. But I promised my uncle Edwin's portrait I’d stay unaffiliated until at least Halloween. He thinks that will give me a better chance to determine the lay of the land.”, Neville offers.
The conversation falls into idle chitchat and hints of past and future interactions of the Longbottoms and Malfoys, with Potter as a sort of unmentioned fulcrum. Harry is starting to lose track honestly ... but as far as he can tell the Longbottoms and Potters had been affiliated on and off for centuries. But his current loose affiliation with the Malfoys meant Longbottom could at least talk to Draco generally, or something like that.

Some time after Pansy and Hermione had returned, resplendent in new plain robes, the group had broken up into several different conversations... Draco and Hermione chattering in rapid fire French, Neville and Theo discussing some obscure treatise on magical plants and Harry going over minor house alliances of the last thirty years with Pansy who had what amounted to an obsessive interest in political history. It was a noisy crowded compartment, full of chattering children, rich smells from the food cart and the baskets packed by various house elves. Harry loved it. Friends at last ... he wondered if this was what it was like to feel normal. To feel happy.

“and that’s all the movement on Potter and Black … Misslethwaite I’ve no idea.” finished Pansy, explaining a fine point. Her voice breaks out into a sudden quite spot in the chatter and Hermione looks up.

“Misslethwaite. I know that name from somewhere. Where is the title from?”

“Actually Granger we haven't the faintest.” Harry smiled wryly. “It came up on the Heredity scroll, and at the Bank, but the er actual property seems to have been mislaid. From what we can tell its been nearly three hundred years at least since a there was a suitable claimant.”

“Oh. Well I know the name. From ... somewhere”, she frowned, brow furrowed. “Bother. Its right on the tip of my tongue … it was in something I read.”

Theo leaned forward, “Do you associate anything with the time you read the book? I find that sometimes helps.”

“It was a long time ago. Which means it had to have been a muggle book. I was sick, it was raining I think the book was green …gardens, something about gardens, and I think its an older book but I don't know how old.”

Harry looked at Draco, “A muggle book? Is that likely?”

“Well I suppose there might be a cadet line with a muggle lineage of the same name?”, Draco guessed. “But I bet nobody has thought to look in the muggle world for your Misslethwaite.”

“I'll have to send the bank a note when we get to school”, Harry said. “Even if there's no relation it might get us a physical location to start looking in.”

“Oh its going to drive me crazy until I figure it out”, muttered Hermione.

“I suppose there’s no point asking for a list of books you've read”, smirked Zabini.

“Oh shush you”, Just because you can count yours on one hand…”, Hermione smiled back.
Chapter 6

Harry stood at the front of the informal group of First Years just outside the Great Hall. Draco had unobtrusively chivied him into position. Draco and Neville flanked him on either side at conversational distance with other peers arranged casually in an informal ranking. Nothing obvious...just a hint of this one in front of that one. Pureblood understated politicking. Already the lines of power around Harry are being drawn.

Some redhead kept trying to push his way towards Harry but all that happened was a line of backs, side by side blocking him, of peers who were not having some upstart shoving in.

He leans and whispered to Draco. “Who is the ginger?”

“A Weasley, Ronald I think, but with six its hard to keep track. Poor as dirt, and a disgrace the lot of them. He's wearing the gray on purpose.” Draco muttered back, his face frozen in a calm uninterested smile.

Harry scowled and shot a single hate filled glare towards Ron before he controlled himself and looked away. A single quiet gasp alerted him that someone saw his slip of control. Draco flicked a glance at him, eyes a little tighter than usual.

Harry smiled apologetically.

After all, there was a chance that it wasn't Rons fault that his scroll had been used to fake Harry's well being. But because of Ron nobody knew about all the horrible things the Dursleys had done. He absently traced a rough patch on the back of his hand and then stopped. Not thinking about that right now.

He cursed his uncertain control. Calm and poised he reminded himself, and pictured Lord Malfoy. His shoulders drew back in unconscious mimicry of the elegant lords posture. He took a half step forward and gently drew Draco with him. A nod brought Neville up on the other side, just a bit closer than before.

He turned and looked through the crowd. Hermione was standing to one side in the middle of a group of unranked. He gestured with his head to bring her forward. She took a few uncertain steps and as the wall of peers obligingly opened she continued forward, her small determined chin lifted up.

He settled Hermione behind his right shoulder, signifying a lower ranking advisor. There. Now he has made a statement. He quirked a tiny smile. Draco's gray eyes were wide with suppressed astonishment. Neville was gravelly smiling and clapped his hand on Harry's right shoulder.

“Well Potter. I think this is going to be an interesting year.” Neville said. Behind him other peers were shuffling quietly as they rearranged themselves around Neville. Draco's family allies were arranged near him with a mingled crowd behind Harry and Hermione of Potter supporters. Theo and Blaise edged themselves a bit from their places behind Draco to give Hermione some room. There was a conspicuously empty spot behind Harry's left shoulder. Neville as yet had no advisors indicated, and only a very few followers mainly of older pureblood families that had been on the Light side of the war.

Weasley was firmly shut out all the way at the back of the crowd next to some weedy blonde boy in the gray and a dark haired boy whose clothing marked him as being half blood, with the gray blazer over.

The new arrangement of the crowd had pushed all of Dumbledore's supporters to the edges. Those few behind Harry had been jostled gently by their peers towards the back, since everyone with a subscription to the Daily Prophet knew all about Harry's lawsuits against the Headmaster.
Professor Mcgonagall reappeared. The genial smile on her face dropped as she saw the solid arrangement of pureblood peers clustered around Harry, Draco and Neville.

“First Years, with me” she clipped out and in a swirl of tartan robes led them into the Great Hall.

The great Hall was an amazing huge structure of vaulted pillars reaching high above them. The floor and walls were the same dressed gray stone as the rest of the castle but the ceiling had layers of illusion mimicking the night sky. The sunset had faded and stars twinkled in the deep blue black sky. Candles floated above the four long tables in the Hall. The walls had various hangings with the arms and signators of the four Houses as well as Hogwarts own combined arms on a massive banner at the head of the hall.

On a dais at the head of the Hall was the teachers table with Dumbledore in a fancy gold chair sitting in the middle. Other professors were in the chairs on either side facing the school, with a gap right next to the Headmaster that must be Mcgonagall's chair as his second. The professor stood in front of the table next to a three legged wooden stool, with a long scroll in one hand and a bedraggled old hat in the other. She put the hat on the stool.

To Harry’s amazement the wrinkles on the front of the hat arranged themselves into a face which proceeded to sing a very silly song about hats and Hogwarts. ‘ookay’, He thought bemused. The second part of the the song was about how it sorted children and the traits of the houses. Harry wondered how many children latched onto the first one they heard without thinking about it. Of course that first one was Gryffindor.

“Abbot, Hannah” the Professor called out. A young blonde girl with long hair framing her heart shaped face took a deep breath and starts towards the front of the hall. She sat on the stool facing the other first years and Mcgonagall plopped the hat on her head. After a few moments the hat called “Hufflepuff”, Hannah joyfully handed the hat to Mcgonagall and hurried off to the House who who were cheering the loudest, dressed in the black and gold of Hufflepuff house.

And so it went in alphabetical order one child to the next. Draco had told Harry it used to be by rank, so allies could arrange themselves with their lords suitably. That had been changed some centuries back. So now students ran the risk of not knowing where their lord was to be sorted and could fetch up in an unsuited house.

It was six students in before the first Slytherin was sorted, Millicent Bulstrode. No surprise there, Harry thought. She calmly walked to the table of snakes. With a polite head bob to the table in acknowledgment she took her spot in the middle of the empty area of bench reserved for the first years. The quiet celebration was a great contrast to the raucous cheering that had noted the acceptance of the girl before her, Lavender Brown, into Gryffindor.

Vincent Crabbe of course, as one of Malfoys vassals, sorted into Slytherin. He took a spot near Bulstrode. Harry knew there would be a little shuffling about if there were any surprise Slytherins.

Harry looked around the great hall. One of the teachers near Professor Quirrel was glaring at him. His black eyes flashed dangerously in his pale face. When he saw Harry looking at him he sneered and turned away to speak to the shorter Professor Sprout to his side.

“Slytherin”, the hat cried again and Harry looked back to see an unknown boy start towards Slytherin House.

“Who is that?”, he nudged Draco.

“I don’t know”, he replied, “Muggle clothes, tailored, comes from money. No grays. Half blood maybe? He was in the boat with Granger.”
“Hes got manners though.” Harry noted, sotto voice. As the new boy approached the table and after bowing his head in reply to the restrained clapping and greetings of welcome took a spot just slightly above Davis and Goyle, but below or equal to Bulstrode.

Draco raised an elegant eyebrow. Harry thought, 'well it could be an accident'.

Goyle joined the Slytherins and rejoined Crabbe, the two stolidly side by side like usual.

“Granger, Hermione” the Professor called. Harry and Draco clapped Hermione on the shoulder as she ventured to the Sorting Hat.

After a few minutes of silent argument the Hat finally called 'Ravenclaw'. Hermione joined the house of blue clad scholars, a wide smile on her face. Before she reached the table she turned and curtseyed to Harry.

“Oh my”, muttered Pansy, “Well shes made her allegiances clear.”

So far the most new students had gone to Slytherin and Ravenclaw. Gryffindor and Hufflepuff had only two each. When the sorting got closer to Neville the Gryffindor table started to perk up. Harry smiled a small crooked smile.

Neville put the hat on its head. There was a pause and the hat declared “Slytherin!” Shocked silence fell over the great hall. The Gryffindors were almost speechless, until their angry mutters began. Neville gently handed the hat to Mcgonagall with a bow and paced slowly to the Slytherin table. He took his rightful place third from the top in the first year section, leaving spots for Draco and Harry.

There were some very confused looks going around the room and Harry smiled slyly, holding the memory of a hurried conversation with Neville in his head. Oh he really was starting to enjoy this politicking stuff. Stealing Dumbledore's allies away with the truth was heady business.

Malfoy was sorted to Slytherin of course followed by Parkinson and one of the Patil twins who tried to get as close to Nev as possible on the Slytherin bench. And then it was Harry's turn. Gryffindor looked almost hopeful again, though the brighter ones have already figured they were out of luck.

The Hat settled on Harry's head.

“Good evening Hat” he thought at it.

“Good evening... well well well. A Misslethwaite. That's been a long time.”

“And a Potter.” Harry added.

“A good strong family the Potters, Gryffindors to the end.”

“The end is the right word ... I'm the last. I'd like Slytherin if you please Hat. I have a great deal to do to restore my family.”

“Very ambitious of you, well if you're sure....”

“Quite sure Hat. Slytherin.” Harry thought.

“Better be Slytherin!” the hat sang out.

There was a hush in the Hall, broken only by the polite clapping of Draco and Slytherin House as
Harry gave the hat to a thunderstruck Mcgonagall and took his place at the head of the first years at the Slytherin table. Draco was directly next to him and Neville was across the table.

The sorting ended quickly after that with a fuming red haired, red faced Weasley delivered as the last student to Gryffindor. Zabini elegantly sauntered towards Slytherin table and then went back for a quick word with the hat as an afterthought, prompting laughter from most of the Hall.
Harry very nearly stuffed himself at dinner, but after a week of being allowed to eat as much as he wanted at the Malfoys he was used to the idea. Still he was tempted to pocket some fruit, but with half the table surreptitiously watching he restrained himself. He really hated being famous.

After dinner the Slytherin prefects herd their young snakes together and lead them quietly down towards the dungeon. Harry has become familiar with the peculiarities of wizard houses at the Malfoys, with moving portraits and pictures where the wind blew the trees, but Hogwarts was in its own class entirely. Entire walls are wrapped in tapestries of intricately embroidered scenes, all moving in simple looped animation. Gilt framed paintings hung in every corner, and heavily enchanted suits of armor guard every stairwell, landing and vestibule. Once again Harry is placed to the forefront, with Malfoy and Neville right next to him with Crabbe and Goyle as silent bookends. Neville still seemed surprised at his own audacity, but stays tight to Harry’s side.

The main stairs end in a flat landing, studded with pillars and flanked with floor to ceiling portraits of forbidding wizards in heavy old fashioned robes. Separated by half pillars against the walls, the steps for the boys and girls rooms doubled back leading further down into the dungeons. The older Slytherins continued to their dorms in a quiet babble of voices. The common room was a rough stone walled room, hung with gilt framed portraits of famous Slytherins, tapestries, trophies and bookcases. Although deep below in Hogwarts, the main room has large bay windows which looked out into the depths of the lake and are hung with heavy velvet green curtains. The focus of the room is the fireplace with a large roaring fire and a heavy stone mantle. Small chairs with toasting irons were drawn up cozily to the fire while two large overstuffed couches faced each other across a narrow low table and are positioned handy to the light.

The rest of the room has simple dark wood furniture, in good repair but nothing fancier than one would expect around rambunctious young students. An open archway led off to a short hallway, festooned with tapestries, portraits and mirrors. It led to another tapestry hung room, with several smaller alcoves holding two chairs, a table and plenty of handy shadows. Only about half the candles in the great cast iron sconces were lit, so the whole room was softly wrapped in shadows. In all, Harry found the whole room to be very comforting.

Gemma lined the first years up by the fireplace. Their head of house, Professor Snape, arrives from the boys dorm stairway, his long black professors robes majestically fluttering as he moves. Draco half smiles at his arrival, he had been missing his godfather as he had often told Harry, and was pleased to have been sorted to his house.

“Good evening and welcome to Slytherin House.” Professor Snape, pauses to survey the newest members of his personal domain.

“Slytherin House is the home of the ambitious, the cunning and the clever. Wizards and witches who are determined to make their way in the world, to use what they have and what they find on their way to greatness.” Severus strides slowly to the center of the main common room in front of the row of anxious first years. Eyes like black onyx flicker over the students.

“Some would say that Slytherins are evil, but I must point out that evil lies in every sort of heart. Slytherins however deal with power, and power often creates enemies. So, children of Slytherin House, here in the common room you may be as you are. In the rest of the school, and any place where eyes from other houses may see, you will always hold fast with Slytherins.”

“That means, no fighting, no foul language, no teasing, no gossip and no pranks.” His eyes focus on Harry much to his confusion.
“Most in-house matters should be dealt with by the prefects, there are two from each year from fifth upwards. However if any of you need to speak to me directly you can send a message scroll to my quarters through the floo.” He nods to the main fireplace. “I do not need to make it clear that privilege should not be used frivolously, I will be most severe if I am summoned unnecessarily.”

“Is that clear?” He asked in his deep voice.

“Yes professor” the first years murmured in a ragged chorus.

“Boys dorms are to the right, girls to the left. First years are at the end of the hall, furthest from these stairs and closest to the emergency floors. The Prefects rooms each have an emergency floo keyed to St Mungos, as well as the main floo here.” Gemma announced.

“Your trunks have been delivered by house elves, so go ahead and settle who gets which bed. Each year dorm has its own shared bathing room. Breakfast is from 6 to 8 o’clock. Your class schedules will be on your trunks in the morning.”

The prefects led the students down the stairs to their new rooms. As they passed Professor Snape he raised one hand slightly.

“Potter, a word.”

Harry stopped and looked at Draco in uncertainty. Draco stayed back as well. The other students straggled down the steps.

The professor walked slowly towards Harry. His pale harsh face was emotionless, except for snapping black eyes.

“Draco. You can go.” He bit out.

“Sir, I’d prefer he stayed.” Harry said quietly.

“Already dictating terms Potter? I don’t know what trick you pulled on the hat, or on those gullible fools at the Ministry. But I will have none of your nerve here. You are no better than any other first year, and in fact worse than many. You will have no special privileges, no exceptions to the rules. Any infraction will be dealt with severely.” He utters in tones of absolute icy malevolence.

Harry is completely surprised,’ What on earth?’

He takes a deep breath. “I understand Professor.” He says. He is unable to force anything more from his suddenly dry mouth. This was just as bad as the Dursleys, he thought dully.

“Draco, Have a mind to your family. After all, you don’t want to go making friends with the wrong sort.”

Draco replies through thin pinched lips. “I am most entirely aware what sort Potter is, Thank you sir, Good night.” Draco reaches out and grabs Harry’s arm in a fierce pinch just above the elbow, bows and drags Harry down the stairs to the boys dorm.

Harry realizes from Draco’s long stride and stiff shoulders that Draco might actually by angrier than Harry is.

They stop near the fireplace at the end of the hall near the open door to their room. He can see the other first year boys gathered in discussion a few paces in.

“Draco, Its ok, You can’t help if the Professor hates me.”
Draco swings to face him, his face pale with tension, hectic red spots are on his cheeks.

“Potter, he's never met you. All he knows is what Dumbledore, the papers and my father have told him. Obviously he believes Dumbledore more than father.”

“Well he does work for Dumbledore.” Harry started tentatively.

Draco glances quickly into the dorm room and turns his back to the open door. “Harry my father and Professor Severus have ... deeper ties of loyalty than that.” Draco raises his eyebrows meaningfully. “This is a gross insult to the house of Malfoy.” Draco frowns.

“Draco people believe all sorts of stupid things about me. The Durselys thought I was nothing but trouble, half the papers say I'm some sort of Light guided hero ... he's just one more person to make trouble for me.” Harry sighs. “There's no point in getting angry about it really.”

“Well you may not be angry, but I'm going to write father. This is something he needs to know.”

“I'm sure everyone is going to write home tonight.” Harry says. “You should write mother too.” Draco adds. “I'm sure she'll be glad to hear from her cousin about his successful sorting to her house.”

Harry smiles tiredly.

“So how are we picking out beds?” Harry asks.

The dorm room is a long room of the same rough gray stone as the common room. The ceilings are smooth low arches of the same stone. The floor has wide dark wood planks, set closely together marked with the scars and dings of hundreds of students. Thick dark green rugs are scattered on the floor. Set along the walls are four poster beds of dark wood, hung with curtains in Slytherin green and silver. Each bed has an empty stand at the foot of the bed for a trunk, with slats under it for other items. Empty hooks on the bed posts waited ready for hats and cloaks. On either side each bed has a welsh dresser, with a desk space and chair for writing, a built in cupboard and shelves above the desk for books and writing supplies. Each desk has a small lamp. “Well”, Blaise Zabini started. “Usually I'd say Malfoy would choose first.”

“Justin Finch-Fletchly. As far as we know probably a squib lineage. My parents are both magic-
less, but father thinks one of the earlier Lord Fletchly's might have been a wizard.” He smiles, his round face pleasantly cheerful. “Father is looking into having the title transmuted to the Wizarding peerage when I come of age.”

That seems to settle things for everyone but Harry. Zabini took the bed next to Draco, Justin the one next to Longbottoms which left Goyle and Crabbe bracketing the door. The uneven number of beds left a space near the door. It had a small table, coat rack and umbrella stand.

Harry looks uncertainly at his second trunk. This one was a special version, meant to be set on end like a steamer trunk and act as a wardrobe for formal robes, of which he had entirely too many already. The problem was there wasn't enough space next to his bed for the chest.

“Would anyone mind if I put this wardrobe in that spot by the door?”

“I thought we were only allowed one trunk? Mother was most concerned what with the weather in Scotland.” Finch-Fletchly asked as he carefully stowed his trunk by his bed.

“The School governors gave me a special dispensation when Lord Malfoy asked them on my behalf.” Harry said.

“Father thought that the extra space for Harry's ducal regalia would be essential since he has so many court dates this year already.” Draco answered as he carefully retrieved his writing box from his trunk.

“Well that does make sense. I can't imagine that formal robes do well in a school trunk.” The dark haired boy added as he bounced carefully on the edge of the bed.

“It's fine by me Potter.” Neville said. He was smoothing a hand-sewn patch-worked bedspread on his bed.

Harry looked round the room and garnered a handful of nods and a grunt from Crabbe. He expanded the wardrobe in an empty spot against the wall by Crabbes bed. The carved front of the wardrobe had the arms of the Misslethwaite family and his name on a small gold plaque underneath.

Harry went back to his bed and flung himself full length on it, facing Draco. The blond was carefully setting out his writing gear on his desk. The heavy cut crystal inkwell with its sticking charm, the little stand for his matched set of green dyed peacock feathers and his case of blank parchments and writing paper.

“Dear Father

We had an interesting voyage to Hogwarts on the Express. Harry intervened in a muggle born girls social embarrassment. Much to our surprise she revealed that the Phoenix Party uniforms are being handed out unbidden to unsuspecting first years. She determined to return hers immediately and was most upset with Madame Malkins for the deception. Miss Parkinson was kind enough to lend the girl some nice neutral robes, although I have a feeling she'll be in Potters colours soon enough. Granger was sorted to Ravenclaw, but after the Hat made its pronouncement she curtseyed to Harry in front of the entire Great Hall.”

Draco stopped writing.

“Harry remember you need to write Gringotts about that book Granger mentioned.”

Harry sighed and rummaged in his trunk for his writing things.
Draco continued his letter in his smooth careful handwriting.

“My dorm mates in Slytherin are Potter, Longbottom, Zabini, a Justin Finch-Fletchly, Crabbe and Goyle. As expected Bulstrode, Parkinson and Greengrass are in the girls dorm along with Davis and one of the Patel twins. Finch-Fletchly is the heir of a muggle peer who is intending to transmute the title when Justin attains it, which should be of much interest to the Wizengamot, as I recall no new peers have been added since the Statute of Secrecy was instated. His father thinks it might be another squib lineage.

Harry and Longbottom seem to have struck up a friendship, which has seen Longbottom sorted here in his determination to rebuild the Potter Longbottom alliance. It should be a very interesting seven years.

However, Professor Snape was most uncivil to Harry after the sorting ceremony. He near as accused Harry of demanding favours and causing trouble. I had been under the expectation that you wrote to Professor Snape about the situation.

Longbottom has not indicated any followers yet, much to their dismay. Crabbe and Goyle are as always steadfast in their protection and have stationed themselves at the door to our dorm like guardians of old. Crabbe only needs a hat with a plume to look just like his great-great-grandfathers portrait.

Thinking fondly of you and Mother,
As Always, Your son
Draconis Malfoy”,

he signs with a flourish.

“Harry can I use your letterbox?” He asks.

Harry looks up from his half finished letter. “Oh, of course, Draco.” Harry indicates the box on the lower shelf of his dresser with a nod of his chin. The letterbox was issued by Gringotts and any letter placed in it is sent to the Central Sorting office and then sent out by owl to the recipient. Due to the weight of Harry's correspondence, the goblins felt that the letterbox would save a great deal of time and effort for the young Duke while at school. The galleon a month rent was more than worth it, Harry felt.
Lucius strode into The Three Broomsticks like he owned it. Not that he did, but attitude is everything really. He was dressed as usual with the addition of a warm cloak to ward off the worst of the Highland autumnal chill. It is early evening, late enough that the children are in their dorms, but still early enough to meet for tea and drinks with a good friend.

This meeting had been arranged months ago, so that father and godfather would be able to speak directly about Draco's sorting, and placement of the rest of the new generation of students at Hogwarts. Such facts were always important to maximize leverage amongst the Wizarding peers. The letter from his son had come as a bit of a surprise, as he hadn't expected Draco to have been able to send a letter via owl so soon. Potter allowing Draco to use his Gringotts secure letter box would be a great tool in the years to come, Lucius thought, presuming that Potter stayed true to his current path.

In the meantime, he thought, as he surveyed the room, Severus had a lot of explaining to do. Lucius glanced at Rosmerta. She wiped her hands on her cloth and laid it on the bartop, hurrying over to him.

“I have a room for you at the back Milord, as requested.” She said with a hurried smile. Rosmerta led Lucius to the back of the pub, past the mostly empty tables and the semi private booths along the walls; to the door of the small room tucked behind the back of the large fireplace. In older times it would have been a private Ladies lounge, but these days Rosmerta supplied it to anyone who wanted a bit of privacy for a conversation, or just less noise and ruckus from the crowd.

As expected the room was empty. Lucius hung his cloak on the hook near the door, and settled himself into one of the comfortable, well worn in leather wing chairs drawn up next to the smaller fireplace. He idly ran the usual scans for listening charms, hidden observers, adding his own privacy spells and wards. Nothing terribly exciting, after all this was just a conversation between the parent of a student and an old friend who happened to be his sons teacher.

A knock on the door heralded the entrance of Rosmerta with a tray of drinks. Tea mainly, but also a small bottle of Ogdens fire whiskey. He and Severus had come here enough times before that their habits were fairly known. Rosmerta bustled in and carefully placed the tray on a small table between the two chairs.

“Sorting Day at Hogwarts already My Lord?” She smiled, as she flipped over teacups and set them ready on the saucers.

“Indeed Madam. Severus should be bringing me news of my son Draco's sorting.” Although he already knew, he certainly wasn't going to let slip his sons access to a valuable asset like Potters mail box to such a strong supporter of Dumbledores. To his mind, any resident of Hogsmead couldn't be trusted entirely, living in the shadow of the school as they were. She left the room, closing the door gently behind her. Lucius glanced at the clock on the wall, telling the time with its two long brass hands. The room was mainly older shabbier furniture, long settled in the pub, but kept in good shape. Rosmerta always did have a knack for charms, and with a few simple enchantments any witch worth her wand could keep a house clean and neat for a very long time.

Lucius had almost resigned himself to starting tea by himself when the door slammed open. Severus entered, in a marvelous temper, if Lucius was any judge of such things. And he was. Having known Lucius since they themselves were at school. They were years apart, but Severus had never held his temper well. All magnificent sulks and flaring cloaks when he rushed off dramatically. Although, he thought, some of that had to be an act, or how else could Severus have played his role between Voldemort and Dumbledore so well.

“Good evening Severus” Lucius started, in a calm smooth voice. He gestured to the tea tray “I was just about to pour out, but perhaps you'd prefer something stronger to start with?”
Severus flung his cloak across the back of the empty chair. With his usual economical grace he settled on the edge of the chair, opening the fire whiskey bottle with a deft twist of his potion stained hands. The first half glass disappeared very quickly.

“So what has got you in a fine pother Severus? Dumbledore at his usual games?” Lucius asked

“Someone has been whispering things to the first years. Sorting was all over the place. Muggleborns in Slytherin House! Longbottom who everyone expected for Gryffindor is a snake and all his supporters are lions and confused as what to do.” He leans back in his chair heaving a deep sigh.

“And the worst part is I get that spoiled brat in my house. My House! its going to be a shambles.”

“I certainly hope you don’t mean Draco.” Lucius nearly purred. “We’ve expected for years he’d be Slytherin. Since that one Christmas when he very nearly convinced Great Aunt Agatha to give him a dragon of his own, the little scamp.”

“No not Draco, though I do worry for your son. I meant Harry Potter.” Severus spat out the name with the rancor he normally reserved for inept Hufflepuffs, corrupt Ministry officials and mimes. Aha. Thought Lucius. Finally we come to the meat of the problem. “Well Severus, I did warn you that Draco and Potter grew quite close while we had his guardianship these last few weeks.”

Severus stops, staring at Lucius, dumbfounded.

“Warned me?, what in Merlin's name are you going on about Lucius?”

Lucius frowned.

“I sent you a letter only last week describing how well Draco and Potter have been getting along. He is a very quiet boy, but Draco has been helping him gain confidence. Those horrible muggles did him no favours.”

“I have received no such letter Lucius. I refuse to believe that the son of James Potter could ever be quiet. I know for a fact that those muggles spoiled the boys rotten from all the reports Dumbledore has given me.” Severus spat.

“Reports Dumbledore gave you? and this the man who is up on charges at the Wizengamot for falsifying Potters alarm scroll? keeping his Gringotts key? placing the child with muggles? if nothing else I know of at least one healer that wants to catch Dumbledore in a dark alley for a few minutes with an untraced wand.”

“I haven’t heard most of this Lucius. Dumbledore gave the teachers some song and dance about a student bringing up wild accusations, but its nothing anyone paid any attention to. Start of term is always mad, you know that. I haven’t had a letter from you since June, after you returned from Narcissa’s yearly pilgrimage to the fashion shops in Paris and Milan.”

“Then Severus, I think you should acquaint yourself with some facts.” Lucius leans forward, finally allowing his irritation on his face.

“I received a very interesting letter from Draco this evening. Yes, after Sorting, and after curfew. Duke Potter has a Gringotts secure mailbox and has most graciously allowed his dear friend, my son and heir, access.”

“Draco’s letter explained quite a few things. He was most surprised at your behavior, since he knew I had made it a point to send you a long explanation of the boy and his circumstances. But I shall bring you up to speed now. The child was raised by muggles, a Petunia and Vernon Dursley. He was told nothing of our world, nothing. He was manhandled, starved and forced to work like a scullery. In the meanwhile their own son was fed 'until his buttons popped' as Harry put it and given every thing he could desire. That their child is spoiled, I’m certain. However Potter is malnourished, suffering from a number of compulsion charms, and has broken bones spanning back years. None of this was on Dumbledores much vaunted alarm scroll. It couldn't be, I saw the scroll myself and it was a modified copy of the youngest Weasley boy's scroll.”

“So you see Severus, I will be very put out, if you have managed to jeopardize your godsons possible future alliance with the Duke, simply because you let that old fool deceive you.”

Lucius busies himself, pouring out fine hot tea into the bone thin china. He feels almost detached, the mark of a master occlumens, as he watches his long elegant fingers carefully drop one lump of sugar in and then carefully swirls in the cream.

Severus is watching Lucius with glittering black eyes.
“Petunia. Lily's sister.” He says flatly.
“I understand she told Potter that his parents were killed because his father was a drunkard in some sort of automobile accident. From what Draco tells me Harry has nightmares where he calls out for Aunt or Uncle to stop hitting him. Draco has learned several silencing charms to apply to Harry's bed to better preserve the Dukes privacy.”
“Lucius, I promise you I received no such letter. For that matter, in the last few years I have gotten fewer and fewer.” Severus nearly sighs, slumping in his chair.
“I assure you, I have maintained my usual schedule. One letter a week, excepting special events.” Lucius responded, arching one pale eyebrow.
“I have never received that many letters from you. One a month perhaps. Not since our school days.” Severus is now clearly alarmed, and for that matter Lucius is as well.
“Severus, someone is interfering with your mail. I think you can hazard a guess as well as I.” “That old goat. He's trying to drive a wedge between us.” Severus nearly growls
“Than we shall not let him.”, Lucius offers, his smile cold and hard. “Thankfully I have kept copies of all my private correspondence. I shall bring you a copy tomorrow evening, also, as a School Governor and Harry's guardian pro tem, I have a right to check in on him.”

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Once again Lucius is in the office of the Lord of the Bank. He hadn't been more than four times in all his years, and now on Harry's behalf, he's been as many times in half a fortnight. In apology for the earliness of the hour, the head goblin has supplied a lavish spread of tea, hot chocolate and coffee. Lucius received the summons at the crack of dawn from the bank and he still wasn't quite recovered from a long night of plotting, tea and fire whiskey with Severus. Also in the office are two Aurors, a very concerned healer, the Lord of the Bank, several goblin guards and tellers and a very old wizard in very old fashioned robes who is ensconced with the Lord of the Bank within a privacy ward, but judging by the expression and the gesturing arms is Very Upset.

One of the Aurors turns to Lucius. “I understand you brought the item in question to the Head's attention?”
“Beg pardon? I'm afraid I don't know why we are all here.” Lucius admits. The darker Auror explains, in a deep voice. “When Hagrid, the Hogwarts grounds-keeper was apprehended for attempted purchase of illegal goods, he had a package with him. You had sent a note, pointing out that package to the Head Auror, saying that Duke Potter had told you it was removed from Gringotts and should be returned to its vault.”
“Oh, that package. Yes, Duke Potter had asked me to pass on the message. May I ask what it was?”
The other Auror says dryly, “Apparently when the Lord of the Bank opened the package, he recognized the item and sent a letter to the actual owner; said owner had no idea the item in question was not safely in his workroom. As you can see, he is quite angry that the thing had been stolen.”
“That's Nicholas Flamel, incidentally.”, the dark auror added. “Nicholas Flamel the renowned alchemist?”. “The Philosopher’s Stone? THE stone? That buffoon had it in his coat pocket in a jail cell? Oh dear gods.” At this moment the wards around Flamel and the Lord of the Bank drop. “And furthermore, I'm going to advise that any and all items and vaults which Dumbledore has had access to be checked for stolen goods. If he can steal such a thing from his own teacher, who else would that man stoop to thieve from?”
“Young man.” He turns and addresses Lucius. “I am most grateful for your assistance in retrieving my stolen artifact.”
“I merely passed along a message from Duke Misslethwaite-Potter,”, Lucius bowed politely. “Then I shall have to thank him as well. I understand he is attending Hogwarts?” asked Flamel. “Yes, he is in the same year as my son, both in Slytherin House.”
“Congratulations Lord Malfoy, I'm sure your son will do you very proud. It's a fine house.”
When Harry woke up the next morning he could distantly hear quiet movement beyond the muffling effect of the charms on his bed curtains. He sat up in bed, sleepily rubbing his eyes, the world was a green and dark wood blur. Harry thought he might like this bed even more than the one at the Malfoys. Which he supposed was good, since chances were he'd be sleeping in this one for the next seven years.

The next half hour was a rush of washing, brushing teeth and hair and sorting out his robes with Draco's not so subtle advice. "Not that one Potter, unless you felt like starting a fight with the Weasleys first thing ."

Breakfast was amazing. The Malfoy elves had restrained themselves to a mere four kinds of eggs, toast, kippers, more toast, crumpets, ham, sausages and jam. The Hogwarts house elves made six of everything Harry could think of for breakfast plus, for some reason, a plate of peppermint humbugs. The Slytherin table was less restrained than at the opening feast and already some of the older students had brought their books to table with them. One courting couple in their seventh year was sitting side by side, heads together talking quietly regardless of the girls Ravenclaw robe.

Draco, Harry and Neville made their way through the crowded halls in time for their first class, their little cloud of followers tagging along. Harry was starting to get used to the whole thing, though it still felt odd to have perfect strangers look at his robes, his forehead and then bob their head in polite greetings from the other side of the corridor. Well, most did. The ones in red and gold, the Gryffindors, he reminded himself, weren't nearly as civil. Harry supposed that if all this time they'd assumed they'd be getting him in their house they might be a little peeved that he had suddenly jumped ship to be a Slytherin.

The first few classes were more or less what he expected from first day at any school. Less passing out of books, since they already had theirs, but the teacher did take roll to make sure everyone was present. This was followed by a not very interesting explanation of the subject matter of the class, and some words about scrolls and handwriting. Draco and Neville took turns sitting next to or directly behind Harry in the classrooms depending on the chairs, a very tacit understanding of the equality of their rank and closeness. The other boys and the Slytherin girls distributed themselves around the trio, depending on status mainly. Harry wondered how the other houses handled things. This at least didn't have many arguments ... if you went by who was friends with who ... that would be a nightmare of moving chairs in no time.

Draco practically dragged Harry down to the potions classroom though, rather than his normal measured saunter.

"Relax Draco. Class isn't going anywhere" Harry laughed after his second close call on a slippery paving stone.

"You aren't the one who got a letter from Father this morning Harry. Seems that somebody has been interfering with my godfathers mail." Draco said with a significant eye flicker in the general direction of the Headmasters rooms. "The Professor will want to talk to us, either before class or after."

Outside the open classroom doors was a pathetically small knot of Gryffindors. Three girls and three boys, the Slytherins out numbered them two to one. Harry and Draco were the first Slytherins to arrive of course. They didn't stop at the door but continued straight in with the arrogance of someone who knew Severus always did that on purpose to weed out the fainthearted. The Potions classroom was deep in the dungeon, not all that far from the Slytherin dorms actually. Harry supposed that would be nice in the years they had potions as first class, but today it just meant walking up all those stairs again for supper after class. The room itself was very dark at the moment. Harry saw a raised platform, with podium, chalkboards and a demonstration table. Most of the rest of the room was deep in shadows.

Draco claimed the first worktable on the left side of the classroom for himself and Harry. Neville and Zabini gingerly settled in behind him.
"I say Zabini. You might be better off if I took the back table by myself. I... I'm afraid I'm not much good with potions". Neville murmured to Zabini.
"And be all out of order?" Zabini laughed "I'm only decent with potions because Draco drilled me for ages before school thinking he'd be my partner and then along comes Harry upsetting the applecart. Thank ye gods."
Neville laughed uncertainly, as he layed out his quill, inkstand and parchment.
"Almost seems a shame to waste half the classroom on those poor sad lions." Pansy said with a drawl. Greengrass giggled. They boldly took the other front desk on the previously Gryffindor side of the room. The lions were still lurking in the hall outside the door as the snakes settled themselves in.

By the time the lions skulked their way into the classroom the girls had already taken the first two tables on that side, so the six Gryffindors were relegated to the unfavored back tables, far from the chalkboards and the demonstration podium. Draco and Harry were already reviewing the first year potions book contentedly side by side.
Red sparkles suddenly went off around Harry and he lifted his head in confusion. Then there was a thud, a crash and a squawk from the other side of the room.
"What just happened?" Harry said stupidly. Across the room Weasley is sprawled out on his backside, hand to his jaw spluttering in anger with Goyle looming over him, one meaty fist pulled back.
The doors to the room slammed closed and all the students scrambled to their seats with sudden expressions of extreme innocence. Well, all the Slytherins. Weasley was still sitting on his bum with an expression like a carp.
"Weasley! this is a classroom. Students are expected to to be in their seats promptly. Unless you would like extra practice later in detention?" Professors Snapes voice came from the shadows at the back of the room with silken menace.
Weasley scrambled into his chair, glowering at Harry. It takes Harry a minute to put together red sparkles, with shield spells, with Weasley and with Goyle hitting people. 'Oh.' he realized 'I seem to have a bodyguard.'
Professor Snape proceeded to the front of the classroom, as he did so the lamps on the walls rose to full brightness and Harry could clearly see the cabinets full of potions ingredients, the heavily warded barrister bookcases of books, and worryingly the scorched marks on the vaulted ceiling more than fifteen feet above them. He glanced down to see similar scorches as well as shiny patches of stone on the flagstones under the chair. Harry gulped. Potions might possibly be a little more dangerous than he had been thinking.
Harry and Draco attentively listened to the Professors speech about potions. Harry had heard it already, Lucius recited it practically verbatim, with comments, over dessert not long before school started. The class wound on with roll call, basic questions and then lists of ingredients for them to copy down. Professor Snape ignores Harry but calls on Draco once or twice and seems happy to ask increasingly more obscure questions for the Gryffindors and stripping them of point for every 'I dunno' and 'errrr'. After the chime rang for the end of class, Professor Snape gestured to Harry and Draco to stay back.
Draco stood boldly in front of the Professors desk. Harry stayed a little back for once. He is uncomfortably aware of quiet voices in the hall just outside the open door, he knew without looking that it is Longbottom, Goyle and Crabbe.
"Malfoy. Your father sends his greetings, and the congratulations of your mother on your successful sorting into Slytherin House."
"Thank you Sir." Draco said, evenly.
"Potter. Lord and Lady Malfoy also wish to congratulate you on your ascension to Slytherin." Harry was a little taken aback. This time the Professor seemed almost .. civil. Nothing like the acid tongued man of the previous evening. Draco must be right after all.

Harry mustered his manners. "Thank you Sir. The Malfoys have been very kind to me the past week. They helped me a great deal with preparing for Hogwarts."
"Lord Malfoy informed me last evening of your stay there. It seems the letter he had sent me
during the week was ... misplaced."
Harry realized the game finally. This is the pureblood 'I made a mistake and I'm not apologizing except I am' conversation. Draco had explained it as a way to save face without accepting or assigning blame.
"I'm sorry to hear that you are having trouble with your mails sir. I do hope you are able to solve the problem." Harry said, meeting the Professor's eyes.
"Oh yes Potter. Lord Malfoy and I will take steps to make sure what happened to my correspondence never happens again." Professor Snape seemed perfectly calm but Harry can guess exactly how furious he was about the incident. Furious enough to suddenly treat Harry with civility, at the very least. Harry nearly felt sorry for whomever was messing about. He wouldn't much want Snape angry at him either.
A few polite words later and they were dismissed.
Most of the rest of their classes were fairly uneventful the next week. They had some classes with Ravenclaw, which Harry found deeply amusing since his comet trail of allies changed its order for those classes with a determined Hermione right behind him every time. Neville had also developed a Ravenclaw follower of his own. The transfigurations Professor, McGonnagle, seemed somewhat surprised every time she saw Harry or Neville on the Slytherin side of the room, and would purse her lips in mute annoyance and then continue her lecture.
Towards the end of the first week was their first flying class. Harry wasn't all that worried, since Lord Malfoy and Draco had talked him through the basics on their own broomsticks well before school had started. Neville however had never been flying, since his grandmother didn't approve of those newfangled automatic spelled contraptions.
The Slytherins gathered in loose groups around the school brooms, talking about Quidditch and the advances in cushioning charms. Zabini is showing Harry with many wild gestures about the last World Cup he'd been able to see with his mothers latest swain in Italy.
“C'mon Longbottom. I'm sure you'll do fine.” Harry smiled at Neville.
“I don't know Harry. I've never used a broom or anything.” Neville said with a hint of a wobble in his voice as he looked at the brooms laying placidly on the ground.
“Neither had I before last week, remember?” Harry clapped Longbottom on the back. “We can both fall off together. I bet we're still better than the lions.”
Draco laughed.
“Hey Poncebottom!” Weasley called mockingly. He waved something shiny in his filthy hand. Draco stiffened in affront. Neville frowned and then patted his pockets frantically.
“That little weasel stole the remember-all my grandmum gave me!” Neville scowled and stepped forward
On impulse Harry put his hand out to halt Neville. “Use your anger, don't let it use you.” he whispered.
Neville looked at Harry blankly, and then took a deep breath as a calculating glitter crosses his eyes.
“Oh I see you found that useless bauble. Thanks for making sure nobody gets cut stepping on glass.” He called to Weasley. Then he smiled wickedly.
“Actually, keep it. You can sell it for a few galleons so you can buy proper robes and not those dreadful Phoenix Party rags.”
The Slytherins all chortled.
The dark skinned Gryffindor said belligerently. “You mean the uniform that you snakes think you are too good to wear?”
“Students will require two sets of plain workrobes, black, plus pointed hat, boots, and cloak, black. Sound familiar? That is the official dress requirement. Those gray uniforms are the clothes worn by those loyal to the Phoenix Party and foisted off on students who don't know any better.”
Finch-Fletchly quoted the Hogwarts letter they had all gotten.
“So its not that we Slytherins are 'too good to wear' them, we just do not support a political group that wants to tear down everything that makes the wizarding culture unique.” Draco smiled sharply.
“After all, anyone who tricks little kids into declaring loyalty shouldn't be trusted.” Harry added very quietly.
“You take that back!” Ron burst out in front of Harry. Goyle stood menacingly right behind Harry, so for all his red faced fury Ron wasn't getting any closer.
“There's nothing to take back Weasley. One would think you took that personally.” Harry stood his ground. He'd had too many years of Dudley and Vernon yelling at him to feel threatened by one scrawny bug-eyed redhead with a busted wand. That and he could tell Draco had his hand on his wand tucked into his sleeve not two paces away.
“The Headmaster is a great wizard!” Ron shouted. 'I challenge you to a duel!"
Draco suddenly burst out laughing. Harry was quiet for a moment and then chuckled along with Draco as the other Slytherins started to laugh.
“Weasley, I'm sure it has escaped your attention, and I do know tradition has that we should not mention it at school. But the fact of the matter is that I am a peer, and you are not. Commoners just can't challenge a peer to a duel. Terribly sorry and all that. You can appeal to a judge, or rather your father could or perhaps the eldest son, his heir. You are what, the sixth in line?” And laughs again even harder, just in time for Madame Hooch to finally arrive and call the class to order. Draco wipes tears from his eye and even Neville is smirking.
Chapter 10

Tensions between the Slytherins and Gryffindors had never gotten much better in the weeks that followed. So far the lions hadn't caused much trouble aside from hexing in the corridors and shouted insults. The Silver Trio, as some of the other students had started calling them, had kept up their approach of verbal insults only and avoiding actual fights. This had just gotten Weasley and Finnegan louder and louder, and stupider and stupider in their efforts to fight back. Draco estimated that any day now one of them was going to be stupid enough to actually lay hands on Harry. He and the other snakes had a quiet bet on exactly which of Harry's many protection wards would get triggered first.

Professor Flitwick finished explaining the levitation spell and handed out feathers for the practical work. Harry poked his feather with the end of his wand and sighed. Draco had tried teaching him this spell before class and he hadn't gotten the hang of it.

Harry hefted his wand and concentrated on the movements. “Wingardium leviosa” and flicked. The feather flopped around a bit on his desk.

“Well it moved.” offered Neville, seated on his other side.

There was a bang on the other side of the class and Harry looked up to see a cloud of smoke and Finnegan with black soot all over him. He and Draco sniggered in unison. Then Weasley's robe caught fire and they both start laughing out loud.

“Oh dear!” the diminutive Charms professor exclaimed. With a quick flick of the wand the fire was out and the robe reparo'ed.

Harry had finally managed to get his feather floating near the end of class. Ron however hadn't, no matter how he shouted the incantation or waved his arms about. Ron was still red faced and angry as they packed up their bags and got ready to leave class.

Neville and Finch-Fletchley were talking outside the classroom, waiting for Harry and Draco. Weasley barged right into them rudely. He was obviously spoiling for a fight. Neville simply excused himself and stood back, ostentatiously brushing invisible dust from his robes.

“You didn't do any better than me, you traitor.” Hissed Weasley. Neville raised one eyebrow and stared at Ron. Harry hefted his backpack and hurried to the door.

Harry got there just to hear Ron finish saying something to Neville that ended with “You should be glad your parents can't see you as a slimy snake!”

Harry saw red. How dare he! Draco had explained what had happened to Neville's parents. It was even worse than his own.

Harry leaned back and slammed his fist into Rons face as hard as he could. A shimmer of little gold sparks erupted around his fist where it hit Rons face, spreading his snub nose even flatter. A wave of Harry's blisteringly angry magic swept down the hallway, stopping conversations and blowing things around.

Ron sprawled flat on his ass on the ground at Harry's feet, blood already streaming from his nose down his face and all over his gray robes. Harry stood over him breathing hard, his hair moving in a breeze made by his own angry magic. He could dimly hear voices shouting in his ears as hands pulled him back.

And then he saw immaculate black boots, the hem of sharply creased black robes and as he looked further up the subtle black on black embroidery favored by professor Snape. By the time he had finally reached the mans face Harry could hear his surroundings again and he dimly realized that he had just hit another student and he was going to be in deep trouble.

Professor Snape surveyed the situation. Harry took a deep breath and thought things through quickly. One angry Potter, bloodied fist clenched at his side. One white faced Longbottom with a sheen of tears. One coldly furious Malfoy, pink lips pinched into a narrow line and aristocratic nose flared. One damaged Weasley.

Professor Snape looked down his hooked nose at Weasley. “You'd better get Madame Pompfrey to set that.” Weasley scrambled to his feet, holding the end of his sleeve to his bloodied face. He
scowled at Harry and took a step away.
“And fifty points from Gryffindor for brawling in the halls.” Snape added with a curl of his lip.
Ron was about to say something when the other Gryffindor boys dragged him off.
Professor Snape turned to face the silver trio. They stood in a little row in front of him. Harry raised his head and looked the Professor in the eye.
“I will speak to you three after the Feast in the common room., Understand?”
“Yes Sir” they all chorus.
By the time they get to their dorm, clean up and get ready for the feast, Harry's mood had slid from angry, to depressed and quiet. This is the first year that he's at Hogwarts, but also the first year that he had known that this was the anniversary of his parents death.
What kind of a wizard is he?
Would his parents be upset that he was sorted Slytherin?
“Harry whats wrong?” asked Draco, as Harry sat on the edge of his bed running a plume through his fingers again and again.
“My parents died tonight” Harry finally said simply.
“Oh.”
Draco sat across from Harry on his own bed.
“All Hallows eve is a night of power.” He started. “Wizards have always honored the spirits at this time of year. The muggleborns brought their feast and their candy with them. But we older families usually treat it the day the same as usual, except for a ritual at midnight to honor our dead.”
“That sounds. Right.” Murmured Harry, still staring down at his hands. I should stop biting my nails he mused.
Longbottom interjected “We could do a ritual together tonight if you'd like Potter.”
Harry smiled wanly at Neville. “Yeah. I'd like that.”
Fintch-Fletchly came in from the common room nearly beaming.
“Harry, did you hear? Pomphrey is keeping Weasley in the infirmary over night. And hes not allowed to eat solid food til the bone knitting potion fixes his nose and his jaw.” He nearly crows.
It was a smug but quiet group of Slytherin boys that attends the Halloween feast that night.
Despite the magnificent spread of food, the general high spirits, the floating jack O'lanterns and buckets of candies, Harry was still feeling very subdued. He picked at his dinner anyways, since he really really hates being hungry.
Its not til the end of the feast that anything unusual happens, when Professor Quirrel burst in.
“Troll! A Troll! In the dungeons!” he shouted and then fainted.
There was screaming and then panic before Dumbledore ordered the students to their common rooms and the teachers to follow him.
The Slytherins stayed put.
“We're not going to the dungeons.. there's a troll in there , thank you very much.” Pansy said indignantly.
The first Quidditch match of the year was in mid November. Everyone was bundled up in cloaks and gloves with their scarves wound round there necks up to their ears. But its was Slytherin versus Gryffindor, so of course all the Slytherins were there, in the stands ready to cheer for their team and jeer the lions.

Harry had been a little disappointed when he had found out that first years were not allowed on the House Team, but after the homework, and the extra lessons owled to him from Lord and Lady Malfoy, and all the books Draco kept saying he needed, Harry didn't think he had the time to play sports.

Draco was brimming with a sort of deeply hidden joy, which Harry envied. As a member of the school Board, Lord Malfoy was also attending the match with his wife. Harry was glad that Draco got to see his mum, even if he did have to squash down a sad sort of feeling.

The quidditch pitch was brilliant. Since the game was played in the air, all the goal posts were giant hoops in poles, and the viewing stands and announcers booth were up on tall stilts. It meant a stiff climb up some worryingly rattly stairs, but the view, oh the view was worth it.

The cold autumn air with its nip of frost, the smell of snow on the wind. Cold crisp blue sky and the mountains already with snow rolling down their shaggy brown flanks. The lake by the school was a dark gray disc that faintly shimmered in the sunlight and if he squinted Harry thought he might just be able to see the train station the Express had come in at.

The stands were packed to bursting and bustling with life. A good number from the other houses had turned out in support of the teams but the predominant colours in the crowd were Gryffindor red and gold and Slytherin silver and green and the eternal wave of wizard black.

Harry had gotten used to thinking of certain colours as default or neutral ... can't figure out your mood, or who you'd run into that day? Wear black, wear gray, wear brown. Felt like showing off? Wear your family colours or house colours in as many ways as possible. Harry was willing to swear some of the girls just had to be wearing green and silver knickers, they way they went about matching colours on everything else. Green lipstick, really?

Hermione and Theo were seated side by side just behind Harry and Neville, a little blob of Ravenclaw bronze and blue, with Hermione's nice warm jar of bluebell colored flames tucked between their feet. They were arguing over some book, which Harry thought, wasn't a surprise.
They argued over everything, but in a polite librarian sort of way that really didn't bother anyone. It was weird.

After dinner in the Great Hall, and an uncomfortable formal after supper gathering of various parents, ministry officials, Draco, Neville and Harry in one of the lounges, Harry finally was able to relax. What a long day. The quidditch was fun, but parties with politicians... ugh.

Harry carefully hung his fancy over robes up in his wardrobe by the room of the dorm. The others had gotten used to the extra space, and now the whole dorm shared a small bookcase there as well as an umbrella stand made from what Harry sincerely hoped was an elephants foot, that held a wild miscellany of umbrellas, canes, wooden swords, very long feathers and what seemed to be a giant rose made of glass. The dorm was getting to be very comfortable now. Harry's corner had mainly his stacks of business papers on his desk and books and more books on wizarding history, traditions and etiquette. Draco had a handful of small but exquisite dragon figurines on the shelf over his desk. Neville had a handful of small but exquisite dragon figurines on the shelf over his desk. Neville's desk was overflowing with plants, all happily thriving under their light wand warming charms. The other boys had quidditch posters, a soccer poster (Man U, Harry thought but wasn't sure) books, catalogs from various wizarding shops and a stray brilliant green sock half under Goyles bed. It had been there for a week and Harry and Draco had a bet on to see when someone would finally pick the thing up.

Harry stretched his shoulders out. For some reason the fancier robes always made his back hurt. Or maybe it was the Duke posture he thought wryly. Draco always reminded him how to stand every time they had some social do. 'Head up, shoulders back' … almost every time. He smiled fondly.

Like every night, Harry checked his Gringotts mailbox before settling down to read for a bit before bed. Most of the time it was empty, but enough times some bit of business had popped up during the day that Harry felt better checking it before breakfast and before bed every day.

This time the box containing a carefully rolled up parchment, sealed with a wide ribbon and heavy blob of wax. As Harry carefully undid the seal there was a pop of magic that licked over his fingers and vanished. Harry still hadn't gotten used to the feel of privacy charms. Harry carefully unrolled the parchment, and glanced at the end to see who had written him. His eyebrows rose.

"Your Grace,

I am writing to thank you for a service you have most unexpectedly provided. Several days past, I received a missive from the Master of the Bank at Gringotts. Much to my surprise, they had possession of an item that I had thought securely under ward and key in my own home.

Upon examination, the artifact returned to the Bank by the Aurors at the behest of Lucius Malfoy, was revealed to be my Philosophers Stone. I was much distressed to find the item missing, as indeed, the wards I had surrounding it appeared not to have been disturbed.

I must thank you for your assistance in retrieving this most powerful artifact. In the wrong hands it could be most dangerous. I have obtained the assistance of the best of the Gringotts Curse Breakers and Security Wizards to ascertain who could have removed the item from my care, but my heart is heavy as only three persons could have been close enough to the item in the past century to do so.

I am much indebted to your grace, and hope that in coming years I shall have the chance to return the favour.

Yours in service,
Harry stares at the letter and reads it again. “Draco? I think I need a translation. I have a letter from a Nicholas Flamel, I'm not entirely sure of everything in it, I think its very old fashioned”

Draco looked up from his own desk.

“Master Alchemist Flamel?” Draco asks, brow furrowed in puzzlement. “Why on earth is he writing you?”

“Oh that thing that Hagrid took from the bank before getting arrested, the one your father had the Aurors send back? Well it was Flamel's. Here, read the letter.” He hands the scroll to Draco.

Another pop heralded the arrival of another letter in Harry's postbox. Actually two. Harry fished them out, noted Lord Malfoys insignia and tossed the scroll marked for Draco on his friends desk.

Lucius, in his usual impeccable handwriting has invited Harry 'and such followers as you deem suitable' to attend the Malfoy Winter Ball and other celebrations at their manor over the winter holidays. In the list of other attendees Harry notices Nicholas Flamel as well as many other people he remembered from the list of people holding Wizengamot seats.

“Oh Harry, father wants to invite you to the winter festivities.”

“I just got his letter Draco. Honestly I had figured I'd just be staying here.”

“Nonsense Potter. Stay here in this drafty old pile with the Headmaster and the Weasels? You are going to come to the Manor and the Ball and we're going to play quidditch with snowballs.”

“Oh we are?” Harry laughs. It still startles him to think he's actually wanted, somewhere anywhere, by anyone.

Breakfast was magnificent as usual. After he had hastily bolted his oatmeal and scones Harry headed to the Ravenclaw table to consult with Hermione She was in a heated discussion with Theo as usual, until a dark haired girl next to her jabbed her with a subtle elbow.

Hermione looked up, startled.

“Oh Potter!” she exclaimed, smiling.

“Good morning Granger. Have a mo?” He asked quietly.

Standing a few feet aside from the table and polite but insatiably curious Ravenclaw ears, Harry explained the letter and the situation. Hermione pursed her lips.

“Well you certainly don't want to go to the Durselys. So that's not an option. I'd invite you to mine, I'm sure my parents wouldn't mind, but we're going to France to see my mothers friend the Marchionesse and then Longbottom has asked me up for Boxing Day. So its here or the Malfoy's right?” She said, idly playing with a stray curl.

“Yes that looks like it. Hogwarts might be nice and quiet, lots of time in the library. But I did like
“Malfoys it is then. I'll just have to put up with the huge ball, and being introduced to all these people.” Harry half smiled. But I should be able to meet Master Alchemist Flamel, the Malfoy's have invited him for the whole week.”

“What a fabulous opportunity Potter! Flamel is over six hundred years old, you know” she confided. “I was reading a fascinating book on famous wizards of the past millennium. My study group is still looking for Mistlethwaite you know.”

“That's very kind of you Granger.” Harry smiled, touched. “Have you remembered that book yet?”

“No and its frustrating me to now end. I do think that once I can look at my own bookshelves at home it might come to me.”

“Well you can write to me care of Gringotts and it will be forwarded as usual. Same for packages of course.”

Hermione smiled. “I'll give you your present when we come back to school Potter.”

Harry gulped. “I haven't even thought about shopping! Maybe Narcissa can help.”

Hermione giggled.
Chapter 12

The Hogwarts Express chugged its way slowly through the snow sprinkled countryside. Harry paused to look out the window as the train crossed a small frozen river on its stone and wood trestle track, Charringsford then. Getting close.

Harry was thrilled to know that he didn't have to change back into muggle clothing and go back to the horrible Dursleys. He couldn't anyways, as the audit on the Dursleys accounts had turned up all sorts of oddities and Mr. Dursley was in custody after trying to strangle his boss at Grunnings when accused of embezzling company funds. Harry thought, with a certain mean satisfaction, that Dudley should really enjoy his Christmas in the care of Child Services.

The Ministry had decided that since Harry was fine with the Malfoys before term, that unless another more suitable family could be found, Lord Malfoy could hold his custody until Harry reached majority. Needless to say, Dumbledore was fighting this tooth and nail.

The traditionalists and purebloods in the Wizengamot however, had a very dim view of a wizarding peers neglect and abuse and were insisting stridently that Harry be left where he was, if not placed in their family's care. Draco was morbidly amused by the infighting.

He and the Malfoys would be flooing directly to Malfoy Manor. There Harry and Draco would freshen up and have a late lunch before Narcissa took them out on a whirlwind shopping trip across wizarding Europe which would last the weekend during which time the house-elves would have the manor decorated for the holidays and much of the preparations for the Yule ball well underway.

Gringotts had already arranged for Harry's travel passes, which would be necessary in Berlin and Moscow. Hermione was green with jealousy and had demanded that Harry take as many pictures as possible.

“Knut for your thoughts Harry?”, Draco interrupted his musing.

“Just thinking about … you know. Things. A good present for Hermione, that sort of thing.”

“Well mother said we'll be doing Paris and Milan today, then Venice, Bombay, Moscow and Berlin tomorrow. Then floo back to London for Diagon Alley and then home. I'd say a card from each city and maybe a book or two. Ravenclaw you know.”

“I got Hermione a book on the area of Yorkshire my family is from. A proper wizard one since I figured she had plenty of muggle books already.”, Longbottom interjected.

“Yeah but I figured everyone would get her books. But the cards sound like a good idea.”

Pansy interrupted shyly, “The last time I was in Berlin they had these little figurines dressed in
traditional german wizarding robes, with a little booklet on local customs.”

“I think they have something like that most places. My schoolteacher Dame Malbiogi had a whole collection she used in classes.”, Zabini mentioned.

“That sounds like a fun present for Hermione ... a little different from just books and informational too.”, Harry agreed, smiling.

“One down, eight to go!”, Draco remarked, prodding Harry with a surprisingly pointy finger.

“Oh you’ll be easy mate. I'll have Plettwickets knock you up some new robes just like your great great uncle Erasmus liked 'em. Lavender and mint green with loads of lace, right?”

The conversation devolved into a wrestling match on the floor as the girls squealed and drew their feet up and the boys laughed. It was great to be heading home Harry thought, as he mercilessly tickled Draco.

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Harry checked his appearance for the umpteenth time in front of the mirror in his room. His room, he thought with satisfaction. Since the Malfoys were going to be his long term guardians, they had moved him from the guest wing to the family wing. His bedroom door was now opposite Draco's. The elder Malfoys private apartment was some distance down the hall, behind some heavy duty silencing spells for which both Draco and Harry were grateful.

Today was the day after Boxing day and the Malfoys were expecting the arrival of Master Alchemist Nicholas Flamel and his wife any minute. Harry wasn't at all sure how to feel about meeting someone who was more than five hundred years old.

Christmas had been grand... they had genteelly exchanged gifts after a casual (for the Malfoys) holiday lunch in the Green parlour, where the house elves had set up a fresh pine tree draped and spangled with decorations especially for Harry. The Malfoys had never much celebrated Christmas, being more traditional celebrants of Yule, but made the effort to help Harry feel included. He hadn't the heart to tell them he hadn't celebrated Christmas before either. Its not as if the Dursleys gave him money for presents, or would have wanted to receive anything from him anyways. Or give him anything more than an old coat hanger.

A thump and screech at the window heralded the arrival of an owl. Harry pushed open the window. Outside, perched on the little decorative final discretely placed outside all wizarding windows was Neville's grandmum's owl. Harry remembered it from mail call at breakfasts in Hogwarts. It kept trying to preen Nev's hair into submission. Harry half chuckled at the memory.

Harry carefully detached the letter form the owls foot and slipped the owl a couple treats form the bag near the window.

“Is a reply needed?” he asked the owl politely, as Draco had taught him.

The owl hooted once and flew away. That would be no then.

Harry braced his hands on the open window frame and breathed in deeply. The air was crisp and cold. It had snowed a few days prior and the cold air had kept the mantle of shimmering snow on the lawn clear and perfect. The snow on the quidditch pitch was nowhere near as pristine. That had been a couple hours of great freezing cold fun.

Harry closed the window and went to his desk to read. He was pleased to see the letter was from Hermione. As a muggleborn she had no insignia of her own yet, and so she used a plain
Ravenclaw house ring to seal all her letters.

“Potter,

I’ve gotten so used to calling you that at school that even to my parents I keep forgetting and use just surnames for all my friends at school. My parents and I had a lovely Christmas with my mums good school friend, Marchioness Writtle. She sends her greetings and does hope that at some point you will come across to France for an event, as she would be pleased to make the acquaintance of, and I quote, ’A duke young enough to not have been laid down in brandy by Churchill's housekeeper’. Whatever that means.

It turns out that most of the aristocracy know of the wizarding world, at least by hearsay, since so many prominent wizard family’s had a habit of sending off extra sons and daughters to catch a title, any title, muggle or otherwise. The Writtles themselves have had at least two wizards in the family tree, but nothing in generations. Its quite fascinating and is a very interesting field of genealogical study.

However the main reason for this letter is that I found Misslethwaite! Or rather, I finally remembered where I'd heard the name.

When we reached Yorkshire via train from the London Neville's grandmother had sent a family retainer with carriage to meet us at the station. He spoke with one of the broadest Yorkshire accent that I have heard.

And that jogged my memory at last. Misslethwaite was the name of a family and manor in or near Yorkshire as described in a book I had read about an orphan girl from India who was taken in by her uncle. The book had a great deal to do with gardening, but as I recall it was based on a true story.

You might want to have the Goblins look at muggle cadet lines and information around Yorkshire for Misslethwaite.'

'Awaiting our return to school eagerly,

Your friend'

'Granger'
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

I'm amazed and kind of in awe that this story, incomplete as it is, has reached over 10k hits. Thank you all for your comments and kudos, and I hope you all enjoy the rest of the story. Because now I'm finally getting to the real plot and you have no idea where its going.

Harry thumped his way down the stairs from the family wing to Lord Malfoy's office just off the Library, rather less graceful than usual. He had the letter from Hermione clutched in his hand. He skidded to a stop at the ground floor landing and turned to rush across the width of the Great Hall to the library, where Draco was probably writing out letters under the supervision of his mother. His rush was halted by the unexpected appearance of Lord Malfoy and a guest in the Hall.

“Ah Harrison, may I introduce Master Alchemist Nicholas Flamel.” Lucius turned back to Master Flamel and continues smoothly.

“Master Flamel, my ward, His Grace Duke Lord Harrison Potter, of Potter of Black of Misslethwaite.”

Harry bowed, tucking the letter in his hand into a pocket almost as an afterthought.

“It's a pleasure to meet you Master Flamel. Lord Malfoy had mentioned that you might be visiting.”

“Oh it's my pleasure, my pleasure indeed Your Grace. Indeed you have done me a great turn. Perenelle wouldn't hear anything but I came to make your acquaintance in person and invite you to visit us at our manse. She would have come herself, but she has several potions on the boil and the grandkids home for the hols, you understand.” Flamel bowed arthritically to Harry, one hand clutching the knob of his gnarled black-oak walking stick for balance.

“What brings you through the Great Hall at such speed Harry?” Lucius raised one elegant eyebrow in subtle rebuke.

“My apologies, but I just received a letter from my friend Hermione.”

“The common blood Ravenclaw advisor, yes?”

Harry grinned. “I'm not sure how common Hermione could possibly be sir, but she was visiting the Longbottoms and finally remembered where she heard the name Misslethwaite before.”

Flamel harrumphs and smiles, waving Harry to continue.

“It seems there was a muggle book about an orphaned Misslethwaite who returned home tot he estate in Yorkshire. So that gives us a definite area to look in.”

They both turn to Nicholas Flamel, who has a sly grin twisting his wrinkled old face. “Well young lord, I can't say as how I could tell you where Misslethwaite was located. But I did meet the last Duke once, quite some time ago. You have the Misslethwaite eyes, come to think, that unearthly
“green.”

Harry unconsciously raised his hand to his eyes and then brought it back down when he realized.

“But that was a long time ago, and there's been many a river under the bridge since then, that's for certain. I was just a young man then! Barely a hundred years old.” He cackles.

The three joined the other Malfoys in the library where Harry copied the letter to send off to his solicitors and Gringotts.

After exchanging pleasantries, they sat down to a sumptuous tea. Harry has found that he's slowly getting accustomed to life Malfoy style. The food, the house elves, the clothing, the manners, everything seems to have so much more meaning than anything at the Dursleys ever had. Every stick and stone at Malfoy Manor had a past, every piece of furniture, every painting could tell a tale (sometimes literally). Harry and Draco had spent several hours introducing Harry to the crowd of portraits in the Manor. Not all of them had great memories, as Lucius explained, but the more modern ones from the last few centuries or so could acquire memories long after death and could even move from frame to frame within certain distances.

“Well young Misslethwaite, I only met Duke Colin the once. It was in mmmm oh at least 500 years ago now. That would put it smack dab in the middle of one of the Muggle wars of succession.”

“The War of the Roses sir?” Harry asked, remembering something about that from his Muggle schooling.

“Is that what they decided to call it then? Yes, the red roses and the white, brother against brother. Bad business. Most of the Wizarding families stayed well out of it of course. But as I recall Colin had some relation to the Kings’ family, being a few shakes away from the throne himself, like most nobility of note.”

Harry is listening with rapt concentration. All this is new and fascinating.

“But Colin mustered up his men and rode off to the south to some great battle or other leaving his son to guard the gates. I remember that being a great scandal, with the family Magics not accepting Percival to the coronet. But of course they had great hopes of the youngest son, though I don't recall what became of him.”

“The heredity potion showed that he died pretty young, nine or ten.” Harry volunteered, He had spent countless hours poring over his family tree, learning as much as he could about his family.

“Hmm ... many is the younger brother of a less talented heir found dead before the age of announcement.” Flamel mused. “But then in those days many a child died young, very young. Not like now where families have but the two and expect them to make the distance. Perenelle and I had eight ourselves, only the four made it to schooling age.”

“Why was he left to guard the gates and not the castle? There was a castle right?” Harry asked.

“Of course! But only the Duke could open the borders of his duchy once he had closed them. That's why it was such a grave risk for him to leave his lands with no suitable heir to open the gates again. Add to that the Secretum ritual, and I wouldn't be surprised if no wizard nor witch has ever set foot in Misslethwaite for more n five hundred years. Can't open it, can't remember it, can't find it and even if they could there's only the one bloodline that has the keys to the castle so to speak.”

“You mean to tell us Master Flamel, that there could be an entire unplottable, hidden, duchy folded away in York?” Narcissa asked genially sipping daintily at her tea.
“Of course! There is no end of odd corners of wizard space tucked in lost corners all over this country. I’ve heard tell of a whole kingdom you can only reach through a closet for example. If you could unfold all of Hogwarts I’d say it would be at least four times the size it is now. That’s wizards for you, great at hiding things, even better at losing them.”

Harry giggles. “I know when I put something in a safe place, half the time I can never find it again.”

A house elf appears near Lucius’ elbow, holding a scroll out on a silver salver.

Lucius passes his wand over the letter quickly and then reads it. His eyebrows rose.

“Well Harrison. It seems that the Lord of the Bank would like our attendance this afternoon if we have the time. York was the clue they needed and they have unearthed several documents pertaining to your family, some of which should be handled urgently.”

Harry looks at Narcissa. He hasn't the faintest idea what to do now.

“Excellent timing, young Misslethwaite, I would like to offer a tentative alliance of my family to yours, to honour the great debt we owe you for your assistance in returning the Philosophers stone to me.”

Harry paused, an alliance with the Flamels is nothing to turn away from, after all they were two of the most renowned potions masters in the world.

“I don't think I can accept alliances until all my titles have been sealed and accepted.” Harry murmured.

“Which is why he specified a tentative offer, so that it is in place and can be held until your family Magics are settled, dear.” answered Narcissa.

“Oh! Thank you Aunt Narcissa. Yes Master Flamel, of course. Although I didn't do all that much, just asked Lord Malfoy to have a package sent back to the bank.”

“Without the stone my boy Perenelle and I would most likely perish within the year. So it is a life debt that I intend to honour, both with your family and the Malfoys of course. Lord Malfoy and I have already sealed our agreement to seek alliance. Now its just for the solicitors to pick over the bones.”

After tea they dressed for going out, in more formal robes heavily layered with protective spells. Harry and Draco both donned the new heavy winter cloaks Narcissa gave them for the holidays, embroidered with the Slytherin crest and their respective coats of arms. Harry fancied his made him look taller. He was already tired of being the shortest boy in his class.

Healer Pantwhystle had explained to Harry that lack of proper nutrition growing up had stunted his growth, but some of his height was just heredity. It seems that he took after his petite mother. But with more of the curses removed from his body and mind, and plenty of daily potions, Harry was filling out and getting stronger and healthier every day.

The blocking spells the first healer had discovered all those months ago turned out to be concealing a number of loyalty, confundus, and other spells some of which the Healers had never seen before. Most of them seemed to be alarm spells, but Healer Pantwhystle felt that the sheer number had retarded the growth of his magical core. Without them blocking the way Harry’s innate magic was growing as strong as the rest of him
Later Harry was glad he had all those biscuits with tea. Between the Malfoys, the Goblins, three teams of lawyers, and Master Flamel, they spent hours poring over paperwork. Flamel proved to be invaluable, he actually knew some of the people these hundreds of years old documents mentioned and could aim the goblins in the direction of their modern descendants.

“Your Grace, we have found an old listing of alliances, not the proper contracts of course, just an enchanted listing of family alliances by name.”

Harry takes the old scroll gingerly. They all have layers of preserving spells freshly applied, but Harry is nervy handling anything that old.

Harry runs his eyes down the list. Most of the names he has never heard of, Selwyn, Gaunt, Longinus but there were some he knew, good and bad.

“House Longbottom was allies of Misslethwaite” He told Draco, smiling.

“That explains a few things.” Draco answers “I wondered how you managed to keep Nev and I from arguing so much.”

“The Malfoys aren’t on here” Harry frowns.

“No but several of the other Twenty Eight are and we are so intermarried I'm sure theres some family bond there. Plus of course, you are Heir to Lord Black and I'm a Black through mum, and my father is your current legal guardian so that makes you some sort of family, as far as the Magics are concerned.”

“The Malfoy family are the second creation of the title. The original Malfeé were from France, but after a great betrayal the youngest son escaped the massacre of his family. He founded the line over with an English title under the name 'Malfoi' meaning 'bad faith' in referring to the death of his family at the hands of one of their own retainers.” Narcissa explained to them both gently.

Harry continued reading his list. One of the names near the bottom made him scowl at the page ferociously.

“Aunt Narcissa, do I need the original contract to break an alliance?” Harry asked, his voice dark with anger.

“No Harry, breaking alliances is much easier than making them. What has you so vexed?”

“Dumbledore.” Harry says bleakly.

The Lord of the Bank looks up. “What was that Your Grace?”

“Dumbledore's family is on a list of alliances. Are these still active? Can I break it? I mean right now? I don't trust the old...” Harry takes a deep breath and continues without swearing like a commoner. “I would rather not have his name connected with my family in any way after how he has treated me.”

“An alliance!” the old goblins bushy gray eyebrows raise in response. “Not to the Potters? That one broke with the death of your father, as it was a personal not familial alliance.”

“No, this is a list of Misslethwaite allies. I wish to remove Dumbledore, and add Malfoy, Flamel and re-affirm Longbottom. The others I will need to send letters to to discuss reaffirming the alliance.”

“Removing is easy enough. Simply tap the name with your wand, picture the person and state 'I
Harrison Marcellus Potter-Black-Misslethwaite do sever and revoke all alliance with the house of Dumbledore and do so request and require all properties, enchantments and sureties belonging to House Misslethwaite-Potter-Black be returned forthwith. The oaths and contracts will update themselves, the bindings if any will be broken and any items of your family's in the Dumbledore family possession will return to you or to your vault.”

Harry followed the goblins directions. There was a puff of greasy gray smoke and the name was gone from the list. Several other names scribbled themselves in at the bottom. More importantly several documents, books, a trunk and a confused looking elf appeared on the table.

“Draco look, the Malfoys are on here now. And a few more.” Harry points at his list. “Avery, Nott, Yaxley, Riddle and something in Chinese? Japanese?”

Lucius and Draco examine the new names on the list.

“These are all families who are in opposition to Dumbledore.” Lucius said delicately. Harry recognized the names of several known Death-Eaters from his reading.

“With the alliance with Dumbledore broken, the old alliances with those families have re-emerged these will need to be examined and reaffirmed or severed.” Lucius added.

The Lord of the Bank leafed through the documents. He muttered several things in goblin. The youngest lawyer looked at him askance.

“I have here several property titles, including all of Godrics Hollow, some buildings in Hogsmeade, the papers for the Potters Wizengamot seats, the papers for this elf Betsy, and most importantly the Potters will, most irregular.”

“Isn't Godrics Hollow several properties?” Lord Malfoy asked

“All illegally parcelled off and sold. It appears that the Dumbledore family were granted tenancy as allies of Misslethwaite, but only as long as the alliance held. They never had any rights to sell the property, sell cordage, pasturage, so forth and so on. So any persons currently living on your property should be sent a letter, it's your choice Your Grace. You can evict them, or send them new rental contracts. Until they agree they have no rights to the buildings so many of their wards will collapse.” The goblin explained.

“What are cordage and pasturage? I'm not certain I understand” Asked Harry.

“Quite some time ago, only nobility and landed gentry owned land. They had the right given by the King to use the land as they saw fit. These rights included using the land for agriculture, pasturing animals, mining, water rights, and cordage or lumbering rights. It was quite common for a lord to rent or sell only some rights to a piece of land while keeping the rest or selling them to someone else. Nowadays, it is more common that all rights are inclusive to the property.” The Lord of the Bank lectured.

“Oh. Then someone needs to go through who is living there, what rents would be suitable and draft letters. Just make sure that no babies or old ladies are out in the cold please.” Harry said.

“Same for Hogsmeade, those were being maintained as rental properties and one business, a tavern run by an Aberforth Dumbledore.” a lawyer asked. Harry was starting to lose track of his various lawyers … this one was something with a P, he thought.

“Examine the current contracts and if they are sound, offer a renewal. Sever the contract with Aberforth and evict him.”
“Done and done your grace.” Profitt, that was it, replied, making notes.

Lord Malfoy finally opened the trunk after several minutes of careful spellcasting. It seemed to have no curses. Inside was a loosely wrapped bundle of silvery cloth and an old leather journal with scorched pages. He took the cloth out of the chest carefully and unrolled it on the table.

“What is it?” Harry asked, curiously.

“It appears to be an invisibility cloak, but I've never seen one made of this material.” Lucius mused.

He handed the book to Harry. “Your father's journal.”

Harry clutched the book to his chest.

“Why would Dumbledore keep this from me? What is wrong with him? “ His eyes tear up with sadness and anger.

Draco clumsily patted his shoulder in sympathy.

“Your Grace? We've quickly reviewed the will most especially in the matter of inheritance and your guardianship. You still have one mentioned guardian of sound mind and body.”

“I do? Who is it?” Harry asked

“Professor Severus Snape. There is a letter addressed to him, that has been opened.” The lawyer said with a frown.

“Severus knows nothing of this.” Lucius reassured Harry. “If he had I'm sure he would haven taken custody years ago.”

“I'm happy where I am now, but if it was my parent's wish than Professor Snape and I should at least discuss it.” Harry says slowly.

“We need to go over everything in the will more carefully Your Grace.”

Harry sighs. He really should have more biscuits at teatime.
Chapter 14

Going back to Hogwarts on the express was as simple as the first trip had been, although in this case Harry had even more luggage. However feather-lite charms and shrinking spells made everything simple so Harry and Draco just strolled onto the train. They met their friends in their usual compartment at the back of the train and spent most of the trip gleefully exchanging descriptions of their holidays and presents. Hermione was very interested in the differences between traditional wizarding and muggle christianic celebrations.

The welcoming feast was the usual huge selection of food. Harry and Draco only picked, since the Malfoy elves had sent them their usual overstuffed picnic hamper for the train. The assistant Headmaster, Professor McGonnigle addressed the school and Harry couldn't help but notice that the head table had a gap right in the middle. The Headmasters chair was conspicuously empty.

“Hey Draco, who is the new face?” Zabini asked, leaning across the table. He nodded towards the new teacher in Quirrel's place.

“I haven't the foggiest idea.” Draco said, frowning slightly.

“Hey if we're really lucky Quirrel got lost going to the loo and we have a new Defense teacher. Maybe even one who knows the subject.” Zabini smirked.

“That's Auror Sacksville-Berger. His mum is a friend of my Gran. Seems that Quirrel went missing a few days ago, all his stuff still in his quarters and everything. The teachers and the Aurors went all over the school and couldn't find anything but loads of cursed stuff.” Neville added

“A teacher missing and Draco didn't know?” Pansy yelped, startled.

“That's very strange, the Board not being informed. But its not the first time something like that happened.. Father didn't know about the thing with the Troll until Harry mentioned it in a letter.” Draco mused.

“I'm going to ask for there to be an investigation into the castle wards.” Harry suddenly declared. Most of the faces at Slytherin table turned towards him.

“Well think about it! A troll 'wanders in' when there aren't any communities of them for miles in any direction, cursed items all over and now a teacher just vanishes? And the board isn't told about any of it? What is the Headmaster playing at? There are children here!”

Draco shoots a glance at the main table where a sulfurously glowering Snape catches his eye and indicates the doors with a flick of his glance.

“Harry. Perhaps we should discuss this … somewhere less public.”

Draco firmly grabs Harry by the elbow and drags him towards the exit. Neville joins them in a swirl of robes.

Harry takes a while to wind down, pacing through their dorm and loudly dissecting the Headmaster's ineptitude.

“Blimey Draco,’ Said Nev, bemusedly. 'Mouth on him like that and I wonder why he wasn’t sorted to the Lions.”
Draco snickered loudly, to be cut off by Harry’s pillow to his face.

“Neville I'm shocked. I think that was the meanest thing you’ve ever said.” Harry flopped into his bed, laughing.

“Well I told my Great Aunt Melliflua that her green frock really matched her complexion.” Neville said innocently. “I think that was sort of mean .. my Uncle Algie snorted fire-whiskey through his nose.”

“Speaking of relations Harry.” Neville got more serious.

“Yes?” Harry answered, leaning back on his bed, propped up on his elbows.

“Gran tells me that our lawyers got papers from your lawyers about re-affirming a very old treaty of alliance?”

“Oh that. Granger let me know that she remembered the book she saw Mislethwaite in. It was a story about a girl from a family in Yorkshire. With that hint the goblins went digging through the history of York or Jórvík as it was when the title was granted to my ancestor.”

“They are still going over all the papers, but I found a list of alliances, vassals and treaties with various families and kingdoms. The list updates to the most current name of the holder of the title, so the Longbottoms were listed as allies, among a number of others.” Harry explained.

“That makes sense. My family has been in York for a very long time.” Neville mused. “Did you offer to re-affirm all of them?”

“Of course not Nev! You I know already, you are a loyal friend and a good man. Or you will be.” Harry said smiling. “There was no question about your family.”

Neville blushed.

“Most of the others are being researched, but the only one I struck immediately was Dumbledore. In addition to everything else, his family has been selling off my land for centuries.”

“Selling off your land?” Neville asked

“Yes it seems that the family Dumbledore was descended from were vassals and held the land in trust for my family, as long as the alliance still held. With the duke gone so long they either forgot, or didn't care and started selling off property they didn't own, such as Hogsmeade and Godric’s Hollow piece by piece.”

“You own Hogsmeade?”

“Only parts of it. It seems that back in the day it was very common for Lords of large estates to maintain well ... sort of an embassy near the school for the students of their house and allies. A great many of the older families have Hogsmeade properties for the same reason.” Harry grinned. “Most of the rentals I renewed, pending audits, but one I threw out straight off was to a Dumbledore.”

“Our Harry isn't all that shy when it comes to holding grudges.” Draco added lazily.

“The interesting thing is that when I repudiated Dumbledore all these new families showed up on my list of allies. Old associates of Draco's father for the most part.”

Neville's eyebrows raised. “That could be a very delicate situation.”
“This is why I have lawyers, lots and lots of lawyers.” Harry flopped back down on the bed with a groan.

“Honestly I'll have less paperwork and meetings now I'm back at school instead of on vacation. I'm starting to dread the summer break.”

It wasn't until the middle of Herbology class the next day that Harry noticed things were unusually quiet. The Headmaster was still missing, gossip had it that he was at the Ministry or Wizengamot trying to stop the inquiries against him. The evidence of the Aurors who had been searching for Quirrel, but had found only cursed artifacts and worse yet, paintings and mirrors enchanted to show scenes from private rooms in the castle in Dumbledores office, was counting against him heavily. Not even the Aurors were giving Dumbledore one inch of leeway.

He looked up from his workstation and looked around the greenhouse. There was Draco right next to him, Neville patiently working with Crabbe and Goyle, and Finch-Fletchly poking at the dirt with a barely hidden look of disgust. All usual.

He surveyed the Gryffindor side of the room and noticed a conspicuously empty seat.

“Hey Draco. Notice how quiet it is?” He asked, quietly.

Draco looked up. “Hmm. Now that you mention it.” he glances across the room.

“Weasley's not here barking like a pomeranian in a strop.” Harry smirked.

“Oh dear.” said Draco, absolutely straight faced. “I do so hope nothing has happened to him.” And grins.

“Harry? why is your devil's snare trying to crawl up your sleeves?” Neville asked, standing at the corner of their station.

Harry looked down. Sure enough the plant was getting overly friendly again.

“It keeps doing that. I thought they were supposed to attack people, but this one just keeps trying to crawl into my robes.”

Draco snickered.

“It loves you Harry. it attacks me like usual.” He remarked. He held his hand out and sure enough it struck out at him trying to constrict his fingers.

“That's very odd. Professor?” Neville addressed Professor Sprout.

“Potter's plant is .. behaving strangely. Can you check it?”

The professor bustled over. She peered at the plant over the rims of her spectacles.

“The colour looks good, soil nice and damp. What is it doing?”

Harry put his hand down next to the plant and again it coiled gently around his wrist and tried crawling up his arm.

“How very unusual Mr Potter!” Professor Sprout exclaimed. “Here try on this cutting, we can see if it also behaves oddly for you.”

Sure enough after a few minutes the new plant was also trying to embrace Harry.
“Very fascinating Mr Potter. You should research your lines to see if there are any plant based talents in your lineages.” Sprout patted him genially on his shoulder, leaving a few crumbs of soil, and bustled off to the other side of the classroom where an unfortunate Finnegan was trying to wrestle his Devil's snare back into its pot and failing.

After class had finished, Draco and Harry were trading scourgifys on each others clothing when Hermione bustled up. She had just come from Transfiguration with the Hufflepuffs.

“Harry did you hear about Weasley?” She inquired, voice full of amusement.

“No, we haven't heard anything.” Harry said, puzzled.

“In fact that's how we noticed he wasn't in class, the blessed silence.” Draco drawled. Harry half grinned in response.

“Well Theo returned from taking someone up to the infirmary for a headache potion, and told me that the Aurors found Weasley. You know, when they were looking for Quirrel? He was in some room in front of a mirror, dehydrated and passed out.” She rattled out, full of self-importance at having interesting news.

“It seems that the mirror was enchanted to show the person's greatest desire. It had alarm wards all round it that sounded in the Headmasters office, but he wasn't there!”

“So Weasley found it?” Harry asked, grinning slyly.

“Yes, sometime over the holidays. Nobody ever noticed he was missing, not even his brothers. He must have stood there for days and days until he got too starved and dehydrated and passed out.” Hermione added with a knowing bob of her head.

Draco laughed meanly. “Only Weasley could be so weak willed to be trapped by a mirror showing him … what would he see? Tables full of food I bet!”

“Piles of money?” Offered Neville, usually the nicest soul in the world, but Ron's unceasing insults to his family had finally gotten to even him.

“Pomphrey was livid! Leaving something like that in a school, and the Headmaster running all over dealing with personal legal matters and nobody else knowing about it.” Hermione confided, as they all walked towards the Great Hall for lunch.

“Draco, I do think that's another bit of news for your dear father.” Harry intoned gravely, mischief dancing in his eyes.

“Why Harry, I do believe you might be right. I'm sure Father needs to know all about the dangerous artifacts strewn around the castle to trap unsuspecting weasels. I mean students.” Draco answered.

“And the Headmaster neglecting his duties because of personal concerns.” Harry added.

Hermione chipped in “ Well .. I would normally be less than happy about you delighting in the trouble of the head of this school. But...” she paused thoughtfully.

“But?” Harry asked.

“But he really is neglecting his duties to the school and the safety of all the students … Agnes Miller in Hufflepuff swears she heard barking when she was on the third floor landing the other day, as if we need guard dogs running around on top of everything else. I think he deserves being
investigated.” She nodded self importantly, happy with her own reasoning and swept off to join the other Ravenclaws.

“Out of the mouths of Ravenclaws.” Harry said, laughing.
No. Not abandoned. I'm just busy. Sorry about that, but a fella's got to make a living. Would you all feel better if you could pay me to finish this? I could set up one of those Patreon things I guess. PLEASE don't nag me. All that happens is that I go and sulk and watch telly instead. This WILL be finished. Eventually.

You can message me on LJ. When I remember to check the thing rather. http://tigershark666.livejournal.com/

In other news this story, along with many other most excellent HP stories has been nominated for an award! so I suggest you all go and check out the nominees in this category. And then you should of course vote. I suggest 'Rise of A Dark Lord' by Miss Xandra, 'Birth of a Serpent King' by Keira or 'Again and Again' by Athy (an author like me who posts chapters at long intervals *lol*)

http://awards.fanaticfanfics.com/index.php/vote

I'm warning you that I can't work on this until at the very least mid May, why you ask? because I'm halfway through the script for a graphic novel I am creating and publishing, as well as the script for a webcomic. Plus of course trying to make a living as an artist, which trust me, isn't nearly as much fun as it sounds.

Life for Harry continued much as usual. The new usual at least, with letters from lawyers and the Bank every day now, and correspondence with Flamel which had slowly turned into an ongoing History lesson. Harry has already privately discussed with Lucius the possibility of adding Master Flamel to the schools teachers. Who better to teach history after all than a man who was there?

Harry has been studying so hard for his legal battles and his first Wizengamot meeting that the schoolwork has mostly passed in a blur. He seems to have been managing decently though, with Hermione and Theo to remind him of assignments and to lend their notes for all the days he had missed classes due to meetings.

Now he understands why most underage Lords let everything be handled by their guardians.

Unfortunately, Harry didn’t have that luxury. The Malfoys past alliances were still being gently tiptoed round but Harry was no fool. His studies of the Recent Unpleasantness had made it perfectly clear that Lucius was, if not the right hand man, certainly a mover and shaker among the Dark Lord Voldemort’s forces.

So letting Lord Malfoy handle Harrys duties would be a very bad idea.

So in the meantime Harry had a stack of books next to his bed that would put Hermione’s to shame he was sure.

These days he got his gossip fresh in the morning walking between classes, which was about all the social time he had left. This was how he heard about the huge rift in Gryffindor house. A helpful Hufflepuff had confided to Harry that Weasley, recovered from his ordeal over the hols,
had blamed Harry for some unknown reason and had been caught after curfew trying to set up some sort of prank.

It wasn’t the prank so much as the one hundred fifty points that had been removed from Gryffindor’s house tally – since the prank had managed to catch Professor McGonagall in cat form much to her eternal fury.

A sly Ravenclaw third year had chimed in with the fact that while he had been in the healers ward for burns from potions class, Seamus had been brought in by Professor Grubbly-Plank after being discovered badly bitten in the Forbidden Forest. It seems that Ron and Seamus, his co-prankster, had been sent out for detention with the Professor to help search for an injured unicorn.

The trail had led past a nest of baby acromantulas, and Ron, giant coward that he was, had run off into the night leaving Seamus to defend himself.

The Finnegan family was claiming a life debt from the Weasleys, and threatening legal action, and the Weasleys were petitioning their Lord, Dumbledore. Who apparently wasn’t a Lord at all once the lawyers finished sorting everything out after Harry had broken the alliance and reclaimed all the assets given to the Dumbledore family by the Misslethwaite family, including the Lordship.

Harry was still terribly pleased with himself over that bit of impulsiveness. The side effects just kept coming and amusing him to no end.

Where was Weasley? Oh who knows, and who cares really? If he ever shows up again he’ll be expelled anyways. The board of Governors had decided on that already. Not like his grades made him a worthwhile prospect anyways. Who gets a T in Astronomy? Really?

‘The only thing faster than light is the speed of gossip’, Harry mused.

All in all, Harry felt fairly prepared when exams started. If nothing else his quill writing had gotten much better with all the practice.

“Honestly Hermione. I think I did fine on the exams. Maybe a little shaky in Transfiguration, but if they had a class in Wizengamot Laws I’d be aces.” Harry grinned at Hermione

It was the day after exams, and Harry had a whole two hours for breakfast and packing which he was taking every advantage of for once.

Hermione frowns.

“Why don’t we have classes in Wizarding Law actually?” she asked

Theo answered “Hogwarts classes were greatly reduced by Headmaster Dippet during the war with Grindelwald, due to the death of so many teachers. When Dumbledore took over after the war, most of those classes were never reinstated, hence the strange gaps in our schedule. The Modern and Traditional parties of the Board have been at loggerheads over it for decades I understand.”

Harry scowled. “That’s ridiculous. What are we paying for? A ghost and eight teachers for several hundred students? What classes are we missing?”

“I understand from reading Hogwarts, a History, that nice unabridged copy Theo was so kind as to loan me over the winter holidays for a little light reading.” Hermione started to be interrupted by Nevilles muffled snort.

“As I was saying,” she mock frowned at Neville, “Previous classes used to include dueling,
swordsmanship, arts, music, dance, law, economics, foreign languages, Latin, basic healing, and some electives for crafts and trades. Hogwarts was primarily a school for the upper classes so had more focus on the skills they would need as opposed to the other schools which prepared students for life in trade or service. Most of the other schools mentioned in the text seem to be gone.”

“Well that explains the much larger class sizes.” Theo remarked.

“And why more than half the students are subsidized from the schools own budget, which is another reason why they hadn’t the money for new teachers. Father was telling me about the arguments the other day when I mentioned the little bonfire Ravenclaw House had of Pheonix party robes.” Draco grinned.

“Aww, I missed a fire?” Harry said. “When did that happen.?”

“I’m sure I told you Harry”, Hermione said primly. “After the Halloween feast I explained to Ravenclaw house about the robes. Ravenclaws purely hate untruth, so almost everyone with those robes took them out to the lakeshore and we had a nice bonfire in protest.”

“Ugh!” Harry said and slumped on his bench. “I can’t believe how much I’ve missed this term. Too much paperwork.”

“Tempus” Draco muttered. “Oi, hurry up Harry. We need to go and get packed up and home and changed in time for the meeting this afternoon.”

Harry sighed. “Back to work it seems.” He said

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“Now mind your step. The ministry Floo has been bumpy recently, I’m told there’s been some muggle nonsense going on that’s upset the big worldgate complex these are attached to over in Central London. They have a senior gate team in from the Americas to look at it again.” Lucius threw a large handful into the fireplace which starting blazing bright green.

“Ministry Of Magic, Wizengamot entrance” stated Lord Malfoy and, holding his long robes tightly to his sides, stepped into the roaring fire in the Malfoy Manor Floo.

Draco grinned at Harry, and repeating his words, followed his father into the fire and vanished.

Harry took a deep breath and carefully said ‘Ministry Of Magic, Wizengamot entrance’ and stepped bravely into the fire. He kept slowly walking as Lady Malfoy had suggested and soon found himself passing through the other side in a burst of purple flames and stepping down a little onto the smooth flagstone of the Ministry floo entrance.

It was a long tiled room, somewhat like a subway tunnel, but no subway tunnel was paved in shining green malachite or lined with rows and rows of ornate carved gilt fireplaces. Each fireplace was popping out wizard after wizard. Draco tugged at Harrys elbow and reminded Harry to continue moving forward, flushing slightly. Narcissa had stressed after all how busy the floo could get on Wizengamot days and that one must move forward out of the way immediately so the transit wards would drop again for the next traveler.

As huge and fancy as the room was it was still filled to the bursting with wizards! Hatted, hooded, cowled, with spectacles and bare heads and fancy hairdos. Men with beards to their knees, women with large fancy hats on which birds flapped their wings and whole miniature forests grow with a blaze of flowers. Harry could swear he even saw one dragged looking fellow with ‘wizzard’ spelled out on his hat in sequins.
Wizards! As far as the eye could see, in long robes and billowing cloaks, with the women in everything from smart suits to long medieval princess gowns and everything in between. The deafening chatter of hundreds of voices, with snatches of conversations and above all the flying swooping owls, ravens and bats and of all things a flock of orbiting paper aeroplanes.

Lord Malfoy and his unmistakable cane led their little procession, with Lady Malfoy on his arm. She didn’t normally attend the Wizengamot, but she was attending today to, as she put it, offer some sort of motherly support for Harry. After the elder Malfoys followed Draco and Harry, solemn in their never-before-worn formal robes. Harrys long purple train slid smoothly over the ground with its dirt-repelling charm keeping the Spectral Ermine fur trim shining and white.

As they proceeded, other Lords, supporters of the Malfoys, joined their procession. By the time they left the massive gently sloping stairwell and reached the gathering hall in front of the Wizengamot Hall they had quite a crowd. Mostly Malfoy supporters, but also the occasional brave Potter supporter.

Here the procession spills out into clusters of wizards. The Malfoys introduce Harry around in a whirl of names, faces and significant heraldic symbols. Harry is doing his best but there is only so much that six months of intense study can do for you.

Harry smiles when a familiar face appears out of the whirling sea.

“Potter! I mean Your Grace” grinned Neville. “May I introduce my Grandmother Augusta Longbottom. Grandmother may I present His Grace Harrison Potter, of Potter, of Black, of Misslethwaite.”

“I am most pleased to meet you Dame Longbottom, Neville has mentioned so much about you.” Harry murmurs as he bows politely over the matriarchs extended, bejeweled hand. Old and withered it might be, but she still had a grip like pinchers.

“I hear you are the reason my grandson got sorted to Slytherin House” She stated in a clear, sharp tone.

“I’m sure Neville attained our House purely on his own merits.” Harry stated.

“I’d been told for years by various relations that Neville would never to amount to more than a second-rate Hufflepuff at best. I am overjoyed that he has proven them all quite wrong. We are most pleased to see such a strong friendship with all the families in Slytherin House.” She pronounced grandly, smiling at Harry and Draco equally, and then indicated for Neville to escort her inside to her seat.

Harry leans over to Draco and whispers “Did she just say what I think she did?”

“If you think she just made an overture of friendship to House Malfoy, then yes you did.” Draco whispered back.

“Isn’t that one of the signs of the End Times?” Harry whispered.

Draco sniggered and prodded Harry gently in the ribs with one pointy elbow.

“You’ve changed everything Harry.” He whispered. “The entire game is on a whole new board now. I can’t wait to see what you do next!”

Harry grins. “Just don’t blame me if it all goes pear-shaped.”

A brief hush and then a burst of voices alerted Harry to a change.
As the noise grows closer, the crowd parts and Harry can finally see Albus Dumbledore. Lord no more, he was stripped of almost all his titles although still titular head of the Wizengamot. However due to the charges Harry had brought against him, the meeting was being presided over by Amelia Bones who had been temporarily elected First Wand, a provision that had not been needed since the famous scandal of Etherby Winchester who had ended by running off to the Americas with his mistress.

“My dear boy” Dumbledore called out to Harry, his arms widespread in an attempt at a grandfatherly greeting.

Harry stared back冷ly. ‘Head up, shoulder back’ he reminded himself.

“Master Dumbledore.” He said in a flat tone.

“Now Harry,” Dumbledore started…

“Master Dumbledore I have not given you permission to use my familiar name. In fact as far as I recall we have never been introduced.”

“Now Harry. Lord Potter. I was a dear friend of your parents.”

“I wouldn’t know Master Dumbledore, as I have never met them.” Harry said with a bitter resentment.

He is dimly aware of a hush spreading out from around their conversation.

Dumbledore took a deep breath and tried again, his eyes twinkling gently. He assumed an expression of sad benevolence.

“I’m sure we can come to some way of settling your concerns about your placement with your family.”

Harry was deeply and furiously angry but holding it back with great force of will. He could feel his magic rising up and he did his best to channel it down his body into the ground as Narcissa had instructed him. However a nimbus of power started to glow gently about his face and hands.

“Master Dumbledore I feel that the actions of the British justice system in arresting both my Aunt and Uncle for child neglect and abuse, and the removal of their son from their care does nothing but prove my concerns as you put it. I am still unaware by what reason you had anything whatsoever to do with my placement there, but I believe that is one of the points that First Wand Bones shall be covering today.”

Albus lost some of his grandfatherly look as he became visibly more annoyed.

Master Dumbledore stared directly at Harry’s eyes as he prepared to speak, when the frame of Harry’s glasses flashed a telltale red.

Lord Malfoy immediately swept Harry behind him. “Aurors!” He cried

Draco pulled Harry even further away from Dumbledore as an Auror rushed up, and a second shimmered into existence next to Lord Malfoy.

“Lord Malfoy?” asked the rushing Auror, hand on his wand.

“Master Dumbledore has triggered the mind wards on his grace Duke Misslethwaite.” Lord Malfoy nearly growled out, his smooth voice deep and controlled. He shifted his weight and
stance into an unmistakable dueller's stance. Body angled, wand hand forward and weight on his back foot ready for a lunge. Draco stood between Harry and Dumbledore. More of Harry’s supporters were pressing in as well as the other previously disillusioned Aurors that made up Harry’s bodyguards.

“Is this correct Auror Judson?” The Wizengamot guard asked the auror with Harry

“They had been exchanging words. Dumbledore became irritated and looked directly at his grace’s eyes when the wards indicator flashed on his Grace’s glasses.”

The Wizengamot guard, now reinforced by another wearing the heavy purple robes marked with the mace and wand, turned to Dumbledore.

“You will refrain from any other mind magics during this session. Shacklebolt, Truppers. Guard this man and make sure he casts no further charms. If he does, confiscate his wand and clap him in manacles.”

Harry’s guards move the whole party quickly into the main Wizengamot chamber. Harry takes a deep breath, letting his magic relax and settle. Draco makes a great show of petting his hair down smoothly.

He leans over and whispers to Harry “Honestly Harry I’m going to need more anti-static charms around you.”

Harry cracks a faint smile and replies “But Draco darling you always look fabulous.”

Draco coughed slightly and looked away at the room, cheeks faintly pinkened. Harry caught Narcissa’s speculative look and also looked away. ‘Perhaps I shouldn’t have reminded her.’ He thought

The Wizengamot chamber was enormous. Harry wasn’t too surprised, after all his studies and given him a great many facts. The room was usually large enough for the usual hundred or so Masters, Lords, Ministry officials, and so forth who normally attended sessions. It was only during sessions of special interest, such as the charges against the sitting High Warlock, that the room was expanded to fit the entire roster of the Magickal Lords, The Guild Masters, various religious officials, Ministry officials and even a royal representative. The commoners, including the media, were in a special gallery room on either side with an imperturbability charm so they could see and hear the events, but not cause any disturbance.

So at this moment the room was large enough for the three long rows of red seated benches on either hand to fit all thousand or so Lords and their heirs, spouses and clerks. The second set of seats, with green cushions, were for the member of the guilds, restricted to Master for this session and still jam packed with black robes.

A set of plain benches at the far end of the room from the great dais held plain benches, for foreigners, witnesses and the Minister for Magic, who strictly speaking had no power here.

The dais had a podium and chair in the center in an almost pulpit like arrangement and two cascades of elevated bench seating surrounding the High Warlocks chair. The chairs were slowly being filled by the Chosen Lords in plum robes, the Heads of the eight great Guilds in scholars black, and two people in brilliant white robes who must represent some religion, Harry guessed the man with the tightly pressed lips was some sort of Christian, going by the black suit and white surplice peeping out from under the robes. Harry had no idea about the woman next to him in a form fitting white wool gown, her long strawberry blonde hair bouncing around her shoulders.
Lord Malfoy stopped in the middle of the great room.

“Your Grace, I’m afraid this is where we must part.” He said gravely.

He gently indicted the far left of the Lords benches, where several people Harry recognized as suspected death eaters were already seated.

Harry looked up innocently.

“But why should I sit all the way over there Cousin?” he asked, looking at the far right benches. He knew perfectly well that long custom dictated the Light supports sit on the right of the room, as far from the Dark supporters as possible.

Lucius looked nonplussed, if only for a moment.

“It is entirely your choice.” Narcissa said warmly, her hand still hooked through her husbands arm.

“Well then.” Harry said, and pointedly not looking at the obvious open spot in the center of the light side right at the front, made his way to the left side of the middle benches. This was a place traditionally reserved for neutrals and undecided. There was a sudden shuffling of bums over the seats as the startled ‘middles’ suddenly realized a Duke and all his retinue were descending on him. By the time Harry reached the bench, walking very slowly, a space had magically opened up for him, Narcissa, and Harry’s bodyguards. Draco, looking very smug with his foreknowledge, continued with his father to the traditional Malfoys seat.
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

So I've received several extremely rude messages from various persons for having the temerity provide an avenue for those wishing to donate for my time. So you know what? I don't think I want to play in your sandbox any more. I'll give it a few days before I decided whether to finish these stories or simply to walk away now. I will be nice and not just delete them. However, if I get banned for whatever random reason, I suggest you all download copies know as I shan't repost them if that happens.

So all you people who think its perfectly ok to harass a depressed and broke artist (and went to the trouble of tracking me down at several different sites to do so, kudos for persistence) can be happy knowing that you have successfully made yet another person no longer willing to write fanfiction. Congratulations. I hope you enjoy your shiny little world without my messy writing in it.

TS42

The Herald walked slowly down the left aisle of the chamber, much to the confusion of some of the persons seated on the right. According to ancient custom the Herald would choose the aisle on the left or right, depending on the inclination of the majority of the Lords present towards Light or Dark. With Potters unexpected movement to the Middle, along with a cluster of his allies, the balance had shifted away from the Light and more towards the Dark side of the Middle. So, the Herald proceeded slowly down the left side of the chamber. His leather clad feet sounded softly on the pare flagstone pavement, worn with countless centuries of wizarding feet, as he followed his slow and measured pace.

He carried with him the heavy symbolic stave of the Wizengamot, as well as a large book. The staff was carved from end to end with runes for truth, honesty, justice, and the names of various deities. When he reached the front of the chamber he turned and took several paces to stand directly in front of the raised podium, which would normally house the Head of the Wizengamot, but at this Meeting would instead be occupied by First Wand Bones.

He turned to face the gathered Lords, Guild Masters and assorted other people. He planted the staff in front of him slowly and intoned.

“All present be advised of this the meeting of our great Wizengamoot, to discuss matters of great import.”

His ceremonial duty done, he retired to stand in his place of honor directly in front of the raised podium.

A slender woman with square spectacles rose from her small table. “Today’s Agenda is as follows. Firstly the Wizengamot must hear and judge upon all matters pertaining to the charges brought against Master Albus Wulfric Dumbledore proceeding from the least charge to the greater, attempting mind magics upon a seated Lord, to the charge of attempted line theft, misuse of funds, deliberately placing a wizarding child in danger, misuse of appointed rank, …” she shook the scroll and it unrolled a further foot. There was a collected sigh.

First Wand Bones leaned over her podium “Let’s skip the full list until we need them Secretary. We haven’t all year.”

There was a muffled wave of laughter. Dumbledore scowled and shifted his weight, seated in the defendants chair facing the Head Wand and the assembled Chosen Lords. Two Wizengamot guards in their dark purple robes stood stolidly on either side of him. The chair itself had a range of incarceration charms, although only the most basic were currently active.
“Of course First Wand.” The secretary looked at First Wand Bones and smiled gratefully. “Secondly the selection of a new Head of the Wizengamot if needed, it having been set as rule that no person who has been tried by the Wizengamot and found guilty of any crime can hold a seat as Head Wizard.” “And lastly the charge of theft against His Grace Duke Misslethwaite, Lord Potter-Black-Misslethwaite brought against him by Sir Weasley.” There was a quiet murmur. “Are there any other matters that must be addressed by this body?” The Herald boomed out, addressing the crowd according to custom. Master Flamel rose to his feet, from his seat among the Guildmasters in the middle of the room. “I press charges against my former student Albus Dumbledore for the theft of a magical artifact from my manor.” “The Head Wand recognizes Master Flamel.” Lady Bones leaned forwards, resting one hand on the podium. “Do you have proof of these charges?” “Yes Head Wand. The Goblin Horde, Lord Lucius Malfoy, Auror Shacklebolt and His Grace Duke Potter are willing to stand as witness.” “Let it be written. Secretary?” “Yes First Wand Bones. As spoken, noted in the list of charges against Albus Dumbledore.” Harry stood. All eyes turned to him. “In addition I must request a summoning of my parents will, the late Lord and Lady Potter, which the Ministry cannot find, and a transcript of the trial of Sirius Black. Again, the Ministry cannot yield them to me on request, as is their responsibility so I must request the intercession of this body.” First Wand Bones peered down at Harry. “And you are, young man?” “Pardon my manners First Wand. Harrison Potter, of Potter, Black and Misslethwaite.” Harry bowed. “Please add those items of business to the agenda Secretary.” Bones gestured at the secretary. “At once First Wand.” The secretary murmured, her quill scratching industriously. “Let’s start with Sir Weasley. Are you present?” “Yes Madame Bones” Arthur Weasley replied from his seat on the right side of the Light section. “What do you accuse His Grace of stealing?” She questioned? “Our land!” He exclaimed. “Less than a month ago the wards suddenly collapsed on our house, and with them many of the charms on the house itself. It was disastrous, my wife was lucky to escape with her life!” Arthur argued, moving to stand in the aisle. Harry looked calmly at the man. He was perfectly aware what had happened, and honestly, didn’t feel particularly bad about it. “What sort of charms failed Sir Weasley?” one of the Guildmasters seated next to the Head Wand asked. His goatee waggled as he spoke. “Expansion charms, stability, protection. Half the house collapsed and the main rooms shrank to a quarter the size, jamming all the furniture together and crushing it. If my wife hadn’t been in the doorway of the kitchen I don’t know what would have happened. As it is we’ve lost most of our worldly goods.” Arthur’s face was red as he ranted and waved his arms. “Do you have any idea why the charms failed?” The bearded man asked, sitting back in his chair. “My son Bill, who works as a cursebreaker for Gringotts, said all the charms had been anchored to the main hearth ward. And when that went the whole thing came apart. The main ward fell because the land changed hands to so-called Duke Potter.” Arthur turned and scowled at Harry. “I know he has been misled by his so called guardians,” at this there was a whisper of a hissing murmur of disapproval around the room, “But my family has owned that land for generations, deeded to us by our Lord Dumbledore.” “Duke Potter? Do you have anything to add?” Lady Bones addressed Harry directly. “Of course Madame Bones.” Harry rose gracefully, twitching his robes into place with one hand. “Some weeks ago I attended a meeting at Gringotts. As part of the process of auditing my estates, we had obtained a list of allies of my House Misslethwaite. As you can imagine, it has been some
time since any of these alliances were recognized or strengthened, so I immediately went over the list. Much to my surprise was an alliance to the Dumbledore family, more accurately, they were Misslethwaite’s sworn vassals.”

He paused to let the crowd react. The Malfoys sat stoically, as they already knew this information. The rest of the room was surprised. The Dumbledore’s had long touted their status as free Lords, not beholden to a master. Falsely as it turned out.

“Since I am at strife with Master Dumbledore, I immediately repudiated his family. In the process, all of the estates, titles, monies, and rights granted to his line by mine were revoked. That included his lordship, and most importantly to this case all the land that had been given enfeoff to his line which had been illegally parcelled and sold off in the ensuing generations. This includes parts of Hogsmeade, Knockturn Alley which was previously one small city estate, and Ottery St Catchpole which apparently included the Weasleys house.” Harry paused to take a breathe. Arthur is astonished.

“When I seized back my assets, any wards anchored to the lands weakened and were expected to fall very soon. Of course I immediately sent out notes to all affected properties, so the tenancy could be resettled before any wards shifted further. The Weasleys never replied, so I’m afraid that when the wards weakened enough, every charm anchored to them fell. I did cover Dame Weasleys fees for injuries at St Mungo’s anonymously, as I felt that she had been injured through no fault of her own.” Harry smiles gravely at Arthur.

“I am sorry that this happened Sir, but I did try to contact you and get things settled in time.”

Arthur opened his mouth to speak.

“I would say this is fairly clear cut then. Misslethwaite’s vassal Dumbledore gave the land without any right to the Weasleys. When Misslethwaite asserted his ownership, the charms anchored by wards set by the alleged landowner fell. Misslethwaite are you charging Dumbledore with the theft of the land?” Declared Madame Bones.

“No Madame Bones. “ Harry looked up at her and smiled sweetly. “ After all it has been over five hundred years since a Misslethwaite held the coronet, so I do not know if the Dumbledore family even knew they did not actually own the estates they claimed. So although it is theft, it may not have been deliberate, but by accident. I chose merely to reclaim what was mine, with no further punishment.” He paused. “None of my other tenants had any issue resettling, and in most cases I lowered their rents and tithes from the ruinous rates the Dumbledores had insisted on. I also enacted cleansing wards on Nocturne Alley which seem to be clearing the aura there quite nicely.”

Harry stirred groggily. Around him was a bustle of voices, some shouting, doors slamming and the unmistakable crackles of many high level wards bursting into activation. His head was pounding. He was laying on something cold and hard. The gorge rose in his throat and he tried to roll to his side, choking.

“Scourgify.” murmured a female voice next to Harry. The sick vanished but Harry stayed where he was for a moment.

“Harry?” Asked Narcissa. He turned his head and opened his eyes to see Lady Malfoy, prim proper Lady Malfoy, sitting on the floor next to him in a puddle of skirts and holding his hand. There was a smudge of soot down the side of her face and her hair was frizzled up on one side.

“What happened?” Harry groaned out. His head throbbed worse than ever.

“Everyone is fine. Or will be fine. You got some nasty curse backlash.” A hand reached between them “Drink this young Duke. It will help with that concussion. And then you can have some water.” He recognized the voice of his Healer.

Harry drank the potion cautiously. Like usual it tastes awful and for a moment he is afraid it too will come back up and then all the headache and nausea abruptly eases away. He sighed in relief.

The Healer chuckled dryly.

“I can always tell when that one works. Drink up lad.” The next bottle was clear glass with the symbol for water on the front in a soothing blue rune.
“What is the last thing you remember Harry?” Asked Narcissa. Harry made to sit up and Narcissa placed one hand on his chest. “You can stay where you are for a minute more Harry.”

Harry looked up at her. “The last thing I remember…” he mused. “I had just requested two more things be added to the agenda before the moot started. And the First Wand started with Arthurs house.”

Narcissa looks significantly at the Healer.

“Ok so you were right.” He grunted. “Here, drink this Potter. Memory Restorative draught. Last dose, everyone else here is going to have to wait ‘til the Potions guild finishes the next batch they have brewing as we speak.”

“What happened?” Harry repeated, more clearly. He sat up to drink the next potion and took a moment to look around. The previously grand and pristine room was a shambles! There were scorch marks on the floor and walls, a chunk missing from the ceiling and benches are scattered across the floor. There were some gaps, with a pile of ashes, a stone or a bewildered animal in their place. Aurors and healers are scattered across the room talking to various people and patients.

“Long version or short version lad?” Healer Pantwhystle said, sitting back on his heels. His robe was also smudged with dust and what might be blood.

“Short first, then long?”

“Spoken like a lord” He laughed. “Well the quick version is Dumbledore was found guilty on several charges. Resisted arrest. Made a hellacious mess and escaped.”

Harry gaped at him.

“Right. The long version then?” He asked.

Harry nodded, struck dumb.

“First Wand chose to start with the seemingly unrelated items first. Your parents will was summoned by the Wizengamot. The ritual circle popped through whatever wards it had been in ... nasty ones judging by all the smoke. Skipping over the bequests and things, which Gringotts will handle, the codicils were the interesting bits. Your parents gave a long list of persons as possible guardians for you and another long list of people that should never be within a bowshot of you ever. That included Dumbledore as well as your muggle relatives, incidentally. They explained that a year in hiding gave them plenty of time to think about things.” He took a deep breath and sat cross legged on the floor.

“There are four remaining names on that list of there .. all the others are dead or too loony to take care of anyone. The top one and your mums preference is Severus Snape. Two of the others are Lord and Lady Malfoy, but only if they can come into alliance with Potter, and the last is Professor McGonagall. So you can have you pick of guardians.”

“Your fathers codicil stated quite clearly that the caster of the Fidelius protecting your parents was Albus Dumbledore, and the Secret Keeper was Peter Pettigrew. But they weren’t at the cottage in Godics hollow but another location on which the Fidelius still stands.”

“What?” asked Harry, confused.

“Well Peter only told the secret to a handful of people, your parents, you, a Mr Lupin, Baronet Black, Dumbledore and Voldemort. But they weren’t at the cottage in Godics hollow but another location on which the Fidelius still stands.”

“Where was I?” asked Harry, confused.

“The scene in Godrics Hollow was staged by Dumbledore and the only people who knew the truth were either thrown in prison, or in Mr Lupins case jinxed heavily with forgetfulness charms. He was summoned as a witness, examined and is currently at St Mungos getting his brain hoovered now. Poor old chap, he’s lost at least five years of memories. All scrambled up.”

“Dumbledore again?” Harry asked bitterly.

“The same. Where was I?”

“Sirius Blacks trial.”

“Right. The trial. Well there wasn’t one. The reason they couldn’t find the records are because they aren’t any! Poor sod was chucked right into Azkaban after his arrest. Sieur Black is now also at St Mungos being treated. As soon as he’s fit to stand they’ll have an emergency session but after all this mess everyone knows he wasn’t the traitor.”
“So isn’t he my guardian? Harry asked.
“No and Yes. He would be, if he was mentally fit, but as he isn’t at the moment and at any rate the matter of your guardianship had already been settled legally. You chose joint custody with the Malfoys and Snape, incidentally.”
“I did?” Harry said surprised. “Well it’s good to know that I agree with myself.” They laughed weakly.
“So at that point the First Wand invoked Prisoner Protocol on Dumbledore and that’s where everything went tits up.” The Healer leaned back and sighed.
“Apparently Dumbledore had altered the wards of the Wizengamot, which is treason by the way,” Narcissa explained. “So when the prisoner wards were activated with him in the chair, they instead keyed a bunch of curses, jinxes and memory charms all triggered into runic arrays.”
Harry just stared at her.
“Dumbledore boobytrapped the whole room lad. The aurors did their best to lock down the room and subdue him. Half the Light siders started cursing everyone else in defense of Dumbledore, the middle and the dark all backed here into this side of the room for defense.” He gestured around where they are.
“And of course pretty much everyone shoved you and young Malfoy to the middle of the ward wall to protect you.”
“You said,” Harry gulped “You said everyone is okay?”
“More or less okay. Dumbledore was flinging around keyed memory charms all over. Half the room fell to those. Seemed the cunning old fart had laid the groundwork at schools. Its only the older wizards and the foreigners who hadn’t any hidden charms on them that got past that. Not that it stopped the Malfoys.” He chortled meanly. “Memory or no memory the Malfoys cursed anyone who pointed a wand in their direction.”
“It always seems a wise course of action” lady Malfoy demurely offered.
“So the worst injured just need Memory Enhancement potions, which we are now all out of in most of Britain. There is a flock of potion masters who took over the Commons lounge here to brew another batch. Some curses needed reversing, couple of burns and one daft bugger tripped over a bench and broke his arm. All told the room itself took the worst of it.”
“So Dumbledore is evil, attacked pretty much everyone and then got away?” Harry asked, summing it all up.
“Yeah. Pretty much. Mean old bastard. The Aurors have been chasing him all over Britain. Lost track of him near Cardiff I think. Something about a giant mess in the leylines there again. St Mungos is scheduling absolutely every graduate of Hogwarts for mandatory purgative rituals. Going to take years to sort this mess out.”
“And so everything he has ever presided over as the Head of the Wizengamot is now rescheduled to be re-met upon just as soon as all the chosen Lords and principals of each issue are cleared by the Healers.” Narcissa added.
Harry sighed. “That’s something like fifty years of laws. We’re going to be having meetings every week for years aren’t we. I’m never going to have a summer break.”
Startled, Narcissa looked at him and then laughed. Harry joined in. “I’m afraid so Harry.”
Harry has a new appreciation for the relative calm of school. At least at school he has a set schedule and most of the time all he had to do was sit and learn. Compared to the endless emergency Wizengamot sessions, school was dead easy.

“C’mon Harry we’re going to be late.” Draco called to Harry, leaning in the open door of their dorm.

“I’m just mourning the loss of my childhood.” Harry calls back. He stands up and fans out the stack of papers from his Gringotts mailbox. “Between the mess at the Wizengamot, my suits against Dumbledore and the Dursleys, tutors and auditing all my properties I’m going to have free time sometime next decade.”

“Well .. you could abdicate I guess. Go live in a modest four bedroom shack in France or something.” Draco drawls. Harry feels he is entirely to amused by all this.

“Shut it you. I know for a fact your schedule isn’t much better.” Harry stands up and dumps the letters on his desk.

“C’mon it’s the final feast of our first year at Hogwarts. It’s a historic occasion.” Draco grins and leads Harry out into the hall.

“Honestly Draco I think people will be remembering this year for quite some time.” Harry and Draco head companionably through the Common Room. At this point Harry barely notices when his troupe of hangers on and disillusioned bodyguards join them.

“The ones who can.” Draco slyly adds.

“Everyones gotten Memory Restorative draughts by now right?” Harry asks.

“Yeah but for some its never going to help them restore everything. Poor Lupin was obliviated at least a dozen times if not more. Father says he’s lost most of the 80’s at least.” Draco makes a face.

“I wonder what he was hiding.” Harry mused.

“Lupin?”

“No Dumbledore. Lupin must have kept doing something Dumbledore didn’t like.”

“Well .. it was the chunk right after your parents died when you were really little.”

“Do you think he was trying to find me?”

“We might never know. They did root most of the mess out of the wards at the Wizengamot. Father tells me the head cursebreaker was nearly in tears over the state of the wards.”


“Seriously!” They turn the final corner and enter the hallway leading to the main hall. “Father said that Lapnok said,” Draco says in an exaggerated fashion “Two thousand years of building and tuning and nurturing a beautiful ward arrangement and some foolish wizard goes and scribbles all over it.”

“It’s been fifty years. Doesn’t it get inspected? You’d think someone would have noticed.”

“Memory charms” Draco sighed. “After they cleared the sitting Lords and the guildmasters they started in on Ministry staff, oldest in service first. I think Dumbledore missed maybe four of the hundred or so people they checked.”

“That really makes me question every single thing people say he’s done. What has he been hiding? I know he was messing about with me, although I don’t know why. I thought it was you know .. just greed. Stealing form a poor orphan kind of thing. Horrible but kind of normal really.
But all this… “Harry shakes his head.
“Theres a bigger picture here and we just don’t see it.”
“Potter!” Hermione greets them. She is beaming. “I just got a letter from my mum. They had the heritage potion done, using the sample I sent them. I am not a muggleborn! You were right Harry.”
“Really Granger? That’s smashing. Do you know what line?” Harry grins at his friend.
“Granger, of the Dagworth-Grangers. The current house is from the second line of the family, the title went to the last heir, a female, so she married a Dagworth and combined the name. That gave them the money from the Dagworths and the title, a minor baronetcy and the reputation from the Grangers. My ancestor was one of the five squib sisters of the last Heir. We have no claim on the title of course, but it’s nice to know I have magical cousins. At any rate, we’ve written to the Dagworth-Grangers and the whole extended family is getting together for supper sometime this summer.”
“Dagworth-Granger?” Draco says. “Not bad. He’s on the board of St. Mungo’s isn’t that right Granger?”
“Yes he and father are already corresponding back and forth about muggle and wizard healing. Potter did you know that wizards very rarely do surgeries? They do transfigurations instead. My cousin is very interested in looking into Muggle surgery techniques, as with actual reshaping and healing, there is no transfiguration to undo, so much less hazardous.”
“So I’m going to guess a family history of Ravenclaw?” Harry says, smirking at Hermione.
“I’ll have you know I have one great great however grandfather in Slytherin.” Hermione says, her hands on her hips.
“aaand?” Harry leads.
“And the rest in Ravenclaw.” She says with a blush.
They survey the Great Hall. It is bedecked with silver and green ribbons. The students are milling about, in the exultation of the last few days of school.
The rest of the notes for this story

Chapter Summary

These are the remainder of the notes for this story. Since I have decided, in the face of unrelenting obnoxious people, to retire from fanfic writing, I decided it was rude to leave the plot hanging since I already knew how it was ending.

This is all you get. I'm sorry - but I need to make a living and I cannot afford to give my work away any longer.

I have turned on moderation for this and all my stories and will not be allowing any comments. I am also no longer following my livejournal. I'm done.

Slytherin wins the House Cup. The exam results come back with positive results, and Hogwarts is dismissed for the summer.

Harry and the Malfoys head to Diagon Alley via Floo powder for school supplies. They meet Gilderoy Lockhart at the bookstore. Arthur Weasley is very rude to Lord Malfoy, and Harry gives him the cut direct. Followed by Draco, Neville and Hermione.

Lord Malfoy gives Harry the diary, after swearing a pact of mutual assistance.

Lucius explains matters to Diary-Voldemort. Harry and DV speak and start working out possibilities of a peace treaty between Duke M and Vol.

Entire party with Flamel ventures to Misslethwaite Manor. There they encounter Colin jr, an older man with no sons. Dickon is there, old but spry as a groundkeeper. He is a squib. Harry and Flamel approach the giant gates near the Manor that are invisible to Muggles and manage to open the Way into Misslethwaite Duchy.

Meet people in duchy, allegiance. Alchemist? Daughter - friends

Return to Hogwarts with small army of his people, makes a massive influx of slytherins

Send diary and draft of contract to Voldemort for treaty

Arrange meeting with Voldemort & diary. Some sabre rattling but it goes well. Voldemort briefly possesses Lucius to sign the contract. Severus produces potion that with a ritual, the diary and Harry's assistance restores Voldemort to his youthful appearance. Harry and Voldemort swear a pact never to attack each other, rendering the prophecy void.

The wizarding war is over. Harry drafts declarations of Misslethwaite duchy as a haven from muggles. Harry and Draco sign betrothal agreement. Harry and his party ram several legislations regarding muggleborns through the wizengamot, as well as educational reforms.

The Order of the Phoenix attacks Harry and Dracos engagement party.

Neville takes a cutting spell to the face, but AK's Dumbledore.

And then they lived happily ever after.

Epilogue

Harry and Dracos wedding
Theo’s proposal to Hermione