

# **Harry Potter and The Power He Has Not**

by

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## **Prolog**

*"We're with you whatever happens," said Ron. "But, mate, you're going to have to come round my mum and dad's house before we do anything else, even Godric's Hollow."*

//

*/"Why?" /*

//

*"Bill and Fleur's wedding, remember?"*

*Harry looked at him, startled; the idea that anything as normal as a wedding could still exist seemed incredible and yet wonderful.*

//

*"Yeah, we shouldn't miss that," he said finally.*

//

*His hand closed automatically around the fake Horcrux, but in spite of everything, in spite of the dark and twisting path he saw stretching ahead for himself, in spite of the final meeting with Voldemort he knew must come, whether in a month, in a year, or in ten, he felt his heart lift at the thought that there was still one last golden day of peace left to enjoy with Ron and Hermione.*

//

**The Hogwarts express pulled into Kings Cross station on time, but 2 weeks early. Crowds of worried parents were waiting for their children, though the crowd was substantially smaller than usual, given the number of students withdrawn before Dumbledore's funeral.**

**Harry Potter stepped down from the car, reaching back to help Ron with their own, Ginny's and Hermione's trunks. (for all of their belief in liberation and equality, Hermione and Ginny were more than willing to make use of the strong back and weak mind of the male of the specie). Ginny approached with a trolley which Harry dutifully loaded.**

**Surveying the platform one last time to ensure that there were no stragglers, Hermione (ever the Prefect)indicated that she was ready to go. Before they could move however an excited Gryffindor first year approached dragging a man in muggle clothing... Her father?**

**"Harry!" the female firstly chirped. "My dad wants to meet you"**

**The tall man extended his hand "Mr. Potter"**

**Trying to think of the girls name so as to address her father properly, reached to take the offered hand, not noticing the large ring the man wore rotated so that the stone faced toward the inside of his hand. Hermione noticed that the man was not making eye contact with Harry or his daughter, and started to reach for Harry's arm, but she was too late.**

**As soon as the rings large red stone made contact with Harry's flesh, it detached from its mounting and burrowed into Harry's flesh, and Harry Potter, the Boy who lived, began to scream. His clothing started smoking from the heat emanating from his body.**

**The first years father stared down at him dully and said "A gift from the Dark Lord"**

**Ron had his wand in the man's face, but the glazed look on the mans face stopped him from uttering the hex on his lips. "Shit, he's Imperioed." The first year was staring at Harry in horror with her hands fluttering at her sides like little wings. Ginny was screaming while trying to help Harry, the heat from his body was actually burning her. Hermione stared at her best friend unable to believe what was happening; she could actually see his bones glowing through his exposed flesh.**

**Aurors responding to the disturbance, Kingsley and Tonks among them, the crowd staring at Harry's screaming form continued to grow.**

## **Chapter 1 - He is No More**

The Aurors quickly got a medical team to the platform, but the three young mediwitches couldn't even touch him. Their wands told an odd tale. Despite a body temperature that should be instantly fatal (indeed his clothing was charred and disintegrating) he was very alive and still screaming. It had been more than 20 minutes since the attack, and still he screamed. The team leader for the medics didn't understand what was going on at all. The boy (she still didn't know who he was, she would blame herself for his injuries later) shouldn't be alive, yet he was. Wave after wave of his magic roiled off his body. No one could expend that much power for long, the boy was going to burn out his magic as well as his body. Joy Fleet watched the indications from her wand as the level of his magic core doubled its value, then in a matter of 2 minutes doubled again, with no indication that it was slowing. That wasn't possible. A wizard's magic might deplete, but it didn't increase when using it's self up like this.

From where she knelt next to the boy she looked up into the worried eyes of the tall black Auror who seemed to be in charge. "I've no idea what's going on with him. He has a cursed gemstone embedded in his right hand, I don't know what it's doing to him, if it's what's causing this or if it's what is keeping him alive. He also has a curse scar on his forehead, but it doesn't seem to be..." her eyes widened when she completed the connection. "Sweet Merlin, this is Harry Potter"

A split second of panic, then Joy's professionalism resurfaced. "We've got to get him to St Mungos so that a Curse Specialist can see to him." From her kit she removed a large plastic bottle. She placed the bottle on the boy's chest, where it started to melt, with a nod both of her team mates grasped the bottle and Joy tapped the rapidly melting bottle with her wand. Her still screaming patient and her team disappear when the portkey activated. Joy turned her attention to the other injuries on site.

She found a red headed girl with burns on her hands and arms, gotten when attempting to help her friend. Easily fixed with liberal application of a burn salve, the girl's mother was hovering over her in a near panic over the condition of Harry Potter. She determined that the tall red headed man was unharmed then turning her attention to the other young woman still on the platform. Her bushy auburn hair practically crackled with the discharge of her barely contained magic. Like most people Joy devoured any information made public about the Chosen one. She decided that the red heads must be the famous Weasley family. That meant that the bushy haired witch who had transposed herself between the Aurors and the obviously muggle family of the young girl clutching at her mother's legs and crying **MUST** be Hermione Granger.

**"You will NOT be arresting this man!" she screamed. "Look at his eyes! He is under the Imperius Curse! Use your brains, he's a muggle, how could he POSSIBLY hurt a wizard as powerful as Harry Potter?"**

**One of the Aurors put his hand on her to move her aside, and jerked it back in pain when her magic flared in response to his unwanted touch. Ignoring his wand, he balled his hand into a fist.**

**"I wouldn't do that mate." The tall redhead leaning against a stanchion said dangerously "That's Hermione Granger. You know, Harry Potter's best friend? Do you know how many Death Eaters she's trashed? She's dead scary mate. I've known her for years, and wouldn't dream of doing what you're thinking about. 'Cause if SHE doesn't kill you, then you get to face Harry Potter, and I'll get stuck with the disposal of what ever he leaves." He grinned at the look of death Hermione shot his way. "I always have to get rid of the bodies and other light work".**

**"Maybe we should all just calm down" Tonks spoke up for the first time since arriving on scene.**

**The Auror confronting Hermione never broke his eye contact with her. His unspoken challenge *mine's bigger* "Shut it apprentice, you're here to learn, not talk. You've not in charge here" Hermione just maintained her own eye contact. Her response also unspoken. /Try it and die/.**

**"He's right there Tonks." Shacklebolt approached the group. "I'm the one in charge here. Tonks, you're with me, to learn." Kingsley had never liked officious asses when he had been starting out, still didn't. "The rest of you, crowd control.. Now"**

**Kingsley turned his attention to Ron and Hermione. "What happened?"**

**---====ooo000ooo====---**

**The Throne room inside Stately Malfoy Manor was lit only by a few gas lights and the fire. Sitting on his throne upon the raised dais, Voldemort was almost giddy with glee when he felt the boy's pain via the link they shared. His most trusted(which is to say, not trusted at all) minions**

were kneeling upon the slate floor, knees and foreheads to the stone, arms flung out toward him. They had been there for more than an hour waiting.

On the small table to his right, a small gem stone glowed with an internal red light. It flashed 3 times to indicate that the magical linkage had been established. "It is time. Bella, attend me!"

The dark haired witch rose from her place before him. She approached him with reverence in her heavily lidded eyes. "Anything for you my Lord. Is the boy in pain?"

"Deliciously so, my lovely Bella. It is time for the second part of the rite.

Bellatrix donned the dragon hide glove that lay next to the glowing stone and picked the gem up with it. "This may be painful my Lord."

"Pain and I are not strangers. Proceed"

The gemstone was placed against his sternum, and like it's twin it burrowed into Voldemort's skin, but there the similarity ended. Rather than screaming, the Dark Lord started to laugh, and his body temperature plummeted. The effect on the throne room was as if a dementor had entered, the temperature in the entire room plunged below freezing despite the roaring fire.

It took almost 7 minutes for the two stones to synchronize, and the Dark Lords laughter stopped as suddenly as it had begun.

"It is done. It worked. Harry Potter is no more."

## **Chapter 2 – Prognosis**

**Healer Michael Slocomb was having an exceptionally bad day. Admittedly, his own choices and behavior was the root of his exceptionally bad day, but that didn't make it any easier to take.**

**First his wife had found out about a 'home visit' he had made for and exceptionally endowed young witch who he had met during an examination during office hours. If anything the penalties levied on the offending party in a divorce were even more punitive in the wizarding world when compared to muggles. Sarah had taken little Dot and moved to her mother's home.**

**Next when he arrived at St Mungos this morning, he was informed of the review board he was to sit that very evening. Something about a misdiagnosis that lead to a patient's death.**

**Then he over heard a small gathering of student mediwitches in their break room**

**"What do you call the man who comes in last in his class in Healer training?"**

**"Healer Slocomb!"**

**He had of course rampaged into the break room and confronted them jokers. They were embarrassed that he had heard them, but didn't seem overly worried about the repercussions of his knowing. The word on the ward was that he was on his way out and his next position would be lancing boils in some small country clinic.**

**Now an emergency response team returned without their team leader but WITH an addled patient who would not stop screaming. He performed a standard diagnostic sweep with his wand. Without seeing the read out he knew the man was hot. Then he did read the output. /That couldn't be right/. He did the scan again. Exactly the same result Body core temperature: 258**



## **Chapter 3 – Others Notice**

**The Daily Prophet:**

**BOY WHO LIVED STRUCK DOWN BY MUGGLE**

**HOVERS NEAR DEATH**

**King's Cross Station - London**

**An unprovoked attack on Harry Potter, also known as “The Chosen One” by the father of a first year muggle born student has sparked a major row over muggle relations and the ethics of allowing muggles to have access to and knowledge of Magical Britain.**

**The attack, involving a large gemstone carrying an unknown curse, caused Mr. Potter to collapse in agonizing pain, issuing what has been described as a ‘banshee wail’. His magic flared in self defense pulverizing all of the glass on and around Platform 9 ¾ to dust. His magic also attempted to fight the curse by elevating his body temperature to levels here to fore unknown in a Wizard kind. The exact amount of heat he generated is unknown, but this reporter observed the scorch marks on the paving stones where he lay before being transported to St Mungos by a highly trained Emergency Response Team of mediwitches, ably led by Mediwitch Level One Joy Fleet.**

**“We did all we could for Mr. Potter” said Mediwitch Fleet after having the Chosen One sent to St Mungos via emergency portkey, “which sadly wasn’t much. He was in so much pain that he didn’t even know we were there, his magic, by far the most powerful I have ever encountered interfered with our diagnostic charms, and the heat coming off his body, was beyond anything I have ever seen or heard of..” She also treated injured witnesses to the attack. “The worst was a young girl with burns on her hands and arms; I believe she was attempting to help him, ignoring the damage he was doing to her. There were also multiple cases of eye and sinus irritation caused by the glass dust, but those were all easily treated on site.”**

**When asked about David Booth, the muggle accused of the unprovoked attack and the claim that he was allegedly under the Imperious Curse Mediwitch Fleet said: “I examined the man, he was uninjured, if somewhat unresponsive. My examination only looked to his medical condition; our Emergency Response medical kit doesn’t contain anything that would detect an unforgivable.”**

**It is the reaction of the Chosen One’s companions which raise the most questions. Muggleborn witch Hermione Granger, 17, romantically linked with The Boy Who lived, as well as Victor**

**Krum, Ronald Weasley, George Weasley, Fred Weasley, and Cormac McLaggen. A young woman of formidable intellect and remarkable appetites spent the minutes following the attack not attending to her injured friend, but in defending his attacker. The Department of Magical Law Enforcements official policy is to never comment on active cases, but one Auror on the scene spoke with this reporter on the condition of anonymity. "Someone needs to do something about that arrogant little ... Witch" he displayed his damaged hand "she cursed me, preventing me from doing my duty, claiming that the muggle was under the Imperious Curse. How could she possibly know that, unless she cast..." the Auror would not theorize just who might have cast the alleged unforgivable. Perhaps more ominous were the comments of Ronald Weasley, 17, youngest son of the pureblood Weasley clan. "The Weasley kid warned me not to respond to her attack, claiming that her powers were 'scary' and muttering about how he was tired of disposing of the bodies."**

**More....**

- \* Repair costs for Platform 9 ¾ pegged at more than 50,000 Galleons**
- \* Muggleborn Witches and the Dark Arts, feeding their appetites?**

**The Quibbler:**

**Weather-Weary Nation Not Surprised By Forecast Of Blood Storms**

**London, UK—A Service advisory predicting that graphic blood storms will touch ground in the southern Scotland Wednesday is being met with numb resignation by weather-weary Brits.**

**"Guess I should go conjur some plastic tarps and cover up the house, or what remains of it," said Scott Huster of Hogsmeade, echoing the sentiments of a nation battered in recent months by a succession of violent hurricanes, tropical storms, and tornadoes.**

**According to the advisory, clouds of pure blood have congealed in the atmosphere above Little Hangleton, and are heading north at speeds of up to 80 miles per hour. MWS meteorologists predict that the unprecedented storm will splatter most of the West Coast by Friday.**

**"I suppose I'll have to cancel the barbecue," said Larry Milhouse of Dunoon.**

**Meteorologists are predicting an epic storm of biblical proportions, marked by bullet-velocity winds and flash bleeding in low-lying areas. Blood may even coagulate and freeze into bludger-sized clot-hail, shattering windows, damaging roofs, and triggering massive blockages on roads and motorways.**

**"Blood-hail can't be any worse than the early thaw in spring," Vermont mother of four Stacey Boswell said. "Still, I'd better take the clothes off the line."**

**During a Monday night press conference, acting MWS Director R. David Paulison recommended that citizens evacuate the area immediately, in order to avoid bile blizzards and packs of marauding werewolves.**

**"We recommend that people stay indoors during the storms," Paulison said. "In addition to gale-force winds, the blood storms carry multiple forms of bacteria and disease, such as Hepatitis B."**

**Glasgow resident James Treadwell had a characteristic response to the warnings.**

**"I'll just put on some extra-thick boots," Treadwell said. "I'll get an umbrella, and cover up my open cuts."**

**Toward resident Kathy English said she is determined not to let the gruesome weather disrupt her everyday routine.**

**"I'm not that worried—at least the blood's supposed to be warm, unlike the sleet that got us last fall," said English, a dog-walker who does not expect a decline in her business during the storm. "Plus, it's only supposed to be a Category 3 blood storm."**

**According to MWS spokesperson Joe Colby, the worst blood storm conceivable is a Category 5 on the Saffir-Savini Meteorosanguinity Scale. In this type of storm, bubbling, boiling blood the consistency of corn syrup pours from the skies, scalding every exposed living thing and sparking fires.**

**Although MWS officials have encouraged citizens to evacuate to Canada, many Brits have opted to wait it out.**

**"I've flown in the early-season blizzards for the past three weeks—how much worse can a little blood be?" said Ayre resident Clark Merrit. "I also worked in a slaughterhouse for 20 years, and trust me, you get used to the smell."**

**The storm is expected to just miss the Northwest, a fact that greatly relieves residents there, who are gearing up for a possible shitstorm this weekend.**

## **Chapter 4 – Reactions**

**Ministry of Magic**

**Department of Magical Law Enforcement**

**Kingsley Shacklebolt stuck his head into the bullpen. "DRADER! My office. Now"**

**Auror Christopher Drader entered his Shift Supervisor's office and sat down. "Yea gaffer?"**

**Kingsley fixed him with a deadly stare. "Who said sit?"**

**Drader got back to his feet. /Crap, what have I done?/**

**Slowly Kingsley turned the front page of the Daily Prophet toward Drader. "Since when do we speak to the Prophet?"**

**"I didn't..."**

**"Drader, lying to me will make it a whole lot worse for you."**

**"Ok Boss, ok. After shift last night I went to the Bull and Bush. I'd had a pint or three and this bird start talking to me, asking if I'd heard anything about Potter. She kept me talking all night, and then left me holding my bits, and this card." He handed the business card to Shacklebolt.**

**Angela Deeds - Daily Prophet.**

**/Wonderful./ Kingsley returned his attention to Drader. "Go back to work. Shut the hell up. I read another word in the paper that I even THINK might have come from you; you'll find your transfer to Azkaban in your hand before you can blink. Now get to work. And the next time a woman makes you look bad, take it like a man and don't whine to who ever will listen. Go find Tonks; I want to talk to her."**

**Ottery St Catchpole**

**The Burrow:**

**"Precisely when was I romantically linked with Hermione?" Fred Weasley asked the room. "Not that I would have put up all that much of a fight mind you, but it would have been nice to have been aware of it, so as to reap the rewards"**

**"Sorry Brother of mine that was me. On odd days I told her I was you, and on even days I was me. That way she could get the life fulfilling experience that is the Weasley twins, without all that hectic swapping between us." George sighs wistfully. "Oh what a summer that was..."**

**"YOU WHAT" their younger brother stopped eating, remarkable unto its self. When did you date Hermione?"**

**"Never, as far as you know." George drawled. "I am far too much of a gentleman to kiss and tell." He smiled. "But I do have reasonably priced photos..."**

**Ron lunged at his older brother, missed and fell to the floor in a sprawl. Having accidentally snagged the table cloth on a shirt button, he pulled everything off the table on top of him.**

**The Twins laughed hysterically. Molly smacked George up side the head with a wooden spoon. "Quit picking on your brother". She waved her wand, and everything returned to the table. "No one with a single brain in their head would ever believe a word the Prophet prints"**

**The Twins wisely failed to note that Molly herself believed nearly the same slander a few years before. Instead they started in on Ron for the location he used when 'disposing of bodies'.**

### **Granger Residence:**

**For the first time in her life, Emma Granger was frightened for her daughter. And a little frightened OF her. She had just gotten that odd wizard newspaper via a most lovely small grey owl, and looked at the front page when the air around her head started to crackle with static electricity. Emma looked at her daughters face and saw a frozen mask of rage. The news paper burst into flames in her hands. Perhaps a return to the wizard hospital might provide a distraction sufficient to keep Hermione from killing someone.**

### **St. Mungos Hospital**

#### **Harry Potter's Private Room:**

**Senior Master Healer Poppy Pomfrey hadn't seen either the Prophet or the Quibbler. She was however feeling every minute of her 73 years. This case made not the slightest bit of sense. She was easily the most experienced healer at St. Mungos, possibly in Magical Britain, but she had never seen anything like this. The coma continued. His temperature as back to normal, as were all of his physical symptoms. Outside of the coma there wasn't a single thing she find wrong with the boy. Magically there was something seriously wrong, during the period that the curse was attacking his body, his magical potential of his core spiked to levels that had never before been recorded. In the last 15 hours his magic had fallen from a level 10 times higher than his normal (extremely high) level to the current reading from her wand that pegged his magical potential at 5% of his normal level. He was now slightly less powerful than the average first year in sheer casting ability. There was a distinct possibility that his phoenix core wand wouldn't even work for him anymore given that core was intended for powerful users.**

**Disturbingly, what ever was causing the drain of his magic continued unslowed. Poppy estimated that in another 3 hours Harry Potter would have the magical potential of a squib. 12 hours after that, if the drain was not stopped, he would have the magical potential of a muggle.**

### **St. Mungos Hospital**

## **Waiting Room:**

**In open defiance of their father, the Patil twins had turned up at the Hospital as soon as they had read of the curse attack in the Prophet. They were the first. Lavender Brown, Neville Longbottom, and Dean Thomas came next seemingly together, but that was just a coincidence. When the Weasley's arrived at 11 am the entire DA was in the waiting area. Then Hermione arrived. Padma and Parvati gathered her into their arms and soothed her anger away. Madam Pomfrey had come out and explained that it was unlikely that Harry would wake today; they stayed until the end of visiting hours. Despite several phone calls and numerous owls, no one from the Dursleys ever stopped by.**

## **Malfoy Manor**

### **Throne Room:**

**Tom Riddle cast reducto at one of the 2 tonne blocks of granite that had been brought for his experiment with his enhanced powers. Yesterday he had managed after 6 castings to split one of these blocks. Today, with a single casting, a hole the size of a bludger was blasted completely through the block. His laughter echoed through out the room. Not 20 minutes earlier he had felt the need to punish a minor death eater who had erred. The power of the Crucio he cast killed the man in 3 seconds. It was a good day.**

## ***Chapter 5 – Void***

**He floated, alone in the universe. There was no up or down, no dark or light, just a frictionless, tasteless, odorless gray nothing.**

**It was also painless. This was good, a major improvement over the previous universe of pain that he had been the sole inhabitant of for approximately ever.**

**Unfortunately it was also boring. This was bad. Boredom led for a longing to not be bored, even bringing happy memories of the time of pain, because at least it wasn't boring.**

***Ok. Focus. Concentrate on what you've got. Time for an inventory.***

**He searched for his body. Feet? Nope, no pain, not even an itch, the same for his legs, arms, hands, torso, head, ears, even the dangly bits seemed to have taken the day off and hadn't left a forwarding address. Ok, the outside isn't working. Try inside.**

**Heartbeat. /Can I find a heartbeat?/**

***Nope. Not there I guess I've dead. Passed on. Shuffled off the mortal coil. Pining for the fjords, tired out from a prolonged squawk.***

**//**

**/I wonder if I have beautiful plumage./**

**//**

***Where the hell did I come up with that from? Oh yeah, TV show.***

**//**



*Ok, I'm dead... Nice day for it. Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam...*

**Lub-lub.**

*Oh thank God. My heart is beating. No more TV show flashbacks. I had a nasty suspicion that The Good Life was next. Sure Felicity Kendal /was a babe but.../*

//

**/FOCUS POTTER!/  
/**

//

*Ok, ok. Heart's beating. That's always good. What else... Hey I've got to pee. Fantastic.*

*Wait. I've got to pee. I can't move. I'm going to soil myself.*

**/Fantastic./**

---====ooo000ooo====---

**Poppy frantically waved her wand over Harry's body, absolutely nothing. She did the same over the body of one of the mediwitches assisting her. A reading. Her wand and magic were working perfectly (she made a mental not to make sure Phyllis knew she was pregnant later)**

**Harry's magic potential had fallen below that of a squib last night, and she had spent the last 20 minutes confirming that his magical potential had actually fallen to nothing. Every instrument at the hospital's disposal showed that he had absolutely no magic left in his body.**

**This wasn't possible. Every living thing had a detectable magical potential. Plants, animals, everything. The research department had instruments capable to measuring the magical potential of bacteria. Those same instruments register an absolute zero when directed at Harry Potter. Before her diagnostic tools stopped working she had confirmed that his magical core was intact, but still the drain on his magic continued until it was completely gone. There was absolutely no way for him to be alive. Yet Potter's heart still beat. With no magic in him, no magical healing tools could be used, the instrument's had nothing to interact with. Out of her bag, Poppy pulled amuggle stethoscope. Time to teach these children how things were done in the old**

days.

---===ooo000ooo===---

*Hey, the grey is lighter in that direction. Is that up? Can I move? Come on Potter push. Push your lazy ass to that brighter spot!*

---===ooo000ooo===---

**Poppy pressed the diaphragm of the stethoscope against Harry's chest, and was startled by his sudden intake of breath. To her amazement Harry forced open one eye and whispered "Damn things cold. Get it out of the freezer?"**

## **Chapter 6 – Aftermath**

**St. Mungos**

**Waiting area:**

**"Less magic than a Muggle? What does that mean?"**

**Poppy Pomfrey didn't even try to make eye contact with the questioner. It had been a long 3 days. She hadn't been awake this long since her apprentice days. Harry asked her to explain to his friends because they would ask questions that he didn't know the answer too. The questions had been coming for more than an hour.**

**"Simply put, every living thing on the planet has what we call 'magic potential'. It has long been theorized that this 'potential' is what life actually is. Then Harry comes along. Leave it to Harry Potter to completely change what everyone believes. His body now has absolutely no magic potential. The flora and fauna in his gut don't either, it's as if his entire body has become an area of null magic. He is alive, even healthy, getting stronger physically all the time recovering from his ordeal. But he has no magic.**

**Neville Longbottom hesitantly raised his hand. "Would it be possible to give my magic to Harry? We need Harry." /No one needs me./**

**Poppy smiled at him. "No Neville. One of the Apprentices tried that last night when I tried to get a nap, I found her after she had been trying for 20 minutes and she had practically drained herself into magical exhaustion. She is a firm believer in the Chosen One and was willing to do anything to help him, even suggestion a few arcane rituals that people your age shouldn't know about. I chastised her for her attempt; there will be a note in her personnel file."**

**She sipped her tea. "If she had made the offer you did, I would have hugged her. She wanted to heal the Chosen One, you wanted to heal Harry."**

**"Harry doesn't need Healing" Luna Lovegood spoke up. "He IS the Chosen One. He has the Power the Dark Lord knows not. No one said it was his magic that would let him win."**

**The Blonde Ravenclaw got horrified looks from everyone in the room. She didn't care.**

**"Madam Pomfrey, please don't take offense, but is there anyone else who could see Harry? I mean you're great at school, but this is so far outside of the injuries that you would normally see..." Lavender Brown blushed.**

**Poppy started to answer but from the back of the group Hermione's said "Madam Pomfrey's full title is Senior Master Healer. She isn't a school nurse. The European Magical Medical Society lists her as the leading Curse Diagnostician in the world. She is also a fully qualified Muggle Doctor, Diagnostician and Surgeon. She is at Hogwarts so that we have the best of the best in medical care. If Poppy Pomfrey can't find what is wrong with Harry, no one can, until we beat the information out of Tom Riddle." Her voice was determined. There was no doubt in the minds of the listeners that Riddle was in trouble if she got her hands on him. "What's important is Harry's alive. The news couldn't be any better. If you had seen him when the curse attacked his body you would know what I mean."**

**"Well, thank you for that."**

**The bushy haired woman just shrugged "I looked your qualifications up first year, the first time you tended to Harry." She looked a little embarrassed. "I had the same question then that Lavender did now."**

**Poppy laughed, so did the small crowd. "Well if there are no other questions, Harry would probably like some visitors. Same rules as last time, 3 of you at a time, no more than 15 minutes per group."**

**St. Mungos**

**The Hallway leading away from Harry Potter's Private Room:**

**George followed his twin and sister as they left Harry's room. He was concerned for his 'silent partner' and had resolved to do what ever he could to help. He was more concerned about Ginny's reaction to the news that her boyfriend was no longer a wizard.**

**As he passed a storage closet the door wiped open and he was dragged inside, where he found himself presented with a most pleasant armload of female form, who had her arms around his neck and her mouth sealed to his, with her tongue attempting to massage his tonsils and grinding her pelvis into his like a woman possessed.. This armload of woman had bushy brown hair.  
/Hermione?/**

//

**She broke the kiss "Oh Freddy, it's been so long. I love you so much"**

**/Freddy? She thinks I'm Fred?/ "I'm G..." she covered his mouth with hers again.**

**"Freddy, I've been so stupid. I know that we decided to wait until I get my NEWTs but ..." she started to cry into his chest, and then kissed him again.**

**He thought he was going to pass out when she broke the kiss again. "I must have bugged up the Contraceptive Charm Freddy, I'm pregnant. Poppy says I'm at 26 weeks. I'll be showing soon. We have to move up the wedding."**

**/Pregnant? Wedding? She thinks I'm Fred?/ "Hermione, I.." she kissed him again.**

**"Oh Freddy, you're so good to me. I was SO worried when that Prophet article mentioned you; I thought that you would be SO mad. Though it was kind of funny that someone saw me with you and thought that you were George. My Daddy is SO angry at you for giving me that firewiskey the first time." Another kiss. "He thinks you took advantage of me, I told him that he doesn't understand love, but he still wants to talk to you 'alone'. I know he won't intimidate you." Another kiss that curled his toes. *I could be Fred. I could be a better Fred than Fred could.* She**

**broke the latest kiss and squealed "Oh we could have a double ceremony with Bill and Fleur. It will be SO romantic. I've got to tell Mum and Daddy!" she apparated away.**

**George continued to stand in the storage room, working his jaw, trying to say something, anything despite being completely alone.**

*Sweet Merlin's Baggy Y-fronts. What the hell am I going to do now?*

## **Chapter 7 – Decisions**

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*Molly's Kitchen:*

*"Mum" Ginny was miserable. "I don't know what to do"*

*Molly turned from her stove, and sat at the table with her only daughter, a casual wave of her wand brought the tea pot over to fill their mugs. "What is it Ginny?"*

*"Harry" She sipped at the tea. "I don't know if I can deal with what's happened to him. I mean, it's not like I hate squibs or anything, but I don't know if I could... BE with one."*

*Molly felt bile rising in her throat at the thought of mixing the Prewett/Weasley bloodlines with a powerless squib, still ... "Ginny, we aren't talking about some random squib, we're talking about Harry. You loved him before you met him; you owe him your life. Our family owes Harry so many life debts... He's family in all but name"*

*"I know all that Mum," Ginny's self loathing weighed upon her even more. "It's just the thought of him touching me, of him destroying my magic by contaminating me with ..." she started to cry. "I get sick to my stomach just thinking about it, what will I do when he actually..."*

*Molly gathered her only daughter in her arms. "It's going to be alright. I never really thought Harry was right for you, even when you were interested in him. There are a lot of Wizards out there. I've seen how Neville Longbottom looks at you. Neville would be a much better match for you. Between his family and ours, you could easily mold him into the Minister of Magic someday..."*

*London*

*Outside Purge & Dowse Ltd. Building*

*Harry Potter was disgusted with himself. Weak as a kitten, needing the help of two smaller women to make it from the exit of St. Mungos to the Granger's waiting car. Emma had fished her keys from her pocket and pushed a button on the key fob that unlocked the car doors. Very cool. He would have to let her know never to allow Arthur Weasley see her use it, else he would have it taken to bits in seconds.*

*As soon as they had gotten Harry safely ensconced in the back seat, Emma Granger got behind the wheel and Hermione got into the back seat on the other side. She hesitantly took his hand.*

*"I've tried to get hold of your Aunt and Uncle, but they aren't even answering the phone anymore. You're going to stay with us for a while, at least until you get your magic back."*

*Get my magic back. You heard Poppy Hermione, it's not coming back*

*"Thank you Hermione, Mrs. Granger. This means a lot to me. I'm sorry to be a burden."*

*"If you want to thank us Harry, then never talk like that again. Daniel and I don't consider helping a friend of Hermione to be a burden. It's only because of you that Hermione is alive. We owe you so much, we can never repay."*

*"Mrs. Granger It's because of me that Hermione was ever in danger."*

*"Ridiculous. We don't tolerate sloppy thinking in the Granger family Harry. I've been researching heritage. How safe is it for a young mudblood in your world?" Emma ignored the sharp intake of breath from both of her passengers in the back seat. "What tender mercies could she expect from young Mr. Malfoy and his friends if she hadn't met you on the Express that first day?"*



*Harry just looked more stubborn. "Ok, maybe you're right, but hanging out with me paints a bull's-eye on your back."*

*Emma caught his eye in the rear view mirror. "Honestly Harry," Harry was startled at how much she sounded like Hermione "People who have never met you have been killed by these people. We take the Daily Prophet at home. I can correlate the cases of 'terrorism' reported in our news with the attacks reported in the Wizarding press. By my count in the last 6 months there have been at least 55 people killed by your Lord Voldemort's people. Did you know them all? Did they hang out with you?"*

*There were few things worse than trying to argue with someone who was right AND had the facts on their side. So this is where Hermione gets it from.*

*"Anyway, what would you like for lunch? Daniel has an appointment and won't be with us until later."*

*Malfoy Manor*

*Throne Room:*

*"My Lord." Peter Pettigrew slowly entered the room looking desperately for permission to speak.*

*"Report Wormtail" Riddle was magnanimous today, he had won, and no one could stop him now.*

*"My Lord, Potter still lives. He is drained of his magical essence, but he lives."*

*Riddle's horrific laughter echoed throughout the room. "The Chosen One is now a filthy muggle? Wonderful news Wormtail. Where does he hide?"*

*"He is at the home of his mudblood whore my Lord. Shall I go and kill them?"*

***"No. He is no threat. After I assume control, I believe I would like to keep him as a pet, properly gelded of course. His mudblood shall be used for entertainment by my personal guard, until I allow Potter to kill her with his own hands. Wonderful news indeed Wormtail. Inform my Death Eaters, Potter is not to be killed. Or harmed in anyway."***

***Diagon Alley***

***Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes:***

***George Weasley was deeply confused. He still hadn't figured how to tell Fred about his accidentally discovery of Fred's tryst with Hermione, to say nothing of the result of said tryst. Fred hadn't returned to their upstairs apartment with him the previous night, saying that he was going to the Burrow to talk things through with Ron.***

***After his encounter with Hermione, George hadn't wanted to confront either Ron (who he knew to be carrying a torch for the bushy haired witch) or Fred, so he stayed home. This morning Fred had Owled him saying that he had a 9 am meeting at Gringotts and would be in late. George had spent his morning straightening stock on the shelves. More specifically, he had been straightening the same stock on the same shelf all morning long. The door chime broke him out of his fog and alerted him to someone entering his shop. He looked up to see Daniel Granger glaring at him.***

***"Mr. Granger, Fred..."***

***"I know who you are Mr. Weasley. And I know what you did to my little girl. There are only three reasons that you aren't dead right now. My daughter loves you for some reason. I'm told you will be marrying her on August 1st. And I like your father, though I don't know how he's going to take your behavior."***

***"Mr. Granger, I..."***

***"I don't want to hear any of your crap Weasley. You got my little girl drunk, and then for all intents and purposes you RAPED her. Now she's carrying your child. Let me make myself crystal clear. If you hurt her, I will hurt you. And I mean physically, not psychologically. Do you know what I do for***

*a living Weasley?"*

*"You're a dentist Sir."*

*"Just consider that. I know about pain. You have no idea what I could do to you. You treat her like a goddess, or so help me..." Daniel Granger turned on his heel and left the shop without another word.*

*What the hell has Fred gotten himself into? What has he gotten ME into? Oh crap, oh crap, oh crap!*

## Chapter 8 – Contacts

*Granger Residence:*

*"I should go to Gringotts"*

*Hermione looked up from her book. "Why?"*

*"I need some cash. Sterling I mean. If I'm going to stay here, I'm going to pull my weight. I also will need to be able to pay tutors."*

*"Tutors?"*

*"Well, yeah. I can't go back to Hogwarts, not like this. No one outside of the wizarding world is going to be impressed with my OWLs. I'm going to have to build a muggle education from scratch."*

*"Mum and Daddy won't take your money Harry."*

*"Then I find someplace else to live. I'm crippled as awizard, but I'm still a man. I pay my way. Besides, I want to get a little something for scaring Becca Booth so badly."*

*"Alright. Let me make myself presentable"*

*"You're trying for more gorgeous? Is that possible?" Oh Crap! Was that out loud?*

*She turned to look at him in surprise. "Mr. Potter, a compliment? Since when are you so gallant?"  
What the hell are you doing? Ron's your best mate!.*

*"Since I want you to hurry?" /Oh, Smooth Potter. Idiot/.*

*She huffed at him, and then side armed a sofa pillow at his head. He paid for the smooth comment.  
Her prep time came to 49 minutes.*

*"Well are you ready?"*

*Harry smiled "Well I guess I could go change clothes a couple dozen times..." He stood up and  
crossed the room to stand next to her.*

*Hermione took his hand. "I'll side along you. Ready?"*

*Harry nodded. Hermione closed her eyes and apparated. Her hand disappeared from his. She was  
gone, he hadn't moved. She was gone for almost 2 minutes, before reappearing before him with a  
panicked look in her eyes.*

*"Oh thank Merlin; I thought I'd lost you along the way. What Happened?"*

*"I don't know. You were there, and then you weren't. We were holding hands then you were gone."  
He pondered for a moment. "I guess that you need SOME magic to apparate, having none, I can't."*

*Hermione wasn't convinced. "What about inanimate objects? We move them when we apparate."*

*"I hadn't thought of that. Ok, I have no idea why it didn't work. Let's try again."*

*This time she hugged him from behind.*

*Stop thinking that, stop thinking that, stop thinking that!*

*She gave a little twist and vanished, reappearing across the room. Harry stayed where he was.*

*"Well, it looks like we aren't apparating anywhere. I wonder if you can use the floo system... Well that's academic at the moment, since we aren't on the network. If you still want to go, we could use the Tube..."*

*"That sounds like It would take all day to do something that you could do in 20 minutes." He thought for a moment. Then pulled his Gringotts key from a pocket and handed it to her. "Would you do it for me?"*

*Hermione looked wide eyed at him. "You trust me to go to your vault?"*

*"Of course I trust you Hermione. If you see anything in the vault you like, take it, it's yours. Hell take a bucket or two and empty the silly thing out. I haven't been there since 3rd year. My understanding is that the trust puts a few thousand in the school vault every year. I haven't touched it for a while."*

*Hermione waited until Harry finished writing out a not to his Vault Manager, kissed him on the cheek and apparated away.*

*Cardiff*

*Booth Residence:*

*"Mr. Booth, thank you for seeing us." Hermione sat beside Harry on the sofa in the Booth sitting*

*room.*

*"I didn't mean to hurt you Mr. Potter. I knew what I was doing, but couldn't control myself..."*

*"Mr. Booth, I'm here to see if I can help. You don't have to explain the Imperious Curse to me; I've been under it myself. I don't blame you." He saw the small first year Becca sitting on her mother's lap, red eyed. "And I don't blame you either Becca. The only people at fault were the evil wizards who did this to all of us."*

*"Mr. Booth, my sources tell me that due to the Aurors heavy handed investigation you've lost your job. The only reason that you were involved with this is because someone wanted to get to me. I feel responsible for the loss of your job. I've asked my bank manager to see if he could help with this. He suggested that you give this gentleman a call." Harry handed Booth a business card. "He'll help with the job situation."*

*"Mr., Mrs. Booth. I know that any loss of employment, even for a short term can cause financial hardship. To help with that I'd like to offer this to Becca." He passed a silver certificate to the young girl. "That's good for next year's tuition. I don't want people getting hurt because of me."*

*"Harry, did you really lose your magic?" The young girl looked like she wanted to disappear.*

*"Yes I did Becca. No one knows if it will come back or not, but don't you worry about it. I'll be alright."*

*"But what about You Know Who? Who will save us?"*

*Hermione answered her "Becca, we'll all save each other. The good people of the world will do what they need to do to help each other. Harry is the key, but all of us will be with him."*

*"We can't thank you enough for this offer Mr. Potter, but we can't accept it, we'll come up with the tuition on our own."*

*"Mr. Booth, my father came from one of the Wizarding World's oldest lines. He left me an obscene amount of money. So much that I can never touch the annual interest, much less the principle. I use it to help people. Due to some truly insane guardianship rules I grew up with nothing, wearing hand me downs from a cousin who was three times my size. Making sure that others don't have to do without makes me happy"*

*"Will you at least stay for dinner Mr. Potter?"*

*"Only if you call us Harry and Hermione. I've never been known to turn down a home cooked meal."*

*Diagon Alley*

*Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes:*

*"Brother, you've got problems"*

*Fred had just gotten back from his appointment at Gringotts, and this was how George greeted him.*

*"I don't do problems Forge, you know that. I GIVE problems"*

*"No Jokes Fred. This is as serious as I get. Hermione came to me last night after we saw Harry. She thought I was you."*

*"Never understood why people have that problem, after all I am the better looking one" He grinned slyly. "Saucy little minx isn't she? Certainly knows what she wants."*

*George went wide eyed at that comment. "Fred she told me she was PREGNANT!" The smile faded*



*from Fred's face. "Brother, she told me all this before I could tell her I wasn't you. She wants to do a double ceremony with Bill and Fleur."*

*"Oh Crap."*

*"Then her dad came in this morning, he's pissed. He thought I was you as well. He's threatened do to horrible things to you. Brother, you've got to make this right."*

*"The hell I do. I'm out of here"*

*"What? Fred you can't do that, I mean, this is Hermione, she's good people." He didn't understand, Fred would run out on a woman carrying his child, would he? "Fred, she's having your kid"*

*"Hey, I didn't force her into my bed, she came willingly. I watched her do the contraceptive charm. If she screwed it up, there's no reason for MY life to be ruined." He went to the door. "I'm taking some time off, see you later." And he was gone.*

*What the hell? Did he even know his brother, his twin? How could he possibly do that to a friend? To his own kid?*

*He thought for a moment. If need be, I could be Fred. I could be a better Fred than Fred could be. Hermione won't be alone.*

## **Chapter 9 – Discussions**

*Granger Residence*

*Dining Room:*

*"It's good that you could join us Professor McGonagall"*

*"Thank you for the invitation, Mrs. Granger. It may seem odd to you, but I rarely have the opportunity to partake of food that has not been magically prepared."*

*"Emma, please. Is magically prepared food really all that different?"*

*"Minerva. Magical food is quite tasty, and very nutritious, but unvarying. A magically prepared Sheppard's Pie tastes like every other magically prepared Sheppard's Pie that one will ever eat. The 'magic' of the muggle chef is his or her individuality and technique. These stuffed peppers are unlike anything I've ever had. They are quite lovely, I don't even know if there is a magically prepared variation."*

*Harry looked up from his own plate (he also had never had the Stuffed Peppers, and was enjoying them very much). "Before dinner you said you wanted to speak with Hermione and me Professor?"*

*"Minerva, please Harry"*

*"No, I don't think so Professor... Maybe in a few years when I forget how much you intimidate me."*

*"The Chosen One is intimidated by an old lady?"*

*"Merlin, YES. You're the second scariest person I've ever met."*

*"Only second? I must be slipping. Your father put me at number one." She smiled at the memory. "Who did I lose first place to?"*

*Harry covertly pointed to his left at Hermione, and got smacked for his trouble when she saw. The adults at the table laughed.*

*"Well actually, (this wine is marvelous Daniel), I wanted to speak to the two of you about your 7th year." She reached into her pocket and placed on the table in front of the teens a pair of badges, each embossed with an ornate capital letter H.*

*"Head girl?" asked Hermione in a breathy voice. "You're making me Head Girl?"*

*"Who else?" Harry asked. Picking the Head Boy badge up wistfully. "Of course I need to decline, for obvious reasons."*

*"Harry, I'm confident that your magic will return."*

*"Sorry Professor, I'm not. I miss it every second. I never realized that it was there because it always was, but now it isn't, not a whisper of it. Madam Pomfrey gave me an instrument used to detect the magic in microscopic life. It doesn't see anything in me. I suspect that this is what I am, what I will be. I'm not a wizard anymore. I've just got to learn to live with it." He laughed when he saw the horrified looks on Minerva and Hermione's faces, and the understanding on the faces of the Grangers.*

*"It's not that bad Professor. I spent the first 11 years of my life living without magic and with horrible people. Then 6 years of having magic and my first friends. If I spend the rest of my life without magic, but somehow manage to keep wonderful people like the Grangers in my life, I am so far ahead of the game I can't even begin to count my blessings."*

*He took a sip of his water. "In the unlikely event I survive Tom Riddle; I'll be hiring tutors to prepare me for a non-magical education."*

*"You intend to continue to fight Riddle, but not your education?"*

*"I have no choice but to fight Riddle, he won't give me a choice. I have some ideas to help me, but I don't expect to win. Hopefully I'll distract him enough so that you and the Order can stop him..."*

*He handed Minerva the Head Boy badge. "The only way you could install me in the Head Boy suite is to redesign the entire school for me. Not fair to you, not fair to the other students, not fair to me. Putting a non-wizard in Hogwarts would be akin to putting a quadruple amputee on a Quidditch team."*

*Hermione hadn't picked the Head Girl badge up. Just stared at it. "I can't accept it either Professor." So quiet, so wistfully.*

*"Ms. Granger?"*

*"Don't be silly Hermione, of course you'll take it."*

*"But Harry, the Plan?"*

*"The Plan was for when we stood a snow balls chance. We don't anymore. The Plan isn't a suicide pact. You need this, you want this. Take it." He smiled at the look on her face. "Looking at it now, the plan was a stupid idea from the start. I'm changing the plan." He took another sip. "It was fine to keep everything a secret when Professor Dumbledore was running things. He's gone, so is the logic for maintaining this super deluxe secret."*

*He turned his attention to Professor McGonagall. "After we talk Hermione into doing what she*

*wants to do, we need to discuss Order business. Justin would make a good Head Boy."*

*/Order Business?/ "Justin Finch-Fletchly? Not Mr. Weasley?"*

*"Merlin no. Being made Head Boy would kill him. Or more specifically, Hermione would kill him. She rode him like a pony when they were prefects together. Ron is my best mate, but he isn't dedicated enough to the rules to be a good Head Boy. If Hermione is going to be Head Girl, the Head Boy will need to be as dedicated as she is, or she'll kill him." That got him smacked again by the blushing bushy haired girl.*

*Patil Residence*

*Padma's Room:*

*"Harry's not a squib. His powers were cursed out of him. There's a difference."*

*Lavender shrugged "Not a difference that matters Padma. He has no magic"*

*Parvati looked thoughtful. "Well his came from a curse stone that dissolved into his body. I wonder if he can pass it on via his bodily fluids... You know by kissing, or ..."*

*"EWWW" both the other girls connected the dots.*

*"Well the first best sign would be if Hermione squibs out"*

*"She's with Ron. Lavender. You remember Won-Won right?"*

*"Ha Ha. Harry's living with her Padma. Who could keep her hands off THAT butt?"*

*"I know I'd take the chance" Parvati sighed quietly.*

*"EWWW" both the other girls threw their pillows at her.*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*Sitting Room:*

*George responded to his father's call for Fred, who had yet to return to the shop.*

*"Hi Dad"*

*Arthur Weasley sat in his chair, more furious than George had ever seen him. More so even than the time he had caught them trying to get Ron to make an Unbreakable Vow. "Where is your brother." A statement, not a question.*

*"Fred and I had an argument, he left, didn't tell me where he was going."*

*Thought gritted teeth Arthur asked, "What was the argument about?"*

*"Hermione"*

*"You know about that do you?"*

*"She mistook me for Fred and told me everything."*

*"And you approve of his actions?" Arthur asked dangerously.*

*"What did you two berks do to Hermione?" Ron stuck his head up from the corner where he had been reading. "You hurt her feelings and I'll kick both your asses"*

*"Shut up Ron" said his father. "What is he planning to do?"*

*"I don't know Dad, I don't know."*

*"I had a long interesting talk with Daniel Granger this afternoon. Fred is going to do the right thing. No son of mine would abandon his child."*

*"His child? Fred and Hermione? No way. She wouldn't do that to me!" Ron looked like he was going to cry. "She wouldn't do that to me. Not Hermione. She wouldn't do that."*

## **Chapter 10 – Turning the Tip**

*Malfoy Manor*

*Draco's Personal Suite:*

*“We leave him alone? Father that can't be right. Why would the Dark Lord spare Potter?”*

*Lucius backhanded him across the face. “NEVER QUESTION THE DARK LORD! He knows all, he sees everything. You are my son, but if he orders your death, I would happily kill you to serve him, and I would expect you to kill me as happily to serve our Lord.”*

*The anger built in the Draco. He has suspected his value to his family, but to have his father come out and say it. Until he could get his mother away from these lunatics he would play along. He hadn't killed anyone yet. His plans required him to go on an attack against Potter, to be momentarily captured so that he could beg scarhead for his help to liberate his mother.*

*“Yes Father, I understand.”*

*London*

*Ministry of Magic*

*Special Assistant to the Minister Weasley's Office:*

*Percy reached for the next document in his inbox. His eyes scanned the parchment, but his mind was running a mile a minute, not reading a word.*

*Dumbledore is dead. My only contact in the Order, gone. Why did I let him talk me into this? ‘cut your ties with your family Percy, fight the good fight from within where your talents will come to the*



*fore' 'write hateful letters to your brother and sister about Harry Potter so to confirm your legend with the ministry Percy' Because of my loyalty to the Headmaster my brothers hate me, my only sister would happily kill me. My own father refused to speak to me in the hall just this morning, and every time I see my mother she cries. If it wasn't for Penny, I don't know what I'd do. Will they believe me if I tell them the truth? Will they accept me again? What will they say when they find out about they first grandchild? Will they bless our wedding? Damn Dumbledore anyway.*

*Truth Percy truly DID dislike Harry Potter. His cavalier attitude toward the rules set Percy's teeth on edge. His willingness to lead Ron and Ginny into danger was something Percy would never accept.*

*He returned his attention to the document he was supposed to be reading. One has to do his job.*

*Granger Residence*

*Sitting Room:*

*"Daniel."*

*"Arthur"*

*Both men spoke through angry clenched jaws.*

*"Arthur, Ron, uh ..."*

*"George ma'am"*

*"George, it's good of all of you to come... Is Fred here?"*

*“I am so sorry Emma; my son hasn’t been seen for 3 days. I believe he has chosen to avoid his responsibilities”*

*“Excuse me? What’s going on?”*

*“Oh, Fred’s found a hilarious new joke Harry.” A look of fury on his face. “Hermione’s got a great joke too.”*

*Harry was confused, what was Ron talking about?*

*“Fred’s not coming?” Hermione looked stricken. “Fred’s not coming?” she sat suddenly, a look of total desolation on her face.*

*“I would have thought you would have raised better men than that Arthur.”*

*“I thought I had Daniel. I thought I had.”*

*George looked to Hermione who was holding her abdomen and rocking in her seat muttering “I need Freddy, I want Freddy. Where’s Freddy?”*

*“Oh you want ‘Freddy’ do you? Well he doesn’t want you. And neither do I”*

*“Ron, what the hell is going on? Why are you doing this to Hermione?”*

*“Open your eyes, Harry, she deserves this and more”*

*The Grangers were yelling at His father, Ron yelling at Harry, Harry was confused, and Hermione*

*was in pain. George crossed the room and knelt on the floor before her, taking her into his arms.*

*“It’ll be ok Hermione. Fred will come around, there’s no way Fred would really abandon you, and he’s just having trouble dealing with the idea.” She sobbed into his shoulder. Guilt and desperation drove him on. “If that prat doesn’t come back to you, I’ll take care of you. You and your baby... You and my niece or nephew will never want for anything”*

*She clung to him, and quietly kissed him on the cheek. “You’re sweet.” Hermione said in a throaty sexy voice “Is this an example of the life fulfilling experience that is the Weasley twins?”*

*He pulled away from her. “What?”*

*“Do I get you on even or odd days? I forget. Oh and do I get a discount on the reasonably priced photos?”*

*“What?” George heard the clink of glass behind him, turned to see Fred hand their father and Daniel Granger each a bottle of beer. All three were grinning at him like madmen. Emma was hiding her laughter behind her hand, and Ron was rolling on the floor in hysterics.*

*“Fred?”*

*Fred raised his own beer “To the great and powerful Hermione Granger, the greatest practical joker of all time. The Kings are dead, long live the Queen!” he toasted her.*

*“Well thank you ‘Freddy’. I couldn’t have done it with out George’s general cluelessness.”*

*“What say I dump the dummy and take you one as a partner? We could wreck beautiful havoc together.”*

*“Hmm. Granger and Weasley’s Wizarding Wheezes... It has a ring.”*

*“Hey, why would you get top billing?”*

*“Because the ‘Silent Partner’ is frightened of me.”*

*Fred considered for a moment. “So is the Senior Partner. Ok, you get top billing.”*

*“Wait a minute.” George was furious. “This was a joke? You put me thought this as a JOKE? “He turned to his father and Daniel “You both threatened me and made me feel ashamed of my brother as a JOKE? All of you conspired against me for a JOKE?”*

*“Yep.” Hermione started laughing.*

*He looked from face to face in the room, other than Harry, who was finally figuring out what happened, everyone was laughing. Laughing at him. After a few seconds, he joined them “Good one. You got me”*

*“Damned right I did dummy. Look at me! I weigh 7 ½ stone. I told you I was 26 weeks gone. Where’s the baby?”*

*“So why was everyone in on the joke but me? “ Complained Harry. “I can pick on George too.”*

## Chapter 11 – Moves

*Little Whinging, Surrey*

*#4 Privet Drive:*

*The first distinctive pop of apparition signaled the arrival of the first Death Eater. Over the next 2 minutes, 8 others flickered into existence. They quickly determined that the blood wards that had protected the inhabitants for so long had lapsed. They surrounded the house, casting locking charms on the doors, and ultimately Incendio on the structure it's self.*

*The Dursleys died unaware of the threat. Smoke inhalation ended their lives before the fire reached them.*

*-----ooo000ooo-----*

*The Burrow*

*Molly's Kitchen:*

*Neville Longbottom stepped from the fireplace dusting stray ash from his robes.*

*"Neville, it's good to see you again"*

*"Thank you Mrs. Weasley, my grandmother asked me to offer her best regards and to ask if you would come for tea sometime"*

*"Please thank her for me. I'll owl her the next time I'm out your way" Molly smiled her thanks*

*"Ginny should be down in a few minutes" she sat Neville at the table, putting a cup of tea and plate of cakes in front of him, and covertly flicked her wand to signal Ginny to make her entrance.*

*Ron was in the sitting room with a view of the stairs when he saw Ginny come down in what he thought of as her 'hunting outfit'. Short skirt, flimsy top with no obvious bra, hair done just so, if she wasn't his sister she would have been gorgeous. She wore this outfit a lot when she was after Harry. /Is Harry coming over? Why wouldn't he let me know?/ He sat up craning his neck to see into the kitchen just in time to see delighted Neville Longbottom get his first view of his sister.*

*/Neville?/ Ron was puzzled. Why was she turning it on for Neville? She was dating Harry. Of course Harry did do that noble 'breakup' with her which fooled exactly no one. Neville was a mate; he wouldn't be sniffing around Ginny. He wanted to, certainly. As Ron knew well, Neville had been very interested in Ginny since 3rd year, but Neville would NEVER do anything about it. Mates didn't do that.*

*He sat silently listening to his mother steer the conversation to Neville reaching his majority in a few days, his responsibilities when he assumed his position as Head of the Longbottom House (like Augusta was going to let Neville out from under her thumb) and the need a young Patriarch had for a Lifemate.*

*/What the hell? What is Mum up to?/ He watched as Ginny ran her fingers through her hair, and touched his hands, arms, and once on the face. Neville was enjoying the entire episode, though somewhat confused at the attention. Ginny suggested a walk to the village, taking Neville by the hand and leading him to the door. She DID have it turned on. Why is she teasing Neville like this?*

//

*Ron stood and followed them outside, closing the door behind him quietly. He cast the disillusioning spell on himself and cat footed it after his friend and sister.*

*Ginny was in full cling mode, hugging his arm to her as they walked down the well-beaten path toward town. As they passed the Lovegood home, Ginny stretched up to kiss him on the cheek. Neville stopped and took both of her hands in his, gazing intently into her eyes.*

*"Ginny, what's going on?"*

*"I don't know what you mean Neville."*

*"In the last 40 minutes you've touched me more than you did on our entire date at the Triwizard Yule Ball." He looked a little sad at that. "Are you trying to use me to make Harry jealous? It won't work. Harry's too smart to fall for something so transparent."*

*"Oh no Neville. I'm not trying to make Harry jealous. Harry and I are over. He broke up with me before school let out. And, now the way he is, I need to move on."*

*"The way he is? What way is that?"*

*"Oh hell, Neville, you know. He's not a wizard. He's not even a squib, I mean how could anyone expect me to ... to... to even touch him now?"*

*"I see." Ron was amazed at the change in Neville's face. "Thank you for the wonderful afternoon Miss Weasley. I think I should be going now, before I say something unpleasant. I would ask that you do not contact me again." The young man strode down the path toward the village.*

*"Finite Incantum" Ginny was staring at Neville receding form and missed her brother's sudden appearance. "You know Ginny..." his words startled her and made her aware of his presence. "I've never been more proud to call Neville my friend, and never more ashamed to know that you are my sister. Tell Mum I'm ashamed of her too" He turned and headed over to the Lovegood home.*

*-----ooo000ooo-----*

*Granger's Residence*

*Gamerroom:*

*David's break scattered the balls around the table, dropping 3 balls in the pockets. "I guess that*

*makes me Stripes"*

*"I'm being hustled aren't I? How much of my money are you going to take?"*

*David smiled over his cue, casually took aim "How much you got? 10 ball, corner." The 10 ball of course fell into the pocket.*

*"Would it be easier to just give you the money and same time?"*

*"Possibly 15, Side" Another down. "This is how I paid my bills while I was at University"*

*After David ran the table, Harry thought that perhaps betting a pound a ball had been a bad investment.*

*---===ooo000ooo===---*

*Emma sat on a lounge chair watching the men play. Well, David played while Harry watched. The young man was on her mind a lot these days. He had stopped being a houseguest in her mind, and had become, well not a son, but a possible father for her future grand children. She had watched Hermione and Harry over the last few weeks. It was obvious to her that Harry had fallen badly for her, but Hermione still seemed to have Ron somewhere in her mind. Though in all the times she had seen Hermione and Ron together all they seemed to do is bait each other and argue.*

*Emma had never been a fan of the 'a couple fights to hide their attraction' school of thought beyond 10 year old children. The way she so casually touched Harry spoke volumes to her. She hoped that her daughter recognized what was in front of her before she lost him.*

*---===ooo000ooo===---*



*Ministry of Magic*

*Lift to upper levels:*

*"Arthur"*

*"Morning Stewart. How are things in Magical Creatures?"*

*"Fur, Feathers and Fangs, same as always. Ah Young Weasley, how are you this fine morning?"*

*"Just fine Sir, thank you for asking." Percy took his place on the lift next to Arthur "Good Morning Father."*

*Arthur was a little surprised at the greeting "Morning Percy". He was even more surprised when he found that Percy had slipped a slip of parchment into his hand covertly. He waited until he got into his office before he chanced a look.*

*/Father/, it said, I believe that the time has come for us to speak. We have much to discuss. If at all possible, please come to#32 Queen's Road tonight for dinner, please bring Mother.*

*---===ooo000ooo===---*

*Hermione returned from a shopping trip. A personal private pleasure. She had picked up a pair of shoes, pair of slacks and dress shirt for Harry to wear to Bill's wedding. She went to his room and knocked on the door.*

*There was no answer, so she opened the door and discovered Harry sitting on his bed quietly crying. She crossed to him, sat beside him and hugged him until his sobbing stopped. "What is it Harry?"*

*He was embarrassed to have been found in such a condition. "Nothing Hermione, I'm just being stupid"*

*"I've known you for almost half my life Harry Potter. You don't cry over 'nothing'. Talk to me."*

*"Hedwig can't understand me." He choked back another sob. "I'm guessing that Owls key into a wizards magic somehow. She doesn't know me. She won't even take food from me. For so long she was my contact to magic for every summer holiday. I've spent more time with her than almost anyone or anything other than you and Ron." He wiped his eyes. "She doesn't know me."*

*"Harry!" Her own eyes were tearing, she had not really thought about everything he was losing bit by bit. "She hugged him closer, burying her face into his neck. His sobs subsided; he rapped his arms around her and hung on as if for dear life. She drew away from him slightly, took his face in both of her hands, and kissed him. He gasped at the contact, then opened his mouth to her and returned the affection."*

*Wondering where Hermione had gotten to, and wanting to see her new purchases Emma had come upstairs, she passed Harry's room and saw the couple through his open door. Smiling she reached in and eased the door closed. Daniel might not find is as endearing as she did.*

*---====ooo000ooo====---*

*Lovegood Residence*

*Front Porch:*

*"And then Ron was there. He must have been spying on me. He said some horrible things to me and..."*

*"Yes I know" Luna was watching a small bee buzz around the flowers in her yard. "Ronald came here and told me about it." The bee landed on one of the bright yellow flowers she could never remember the name of 'butter' something. "I must say I agree with him, you behaved appallingly."*

*"Me? What am I supposed to do? I've got nothing against Harry, it's just since he became a squib..."*

*"Harry is not a squib. He is cursed. If his magic manifested it's self tomorrow would you love him? Would your rudeness to Neville be forgiven? Ginny you are my first, best, and for most of my life, only friend. After what I've heard today, both from Ron and from you, I find that I don't like you very much. Tomorrow I'll probably love you again, but for now, I'm going to have to say goodbye." She reentered her home.*

*Ginny blinked. For Luna, that was a display of unbridled fury. Why couldn't anyone see what was really going on?*

*---====ooo000ooo====---*

*Lovegood Residence*

*Luna's Bedroom*

*Luna returned to her room, Ron was sitting on her bed where she had left him, still staring at his shoes.*

*"Hi Luna, that Ginny?"*

*"Oh yes" she stared at him with an intensity almost unknown to the Ravenclaw. "She doesn't understand why what she is doing is wrong, that she is just trying to use Neville. I sent her away because I wanted to do something other than listen to her justify her."*

*"I'm sorry to bring our family problems to you; you just listen to me and have good advice when I'm smart enough to listen. Enough of my whining. What was it you wanted to do? Could I help?"*

*"Oh yes Ronald, I definitely require your help in my project, I couldn't do it without you."*

*"Alright, what's your project?"*

*"I'm going to molest you." She jumped on top of him, covering his mouth with hers.*

## **Chapter 12 – Changes**

### ***Granger Residence:***

*Seven Death Eaters apparated into the Granger back yard. Awake of the leader's wand opened the back door and they eased into the house as silently as possible.*

*The Leader hissed "Remember, stunners only on Potter and his Mudblood whore. If a single hair on either of their heads is harmed, the Dark Lord will kill us all slowly. Kill the muggles if you can, but we are here to grab Potter!"*

*The Death Eaters started their silent search.*

### ***Ottery St. Catchpole***

#### ***The Burrow***

#### ***Molly's Kitchen:***

*"Bloody Hell Percy. Why didn't you tell us?"*

*"Language Ronald"*

*"Sorry Mum. Seriously Percy, you could have trusted us. For more than 2 years we've hated you and bad mouthed you."*

*"That is precisely why I could not tell you Ronald. Doing so would have jeopardized the task the Headmaster set for me."*

*"I still don't think that..."*

*"It no longer matters Ronald. It is in the past; we cannot do any thing about the past. We can only remember that Weasleys are family, now and forever."*

*The fire suddenly flared green and Penelope Weasley stepped into the room. Percy's normal reserved demeanor vanished in a second as he rushed to his wife's side. He guided his extremely pregnant wife to the table and aided her in sitting down.*

*"Well, we forgive you Perc."*

*"But only because you're making us Uncles"*

*"Unless you buck tradition and have a girl"*

*"Then we'd be Aunts"*

*"But either way"*

*"We're going to pass our skills"*

*"To your next generation"*

*"If that doesn't pay you back"*

*"For the last two years of extreme Praterly"*

*"Then nothing will!"*

*"New Sister Penny!"*

*"We Love YOU!"*

*"Even if you don't have Red Hair"*

*"No one's perfect."*

*"Though if you can put up with Percy"*

*"You're closer to it than most."*

*The twins hugged her from either side and kissed her on each cheek.*

*Penny started to laugh. It was a full-throated musical laugh. It was a Weasley laugh. The family was back together.*

*Granger Residence:*

*Unused to the appliances in a muggle kitchen, one of the Death Eaters caught his flowing robe on the handle of a drawer. As he stepped away, he pulled the drawer from the cabinet and its contents clattered to the floor. He whirled at the noise and cast "AVADA KEDAVRA!" and the green flash*

*caused the kitchen counter to explode.*

*Down stairs in the Game room Daniel and Harry were playing 8ball again (again it would be more accurate to say that Harry was watching Daniel play) while Emma and Hermione were looking through a photo album reviewing what had happened during the most recent school year.*

*At the sound of the shouted spell, Hermione drew her wand, pointing it at the stairs. "Death Eaters" she hissed. Harry put a billiard ball in each pocket and with his cue at the ready, took up a position out of sight where he could strike at anyone who came down the stairs. Emma pressed herself against the wall behind Harry while Daniel went to the storage closet and removed his venerable Harrison & Hussey Sidelock shotgun as well as a box of shells. Quickly loading a pair of rounds into the weapon, he stuffed his pockets with more shells. He also took up a position of relative safety. Lacking any easy way out, they had nothing left to do but wait for the Death Eaters to make a mistake.*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*Ginny's Room:*

*"Ron told us an interesting story about you and Neville Longbottom"*

*"Care to explain yourself?"*

*"Your attitude?"*

*"Don't try to pull this whip saw crap with me. I know all your tricks and they don't work on me." The lithe redhead sat on her bed, arms crossed displaying a clear example of 'go to hell' body language.*

*"Alright Little Sister" Fred said. "I'll do the talking. What the hell do you think you're doing?"*



*No response.*

*"You might have had more luck with your 'I can't touch asquib' crap with a sytherian. Just imagine what Longbottom thinks of you now. You don't love Harry anymore, fine. To be so because he lost his magic to a curse is unspeakably... dark."*

*"Yeah like you're dating a squib."*

*"No Fred isn't dating a squib. The fact that we don't know a female squib within 15 years of our age might have something to do with it. But I'll let you in on a little secret, one we were saving for Halloween when Fred plans to introduce her to the Family. He's dating a muggle nursing student. They're close to getting engaged. Is this the treatment that Sarah can expect from the sister we've told her about?"*

*No response*

*"Doesn't it bother you that the rest of the family is disgusted with your actions?"*

*"Mum supports me."*

*The twins left, shaking their heads.*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*Lovegood Residence*

*Luna's Room:*

*"So, what is that Luna?"*

*"It's a muggle invention" Luna stood back from the easel, and put the paintbrush behind her ear to examine her progress. "It's called a "Paint by Numbers Picture," Daddy found in on one of his business trips. It comes with these pictures" she showed him the unused canvases) "and this selection of paints, numbered 1 through 10. According to the instructions, you put the paint labeled #1 in the areas labeled #1 and so on. But I've figured that can't be right, so I've been experimenting with shifting all the colors up 3 digits, except 8-10 which I moved to the bottom of the palette" She rotated the canvas on the easle 90 degrees. "I will break this code Ronald. I will discover what the muggles are trying to tell us."*

*"You sure know how to have fun Luna. Mind if I try one?"*

*"Certainly Ronald, just not right now. Paint time is over; it is now time to return to my summer holiday school project."*

*"Ok. I'm not the best student in the world, but maybe I can help. What's the project about?"*

*"I told you yesterday silly. Molesting you!" once again she leaped upon him, trying to massage his tonsils.*

*After 15 minutes of constant contact and the removal of several items of clothing, Ron broke the silence. "How is molesting me a holiday school project?"*

*"If successful, it will ensure that my 6th year has many meetings with you at the lake, Hogsmeade, the greenhouses and the occasional storage cupboard..." She experiments a bit. "Your eyes go all funny when I squeeze this... good to know"*

*"Yeah" Ron gasped, "Research is good."*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*Molly's Kitchen:*

*"Molly, love, what have you done?"*

*"Arthur, she's terrified of him, of being infected with what happened to him, stealing her magic."*

*"So instead of talking her through her fears, you send her after Neville? Did it never occur to you how loyal to Harry Neville is? He offered to give Harry his magic for Merlin's sake. What were you thinking?"*

*"If Neville has problems with her there are many young unattached purebloods..."*

*"My gods Molly are you listening to your self?"*

*"So now it's wrong to want the best for your daughter?"*

*"Who are you? You have never said these things to me before Molly. Is this why you've always been against Hermione?"*

*"I don't hate muggleborns, halfbloods or squibs, but I don't believe in mixing them into the pure blood lines Arthur."*

*"HARRY IS A HALFBLOOD! Why were you FOR the relationship when he had his magic? Are you against Bill marrying the quarter Veela Fleur? Are you aware that Charlie is living with a muggle born witch on his dragon preserve? Did you know Fred is thinking about asking a muggle girl to marry him? Ron has been interested in Hermione since his 2nd year. Are you going to destroy all of their relationships, or just hate the women in their lives? How could who their parents were matter to you in the slightest?" He was pacing the room, "I don't understand. Can you explain it to me? Why have you never said a word about this attitude before now?"*

*He got no response beyond her glare.*

*"I'm going out for a while. I think I need a drink"*

*"Arthur!"*

*"I'll be back Molly. I would suggest you consider your attitude"*

*Granger Residence*

*Game Room:*

*When the first Death Eater came down the stairs, Harry broke the cue across his face, shattering the mask, breaking his nose and flinging him backwards to fall to the ground unconscious.*

*Five others apparated into the game room. Two fell to ablast from both barrels of Daniel's shotgun. Hermione dropped one with a Stupefy, Harry beamed another with one of the billiard balls, the last managed point his wand at Emma as she backed into the corner and screamed "AVADA KEDAVRA!" Harry pivoted to shield Emma with his body when the green spell impacted on his back, and Harry slumped to the ground.*

*Malfoy Manor*

*Throne Room:*

*Riddle was slumped on his throne, with his death eaters in abject worship around the dais. Bellatrix was on her knees, tending to his carnal needs, when the Dark Lord bolted upright, his eyes unseeing, mouth open, a deep scream issuing from his soul. He collapsed on top of Bellatrix, bringing the Death Eaters to panic.*

## *Granger Residence*

### *Game Room:*

*Hermione's magic flared in the room, the magic leaped from her wand without conscious thought and eviscerated the remaining Death Eater, and she fell to her knees sobbing. There was another pop of apparition. Daniel turned his shotgun in the direction of the new arrival, but Emma was too close. The dark robed man stared at Harry's body. His wand clattered to the tile floor and he fell to his knees next to Harry.*

*"Damn you Potter. You cannot be dead. I need you, you damned stupid noble Gryffindor."*

*Harry opened his eyes and stared into Draco Malfoy's eyes.  
"If this is being dead, it really sucks."*

*"Potter!"*

*"Malfoy"*

*"Harry!" Hermione struggled to her feet and ran to him knocking Malfoy out of the way, holding him "You stupid goof, how could you scare me like that?" covering him with kisses and tears. Emma knelt to hold him as well. It is not every day someone saves your life by taking a killing curse after all.*

*Daniel pressed the barrel of his reloaded shotgun against Malfoy's back and stepped on his wand, breaking it. "Move and you're a dead man."*

## **Chapter 13 - Triskaidekaphobia**

*Ministry of Magic*

*Office of the Minister:*

*"Minister"*

*"Yes Weasley?"*

*"The Branch Manager of Gringotts has sent a response to your request for a meeting."*

*"He'll be here at 11?"*

*"No sir, he says that he has opened a slot on his schedule for you to visit him"*

*"I meant for him to come here"*

*"I know that sir, and informed him of you wishes." Percy looked distinctly embarrassed.*

*"And?"*

*"Sir, Branch Manager Ragnak said, and I am quoting him sir, that Gringotts pays taxes and isn't at your beck and call. If you would like to speak to him, he is willing to extend his cooperation by not charging you for his time when you come to his office."*

*That started a rant. Percy wisely exited quietly.*

*Granger Residence:*

*"You seemed upset to see me 'dead' Draco. Funny reaction for someone in your line of work."*

*"I need your help Potter."*

*"I bet you do Malfoy. Harry, why are you even talking to him, he came to kill us."*

*"Draco isn't a killer Hermione. I watched him; he had Dumbledore and couldn't kill him. Another 5 minutes and he would have surrendered." Harry stood up stiffly, and offered his hand to Malfoy. Draco ignored it and stood himself, with Daniel's shotgun still pressed between his shoulder blades.*

*"Well?"*

*"I need your help to save my mother. She hasn't taken the mark, and father is going to kill her. I can't do it, but you; you do these things all the time. I'll give you anything Potter. I've got to save my Mother."*

*"Where is she?"*

*"Malfoy Manor."*

*Have you still got House Elves?"*

*"Of course."*

*"Dobby?"*

*Harry waited almost 30 seconds before he sighed. "Hermione, could you try calling Dobby?"*

*"Dobby?"*

*There was a sudden crack of Elvin apparition. "Yes Ms Harry Potter's Grangy?" The tiny elf appeared, wearing looking quite the worse for wear, though his collection of mismatched socks and several hats remained.*

*"Hello Dobby."*

*"Harry Potter Sir! Dobby did not see you, or sense your magic... "Dobby stopped in mid sentence "Young Master?"*

*"Draco isn't your master Dobby, calm down. The Grangers and I need somewhere to hide from bad wizards; Draco and his mother do as well. Do you know anywhere we might go?"*

*Dobby pondered for a moment "Harry Potter Sir and his friends could stay with Millet and Dreek and Slock."*

*"There's room for all of us there?"*

*"Oh yes Harry Potter Sir, Potter Manor has many many rooms. Millet and Dreek and Slock are good elves and work very hard on it."*



*"Potter Manor?" Daniel asked. "There's a Potter Manor? Where is it?"*

*"Dobby does not know where Potter Manor is Ms. Harry Potter's Grangy's Sire sir. Potter Manor is under Wizard Hide magic."*

*"Wonderful. Well it was worth asking I suppose."*

*"Harry Potter Sir, Dobby doesn't know where Potter Manor is, but Millet and Dreek and Slock do."*

*Harry knelt down to the elf's level. "How do I find Millet, Dreek and Slock?"*

*"Dobby will get them Harry Potter Sir!" and he disappeared.*

*"What now Potter?"*

*"I guess we ..." Harry was interrupted by multiple cracks of Elvin apparition.*

*"See Millet, Dreek, Slock? Dobby didn't lie, here is Harry Potter Sir!"*

*And the three new elves threw themselves at Harry hugging him and chattering.*

*"You three are Potter House elves?"*

*"Oh yes Master Potter, we are Millet, Dreek, and Slock. We server the House of Potter."*

*He gestured toward the Grangers. "Could you take the Grangers to Potter Manor please?"*

*"Certainly Master Potter." Each of the elves took a Granger by the hand and disappeared with a crack.*

*"Dobby could you take Draco and Myself?" hoping against hope that Elvin magic would work on him.*

*"Of course Harry Potter Sir!" Dobby took his offered hand and took hold of the hem of Draco's robe.*

*Malfoy Manor:*

*Laying in his bed trying to understand what had attacked him and why his weakness continued, Riddle suddenly felt his stomach heave. Attempting an obscure strengthening spell that required sexual contact, Bellatrix was servicing him while the Lucius Malfoy chanted the incantation. Riddle voided his bowels soiling his bed (and Bella) unable to move, and projectile vomited all over Lucius at the same time, continuing long after his system was empty.*

*Potter Manor*

*Gourock Scotland:*

*Suddenly Harry was in the foyer of Potter Manor staring at a thousand years worth of magical family portraits, all of whom started to greet the last of the Potters. Directly in front of him was a portrait of his mother, father and infant self. All three turned their attention to him. "Harry?"*

*He knelt again to hug Dobby the Free Elf "Thank you Dobby, thank you so much."*

*Draco cleared his throat. Harry looked up to him and understood. "Dobby could you do me one more favor?"*

*"Of course Harry Potter Sir!"*

*"I need you to go to Malfoy Manor, and bring Narsissa Malfoy here."*

*"Young Master's Dame?" Dobby pondered for a moment. "Right away Harry Potter Sir!"*

*He disappeared with a crack, and reappeared less than a minute later with a protesting Narcissa.*

*"Millet!"*

*"Master Potter?"*

*"What housing is available here?"*

*"The main manor has 12 bedroom suites; there is also a guest cottage with 3 bedrooms."*

*"Take the Malfoy's to the Cottage, find them new clothing, take everything they brought with them and destroy it. . Check them both for tracking charms. If they resist, make it hurt."*

*"You are guests here. Annoy me in any way and I'll deliver the both of you back to your dark lord before I kill him." He watched as the Malfoys were led away. "Dreck?"*

*"Master Potter?"*

*"Could we get some dinner?"*

*"Of course Master Potter, we will let you know when it is ready. Master Potter?"*

*"Yes Dreek?"*

*"It is good to have you home sir."*

*Harry approached the painting of his parents and infant self. It took only seconds to realize that this painting was enchanted for movement, but not with the personalities of the subjects. His parents were seemingly unaware of him, the painting silent.*

*Diagon Alley*

*Gringotts Bank:*

*11:07 a.m.*

*"Bank Manager"*

*"Minister. You're late."*

*"I am a busy man Bank Manager."*

*"And I am a busy goblin Minister. What can I do for you?"*

*"Succinctly, the Potter House has been declared extinct."*

*"Really Minister? I had not heard of young Potter's death. We keep track of our major accounts you know."*

*"Potter has lost his magic, as such cannot lead or sire anoble house. The House and Line are extinct, despite his still being alive."*

*"How interesting. Thank you for the information." Ragnak looked pointedly at the clock on his wall. "Was there anything else?"*

*"Just that the Ministry would like the Potter Family vaults transferred to Ministry control."*

*Ragnak blinked. Twice. "You would? And why would Gringotts wish to be a party to this act of theft?"*

*"Hardly theft Bank Manager. There is no longer a Potter Family; therefore the Ministry will confiscate the Potter fortune."*

*"I see. I do not think you know what you are asking Minister."*

*"I assure you I do. I have gotten legal opinions that support this position"*

*"Have you gotten Goblin Legal opinion?"*

*"Why would I need that?"*

*"I thought so Minister. Unfortunately I am going to need to conclude this meeting, and fine the*

*Ministry 10,000 Galleons for attempting to involve Gringotts in a blatant theft." An evil snarl crossed Ragnak's face. "One more word Minister, I will fine you personally the same amount. It is within your power to take away young Potter's family name, but you cannot rob his vaults like a common thief. This conversation has been recorded and will be released to the media. Gringott's protects its clients. Good day sir."*

*Potter Manor*

*Gourock Scotland:*

*Following the meal Harry and his new family explored the upper floors finding the bedrooms that they would take. The Master suite Harry offered to the Grangers.*

*"Take it. It's far too large for me."*

*"Don't be ridiculous Harry, you are Potter, and you get the master suite in Potter Manor. Any of the suites here are larger than our master bedroom back home." Daniel drew him into a hug. "Thanks for saving Emma, son." he left for the suite at the far end of the hall.*

*Emma then took him in her arms as well. "How can I show how much it meant to me that you took such a chance for me? Good Night you too." She then hugged her daughter and whispered to her.*

*Hermione took him by the hand. "Come one Harry, time to get you to bed."*

*"Hermione?"*

*"I don't want to be alone tonight." She led him into the master suite, closing the door behind them "I saw you save my mother's life. I thought you died, I killed a man. There is no way in hell you aren't going to hold me tonight."*

## **Chapter 14 - Unions**

*Malfoy Manor*

*Throne Room:*

*"Death Eaters, Attend me!"*

*Grasping their burning marks and ears ringing from the magically amplified sound of their Master's voice (that was still echoing throughout the stone structure) the entire cadre of Death Eater Minions ran into the throne room.*

*Riddle sat in his throne, the very picture of agony and pain. His weakness gave pause to all of his minions. Fear filled the ranks. Despite his weakness, they all knew that he could snuff their lives on a whim.*

*"Good news my Death Eaters. I have need of your services. Those with young daughters, come forward, the rest of you be gone!"*

*The ranks thinned by about 4/5ths. "Excellent. GO now and return with your young daughters, for they will have an opportunity to serve me personally. You and your lines will be honored above all the others."*

*"Soon Bella, soon you will be able to revitalize this body!" His stomach heaved again; once again he voided his bowels and vomited. Once again, Bellatrix was soiled.*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow:*

*The Grangers and Harry apparated onto the grounds of the Burrow, Hermione bringing her mother, Daniel and Harry courtesy of Air Dobby. Upon Arrival, Harry thanked Dobby, who went into paroxysms over being thanked by Harry Potter Sir, and returned to Potter Manor to await another call.*

*The elder Weasley's greeted the new arrivals with hand shakes and hugs, Daniel and Emma left with them to meet the Delacours. Bill approached Harry and Hermione with the largest smile that either of them had ever seen on the eldest Weasley.*

*"Welcome you two. Ron and Ginny are here somewhere." Bill took Harry's hand in both of his. "The family's filled me in on your magic Harry. I wish there was something I could do."*

*"I'm getting by Bill."*

*Bill's eyes flicked between them. "Oh, I see." He smiled. "Good for you"*

*Harry and Hermione exchanged puzzled looks, what did he see? Did they look guilty?*

*"Fleur asked that I send you up to see her before the ceremony Harry. She said she had a talk to you 'champion to champion'... I think she wants to see if she can dazzle you with her Veela side just once before she marries. She tells me you were the only guy at the Triwizard to look her in the eye." He smiled. "She could never resist a challenge." Bill tried to look dangerous "But I hate competition."*

*Harry laughed. "Yeah, right, why marry all 6 foot 2 inches of tall muscular red headed God, when she could have all this?" he gestured at his own skinny bespectacled form.*

*Bill slapped him on the back. "Percy's room."*



*Hermione drifted off to greet friends, so Harry went to find Fleur. On his way he spotted Neville and his Grandmother.*

*"Neville! Happy Birthday Mate!"*

*"And you Harry, look at us, all grown up. You're looking better. How do you feel? We heard about the attack at the Grangers. You took those bastards down WITHOUT your magic?"*

*"Got lucky with a pool stick and a billiard ball. Either of those up side one's head focuses the mind most effectively. Daniel got two with his muggle shotgun, and Hermione got two as well."*

*He paused for a moment looking at Neville and made a decision. "Mrs. Longbottom, Neville, we need to talk"*

*"If this is about Ginny, I didn't do anything Harry. I shut her down as soon as I knew."*

*"Ginny? no Neville, this is important. Ginny and I are over, were before we came home from school."*

*"Well then, what is it dear?"*

*Harry gave them both an appraising look. "Mrs. Longbottom, did the Headmaster ever tell you about the Prophecy?"*

*Blank looks came from both of them. "Ok, A few months before Neville and I were born the Headmaster was given a prophecy." He closed his eyes and recited*

*"The one with the power to vanquish the - Dark Lord approaches... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he*

*will have power the Dark Lord knows not... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies..."*

*Looks of shock filled both of the Longbottoms faces. "According to Dumbledore, that prophecy could only point at two people. Neville and Myself." He paused to let them digest the information. "The Headmaster suggested that my scar was when he marked me, and I suppose that could be right. But it seems to me that he's marked you just as thoroughly Neville. Now that my magic's gone, Riddle may decide that the mantle of 'Chosen One' has fallen to you."*

*Neville looked worried. "Do you believe in the prophecy Harry?"*

*Harry Shrugged. "I don't know. It all seems to be exceptionally vague to me, but Riddle believes in it. And acts on that belief. I thought you should know."*

*The Minister of Magic approached. "Madam Longbottom, Mr. Longbottom, Potter."*

*"Minister." Augusta Longbottom said coldly. "Any reason you believe we would want to speak with you after the stunt you pulled last week?"*

*"All I did was pronounce a dead house extinct Augusta."*

*"What house?" Neville asked suspiciously.*

*"Why the formerly great house of Potter, of course."*

*"Is that supposed to anger me Minister? To punish me?" Harry laughed. "If anyone had ever told me that I was a member of a great house, it might. Until a few days ago I didn't even know I owned property. Amazing."*

*"We will be seeing about that Property Potter. Without aHouse to protect you, I think you'll find that the Ministry will be in control of all you own before long."*

*"Really?" Neville looked angry. Harry reflected that he had never really seen Neville get angry, at least not this angry. He held up his right fist and a large signet ring appeared. "I happen to be the new Patriarch of the Ancient and Noble House of Longbottom." Neville's magic flared into avisible aura. "As Patriarch I invoke the ancient laws and take into my family as my heir and brother Harry James Potter, of the Equally Ancient and Noble House of Potter. Any insult visited upon My Heir, My Brother or his Ancestral House will be viewed as an insult to the House of Longbottom, with all the consequences that involves."*

*Neville looked at the Minister of Magic like some type of unpleasant insect. "I would suggest you return to the Ministry to repair your grievous error." The Minister opened his mouth to say something. Neville cast sonorous on himself "NOW YOU INSIGNIFICANT WASTE OF FLESH BEFORE THE HOUSE OF LONGBOTTOM ERASES YOU FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH!" The Minister (and his toadies)apparated on the spot.*

*"Sweet Merlin Neville!"*

*"The very least I could do for my friend Harry."*

*"Well done Neville"*

*Neville Blushed. "Thanks Gran. I learned from the best. If anyone knows how to intimidate bullies, it's you."*

*"Neville, you don't need to do this, I don't want your family to get into trouble over me."*

*"Harry, you've helped me, stood up for me, and protected me until I learned to do it myself. It's only fair I return the favor now that I can."*

*"Throwing your weight around again Neville?"*

*"Harry you remember Susan Bones?" Harry nodded "We're dating."*

*"Congratulations, both of you!"*

*After thanking Neville again, and a few moments of small talk, Harry once again struck out in search of Fleur.*

*Malfoy Manor*

*Throne Room:*

*"Welcome Daughters of my Lord's death eaters" Bellatrix had culled the girls who were too young, and those who were obviously too old. Leaving 27 candidates between the ages of a very physically mature 12 year old and 24. "Rejoice! Today you have the opportunity to serve the Dark Lord in ways that only a few have."*

*The girls and their fathers murmured together. "The Dark Lord requires the services of a Virgin for a Sex rite, you have been brought here that he might have his choice" There was a short pause, and most of the girls started laughing.*

*Later:*

*"What went wrong Bella?"*

*"We will have to extend our search further a field. It seems that the strong morals of our youth are things of the past."*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*The Bridal Room:*

*Harry knocked on the door to Percy's old room. It opened to show far more women than Harry was comfortable being alone with.*

*"'arree!" Fleur ran to him and wrapped him in her arms, her Veela charms radiating at full blast.  
"How are you?"*

*Malfoy Manor*

*Riddle's Bed Chamber:*

*Riddle convulsed on the bed. "Bella! Find me that virgin NOW."*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow:*

*An hour later Harry was seated on the Groom's side. Holding Hermione's hand, the Grangers sat on the other side of Hermione. Hermione had been whispering to her father to be careful of Fleur and her relatives due to their being Veela, and explained the effect those women could have on a man. She also told her mother how proud she was that Harry seemed to be immune.*

*Bill and his brothers (and a goblin!) lined up at the pulpit. Then the music started, Fleur's bridesmaids started down the aisle, followed by the bride.*

*"She's so beautiful!" Hermione heard her mother whisper.*

*"She's ok I guess. I don't see what all this 'veela' stuff is about." That got him kissed by both his wife and daughter. "what?"*

*-----ooo000ooo-----*

*Later:*

*"Ron!"*

*"Hey Hermione, glad you could make it. Did everyone make it out of your house ok?"*

*"Yes Ron, everyone's fine."*

*"We need to talk." They said together. Then they both laughed.*

*"I guess we're both getting dumped." Hermione smiled at him broadly. "You first"*

*"Luna and I have sort of found each other."*

*"So have Harry and I."*

*"So, we're ok?"*

*"We're always ok Ron."*

*"Ok, good. I want to find Luna so we can dance."*

*"You dance now?"*

*"Badly. She likes to dance, and will teach me to be better. She says to just ignore the music."*

*"Ah, Luna dancing. Go, have fun."*

*-----ooo000ooo-----*

*"Ginny!"*

*"Just stay away from me Harry. I don't need you to suck my magic away."*

*"Ginny? I wouldn't hurt you."*

*"You've already turned my brothers and father against me Harry, just stay the hell away from me. Just go hump Hermione's leg and leave me alone."*

*-----ooo000ooo-----*

*"How are you today Auggie?"*

*"Better every day Alastor. Did you see what our boy did to the Minister?"*

*"Fairly hard to miss Auggie. The boy's got a pair, just like his dad. Do you think it might be time to tell him?"*

*Augusta nodded. "I think it's well past time the boy met his Grandfather." She leaned in to kiss him, and smiled. "I think the only time that those eyes of yours are both looking at the same thing is when you kiss me."*

*Alastor Moody chuckled. "It's the only time I want to make sure I don't miss anything."*

*-----ooo000ooo-----*

*After several dances with Harry (who was getting better all the time) and a couple with her father and class mates Hermione saw Luna dragging Ron off the dance floor. Her curiosity got the better of her and she followed them into the Burrow. Up the stairs to Ron's room, she really wanted to talk to Luna about the coming year. Then she heard the sounds coming from the room negated her curiosity.*

*/Wow. Luna is vocal/. Who'd of thought that? Her brow furrowed. What 'research' was Ron talking about?*



## **Chapter 15 - Appointments**

*Brown Estate*

*Lavender's Suite:*

*"Drinks everyone!"*

*Lavender directed her friends to the table stocked with refreshments delivered by the Brown family House elves.*

*"Thanks Lav," Pavarti selected a bottle of Butterbeer. "So, what's the latest news on Harry?"*

*"Still no magic. The Ministry tried to screw with him last week" Susan said for the benefit of the girls who didn't take the Prophet. "Tried to strike his family from the House Roles. But Neville adopted Harry into Longbottom House and threatened to marshal the Longbottom House against him." Susan smiled at the memory. "Neville has become so...."*

*"Tasty?" Padma supplied helpfully.*

*"Sexy?" suggested Hannah Abbot.*

*"Rich?" added Lavender. "Well he is. Who would have thought that chubby little Neville from the sorting would end up so fancible?"*

*"None of us were prizes at the sorting." Susan interjected. "Neville's mine girls, back off."*

*Laughter rang throughout the room. "Ok, what other gossip do we have?"*

*"I've heard that Ron Weasley has hooked up with Luna Lovegood." Offered Hannah.*

*"No, Loony Lovegood and Ron Weasley? What could she possibly offer him?"*

*"I think that's obvious Lav." Pavarti stared at her friend pointedly. "She's not putting any pressure on him. And sleeping with him."*

*"That works for most guys." Said Hannah*

*"Luna is a sweet girl who would do anything for a friend." Padma looked somewhat sad. "My house hasn't been very nice to her. If she is taking him to her bed, it's because SHE wants to, not a ploy to bend him to her will. There isn't a devious bone in her body."*

*"At least not until Ron visits" Lavender's bawdy joke reduced the crowd to tears of laughter.*

*"Moving on, Hermione has only been seen in the company of a certain Savior of the Wizarding World for the last few weeks. Is Harry/Ginny over?"*

*"I don't think Ginny took Harry losing his magic very well." Padma said. "I think what happened to him scared her horribly."*

*"You all said I was crazy when I put 10 galleons on Harry/Hermione pairing up." Pavarti smiled. "Ginny was never a good match for him. She's cute and all, but to love someone like Harry, you need more than the little girl fantasies about "the Boy who Lived."."*

*"That was insightful Pavarti; did Padma work that out for you?" Pavarti flung a biscuit at*

*Lavender.*

*"Ok, time to embarrass ourselves. Who here had one of those 'Harry Potter' dolls that Zonko's used to sell?" Susan asked.*

*Slowly, with much embarrassment all 5 of the young women raised their hands.*

*"Who still has the doll?" asked Padma in a quiet voice.*

*Again, all 5 raised their hands. "Sweet Merlin, we're nothing but a bunch of fan girls."*

*Padma looked from face to face. "You know one thing I always wondered, how Zonko's managed to get such a good image of Harry for those dolls. Ok, sure they took his father who everyone said he looked like when he was a baby, and added his mother's eyes, but how did they know about the glasses? My doll had the same style of glasses he had first year, including the broken frames before Hermione fixed them. The doll was sold BEFORE Harry even knew he was a wizard, living with his mother's muggle relatives. And how did they know about the scar? They say that Dumbledore had Hagrid take Harry from the ruins of his parent's home to his relatives with no stops in-between. My Harry doll had the lightning bolt scar in exactly the same place that Harry's real scar is, every one knows about his scar. I remember seeing him on the Express, seeing the scar and knowing it was Harry, but HOW did we know this?"*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*Molly's Kitchen:*

*"Hermione"*

*Hermione sat at the Weasley table, where she had shared many meals with her favorite other family. "What have I done Ginny? Why are you so angry with me?"*

*"Who said you did anything? Maybe I just decided I didn't want to be your 'little friend anymore."*

*"But why? I heard what you said to Harry." Ginny looked up, brown eyes blazing. "Not from Harry. You weren't exactly discreet. You were angry at him for some reason, told him you didn't want him to suck your magic away, like he would do that. You accused him of turning your family against you, as if he COULD do that. Then you told him to 'go hump' my leg." She blinked back tears. "Have you been told by someone that Harry and I were intimate?"*

*"Why should I care if you let him between your legs?" Ginny stood to leave. Hermione took hold of her arm and pulled her back to her seat.*

*"Ginny, Harry and I have NEVER been intimate on that level. I have comforted him in the face of the loss of his magic, and in the loss of his family. He never liked them, but blames himself for their deaths. The night my mother was almost killed, and I lost control killing a man, Harry held me all night while I cried, feeling sorry for myself. I haven't tried to take him away from you."*

*"Don't you get it? The Idea of touching a squib turns my stomach. I don't care what you would do with him, I'm repulsed by the idea, and if you aren't you aren't as smart as I thought you were. I'm leaving; I don't want to talk to you anymore. Just leave me alone." And she stalked off.*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*Outside:*

*"Good Morning Hermione"*

*"Good morning to you too Luna. How are you this morning?"*

*"I haven't seen a Slitmor all morning, but the day will improve when Ron and I make love."*

*Hermione blinked. Well, she is certainly up front about it. "You've reached that level of your relationship then?"*

*Luna cocked her head to the side. "You know we have, Hermione, you were outside his room following Bill's wedding, why pretend otherwise?"*

*"I was a little ashamed of intruding on your privacy like that. Just trying to be discreet." How did Luna know I had been outside the room?*

*"I'm told discretion is a good talent to have. I've never had the knack."*

*Longbottom Manor*

*Augusta Longbottom's Personal Suite:*

*"Neville?" His gran asked in shock. "What are you doing home right now?"*

*"I just got back from escorting Susan home, saw your lights still on, and thought that I'd stop in and say good night." Neville said happily.*

*"Did you have a good time?" She asked.*

*"Yeah," the boy agreed. "I . . . is there someone else here?"*

*"Why would you ask that dear?" The old woman asked nervously."*

*"I can hear them," Neville said as his hand dropped to his wand.*

*"He's old enough to know Augusta," a gravelly voice said. "Tell him."*

*"Tell me what? Neville demanded.*

*"Your grandfather, my husband is alive." The old woman said. "He's been hiding his relationship with us to keep us safe."*

*"From who?"*

*"Half the bloody world," Moody said as he stepped out. "I have lots of people wanting to kill me and many more that would be happy to get you instead."*

*"You're my grandfather?" Neville asked in shock.*

*"That I am," Moody agreed.*

*"I . . . I don't know what to say?"*

*"Say teach me to kill Death Eaters," Moody said with a grin. "And we'll have something to bond over as your grandmum likes to say."*

*"Teach me to kill Death Eaters," Neville said eagerly.*

*Malfoy Manor*

*Riddle's Bed Chamber:*

*"I have found the witch that fits your requirements my Lord. She is the daughter of one of your followers, a pureblood so as to not contaminate your essence and a Virgin for the purity the Rite requires."*

*"Bring her to me Bella, you will perform the incantation to return me to power."*

*Her heavily lidded eyes glistened in anticipation. "My Lord, I present Amanda Parkinson*

*She is Research Librarian Level 5 at the department of Mysteries, 43 years old and pure.*

*Riddle shuddered slightly. The woman looked like the south end of a north bound skrewt. "Very well my lovely Bella. You shall be rewarded Amanda Parkinson. We will perform the ceremony in 20 minutes." The Parkinson woman left to prepare. "Bella"*

*"Yes My Lord"*

*"I will require two large Canvas shopping bags."*

*Potter Estate*

*Library:*

*A high pitched scream of Elvin terror tore Hermione's attention from the book she was reading. She ran from the room, wand ready, to the entry foyer where she saw Harry, unconscious, hovering in mid air, surrounded by a glowing pulsing sphere of magic.*

*---===ooo000ooo===---*

*Insanely ancient bad joke department:*

*After Poor Tom and his Librarian friend, I couldn't resist a small joke... Please note, this has nothing to do with the story.*

*When the Idea of the 'virgin sacrifice' idea to strengthen Tom, this old joke kept playing in my head:*

*"My Lord. We have determined that to restore you to health, you will need to deflower a virgin." Lucius fought to keep the smile off his face. A crucio first thing in the morning can ruin your whole day.*

*"Very well. The girl will be well rewarded. I require her to be of pure blood to keep from contaminating my essence.*

*"Yes My Lord" said Bellatrix, taking notes.*

*"She must be blind so that she will not know who had done this to her"*

*"Yes My Lord" said Bellatrix.*

*"She must be deaf, so that she will not hear what I am doing to her."*

*"Yes My Lord" said Bellatrix*

*"She must be mute, so that she can never tell anyone what I do to her."*

*"Yes My Lord" said Lucius, starting to get into it.*

*"And she must have huge tits..."*



## Chapter 16 – Transitions

### *Potter Estate*

#### *Foyer:*

*Hermione stood apart from Harry as he floated, suspended 20 feet off the marble floor. The bluish glow of the bubble of magic lit the room. Dobby's screams had alerted her parents that something was happening; she heard them running toward her, until she heard her mother gasp at seeing Harry.*

*Inside the bubble, Harry started to rotate laterally. When his head turned toward her, Hermione saw that the normal green of his eyes was gone, replaced by the entire visible eye being black, all the appearance of being dead. However, through the bubble she could still see the rhythmic rise and fall of his chest. Hermione knelt next to the still screaming elf, and comforted him while shushing him.*

*Hermione reached out with her wand to touch the bubble, no opposition. It was as if it was not there at all. When her hand penetrated the glowing field of magic, it tingled like passing through an especially strong ward. Withdrawing her hand, it was all pins and needles.*

*She cast a scan charm on the bubble, and got no return at all. That was not possible, if nothing else it should have at least told her it could not see anything. Again, she cast the charm. Again, no return.*

*Within the bubble of Magic, Harry began to convulse... Once, twice, three times the spasms went through him, then the bubble vanished, and Harry fell to the floor with a wet thump. Blood began to pool about his head.*

### *Malloy Manor*

#### *Throne Room:*

*A revitalized Riddle strode to his throne and threw himself into it.*

*"Now that that bit of unpleasantness is over, important matters can be concentrated upon." He looked around the room at the kneeling minions.*

*"Bella?"*

*The Witch rose from her position on the floor. "My lord?"*

*"The Matter we discussed." Riddle laughed. "Lucius Malfoy, rise."*

*The regal Death Eater rose to his feet. "How may I serve you My Lord?"*

*"Where are your family Lucius?" purred Bellatrix dangerously*

*"I haven't seen Draco or Narcissa today, but I'm sure they're in their chambers."*

*"Lies Lucius? You lie before your Master?" Riddle intoned.*

*"Neither your wife or son have been seen in a week Lucius. Where are they?"*

*"I..." his words cut off and replaced by screams when Riddle cast Cruciatu*

*"Where is your family, Lucius?"*

*Gasping for breath, the somewhat less regal Malfoy attempted to stand. "I do not know. Draco was part of the team of seven that never returned from the mission to collect Potter and his Whore, Narcissa disappeared the same day." Struggling for his composure, he continued. "The wards do not show her leaving the Manor; I do not know where she might be."*

*"Was that so hard Lucius? That was all I wanted to know. Bella?"*

*Bellatrix Lestrange ended Malfoys life.*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*Outside:*

*"That was nice." Luna rolled off Ron Weasley and cuddled into him*

*"Nice? That was Bloody Fantastic! I swear, you're going to kill me one of these days."*

*"Yes, but not for another 94 years. I will cry for several days, but will be alright for our great great granddaughter's wedding three weeks later." She smiled at the look on his face. "Our eldest son will tell everyone the truth."*

*"What truth?"*

*"That making love to me is how you wanted to go."*

*Ron blinked. Well, that's Luna. She is certainly seems to know what to expect from life.... Do it you coward. Ask her! "So, we're going to be together for another 94 years then?"*

*Luna cocked her head to the side. "Oh yes. We will have five children; the oldest and youngest will be boys that take after you. The middle children, a set of triplets, girls, who take after me in appearance, and the twins in temperament." She looked a little perplexed "Why they would emulate the twins is beyond me, but they will. We will chastise them quite a bit, but George and Fred will love them beyond all their other nieces and nephews, and spoil them accordingly"*

*"Well, if it's all planned out" he leaned over to kiss her deeply. After the kiss broke, "Would you marry me?"*

*"Oh, yes Ronald"*

*She said yes, she said yes, she said yes, SHE SAID YES! "We could do it next summer, or the summer after that when you finish at Hogwarts."*

*"Oh, no Ronald. First we all need to defeat Voldemort, and then you have to play for England in the World Cup."*

*Ron blinked again. "I'm going to play for England?"*

*"Yes. You will be the most valuable player for not letting the other team score. Their seeker gets the snitch, but England will still win."*

*"Who will the other team be?"*

*"I don't follow the world cup, I don't know." She thought for a moment. "They wear blue robes."*

*Blue robes. Just about every other team wore blue robes. "Where will you be for the cup then, since you don't follow it."*

*"I'll be in the stands with Hermione and Victor Krum. Victor will be so cute, telling everyone he knows you."*

*/Krum will be telling people he knows me/? "So where's Harry for all this? And Hermione gets together with Victor?"*

*"Oh, no. Hermione will be there with her husband Marcus. Victor will be there because he's going to be a commissioner for the World Cup." She looked a little sad. "I don't know where Harry will be, I've never seen him there."*

## Chapter 17 – Interludes

*Potter Estate*

*Master Suite:*

*Hermione led Madam Pomfrey to Harry.*

*"At my age, I don't make that many house calls anymore" Poppy pretended to be upset. "Especially at the demands of a house elf.*

*"I tried everything I could think of to get Harry to you, but nothing worked. I can't apparate him anymore, even Dobby can't, and I couldn't think of anything but to send Dobby to ask you to come."*

*"It isn't a problem Ms. Granger. Just one of my jokes. Levitated inside a sphere of visible magic you say?" Why was it always a unique experience treating Harry Potter? "I'll tend to him. You should see to his elf friend, he isn't looking well at all."*

*Potter Estate*

*Dining Room:*

*Daniel surveyed the selection of items available for breakfast. "We need to hire one of these little people. I've never met anyone so happy to work and so delighted to please."*

*"I don't know if I could take their cheerfulness every morning." Emma said looking out the window at the grounds. "I also don't know if I could take the utter despair they go through if they think they have displeased you." She paused. "I also don't know if I will be able to survive the utter despair that Hermione will go through if anything more happens to Harry."*

*"Tell me about it. It isn't much easier for us. How can anyone not love the kid? He treats Hermione like a princess, He keeps playing pool with me, handing me a pound every time I sink a shot. He*

*took a shot intended for you that he thought would kill him. As long as I can keep pretending that Hermione is sleeping in her room every night, the boy is my new best friend."*

*"They haven't been intimate Daniel"*

*"Right. I was 17 once Em, don't try and sell that one."*

*"I knew you at 17 Daniel. The only one you were sleeping with was me. No matter how you remember it, you weren't nearly as fancible as young Mr. Potter. Hermione asked me if there was something wrong with her."*

*"What?" There is nothing wrong with Hermione. I'll hurt the little...*

*"The night we got here, I saw what was on her mind and we spoke about it. I gave her our blessing. She offered herself to him. He told her she was upset, and that doing anything under those conditions would be unwise. He told her that he wanted her badly but that he needed to wait until it was over."*

*"What?" How could any man turn down my gorgeous little girl?*

*"He doesn't think he's going to survive this Daniel, I think he's afraid that if their intimate, he'll leave her with his baby." She shook her head sadly. "I assured her that under any normal circumstance Harry would probably be all over her. She told me he holds her at night, they cry a little, and he's there if she has nightmares. And she has nightmares every night. He's there for her." She looked at him, and continued in a small voice "Just like you're there for me."*

*Ah, damn it all to hell. How am I supposed to deal with that? "Do you think I should talk to him when he gets better?"*

*"And tell him what exactly? 'Go on, do her.'?"*

*Potter Estate*

*Library:*

*"Dobby?"*

*A 'pop' of Elvin apparition. "Yes Ms Harry Potter's Grangy?"*

*"Dobby, are you alright? You appear to be ill."*

*"It is nothing Ms. Harry Potter's Grangy. Dobby is weak because he is not bonded to a wizard. Dobby was bonded to Harry Potter sir when he was a great wizard, but when he became a great man without magic, the bond went away."*

*"But you're a free elf Dobby, why would not being bonded hurt you?"*

*"Elf magic is tied to bond with a wizard or witch Ms Harry Potter's Grangy. When Harry Potter Sir helped Dobby be free, Dobby bonded to him. This is way Dobby always comes when Harry Potter Sir, or Harry Potter Sirs friends call."*

*"Couldn't you find another wizard to bond with?"*

*"Dobby could try, but Dobby will not. Dobby will not leave Harry Potter Sir while he is weak. Dobby would die first."*

*/He's willing to die to help Harry/. "Could you bond to any wizard or witch, even one who didn't want you to work for them? A muggleborn maybe?"*

*"Oh yes, any wizard, Ms Harry Potter Sir's Grangy."*

*"Dobby, would you like to bond with me? If you do, I would ask you remain with Harry to help him."*

*"Oh yes, please!" He grasped her left hand in both of his. She never felt so huge before. A sensation like an electric shock passed between them. "Would Hermione Granger Like anything before Dobby attends to Hermione Granger's Harry?"*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*The Paddock:*

*"Where will we live?"*

*"In a nice little house near the shore. You will take the children to the sea to learn to swim, and we will make love on the beach on warm nights." Luna got that far away look she was famous for "You make me happy now, and will in the future."*

*'Is this real Luna? Do you really know what is going to happen?"*

*"I know what is going to happen to me." She stooped to pick up a smooth stone, marveling at the colors it held. "I see what I will see; I know what I will know. Of course," she put the stone into the left front pocket of her jeans "the future me also knows what the past me knows, it's only fair."*

*"Do I ever disappoint you?" Ron had a sneaking suspicion that he frequently disappointed people.*

*"Only once."*

*"What do I do? Am I a jealous git? Do I hurt you?" Fear in his voice. He had hurt Hermione more than once with his stupidity. "Do I Cheat?"*

*"You could never hurt me Ronald, it isn't in you. And the fact that you will die while we are making love proves you never cheat on me." She found another stone, so very different from the first; it too was saved in the pocket. "Because if you cheated on me, you would have died from some most horrible curses that Harry has taught me." She smiled up at him.*

*Ron shuddered, just a little bit, making a note to find out just what curses Harry had taught her. "Then how will I disappoint you?"*

*"When you buy your parents a new home, the year you captain your Cannons win the cup, you don't let me check it for Plistos. As a consequence, Molly gets the most horrible new hairdo..."*

*Potter Estate*

*Library:*

*"Hermione?"*

*This can't be good. Poppy Pomfrey has never once used my given name. "Yes?"*

*Poppy entered the library wiping her hand on a towel. "He's awake. He's fine. The blood was mostly from a bloody nose, and few cuts."*

*"He fell at least 20 feet on to a marble floor!"*

*"It must be that damned Quidditch. Even unconscious, he knew how to fall. From the bruise, he*



*appears to have taken most of it on his butt." She shook her head. "Except for the curse, he's fine, I gave him a Muggle sedative, he'll sleep through the night."*

*"And the curse?"*

*"Has gotten stronger. Every single magically created item I took into that room disappeared. Transfigured items returned to what ever they were originally. He is putting out a field of no magic, inside its area, magic doesn't work. Which brings me to your sleeping arrangements."*

*"What about them?"*

*"I'm not that old Hermione. I remember being 17 and being with a handsome young man. That and I saw your sleepwear under the pillow on 'your side'." The older witch smiled at the embarrassed girl. "You need to move down to one of the rooms near your parents."*

*"No."*

*"This is important Hermione. I was in there for an hour. I've had a 10 percent drop in my magical reserves. When I exited the room, I was pins and needles over my entire body. I am already regenerating those reserves, but if you are in there for 8 hours, I don't know how drained you'll be, or if you can come back from it."*

*"I don't care. He's lost everything, we've started to find each other, and I won't leave him."*

*"I didn't say leave him. I said don't sleep with him. School is starting soon; you'll need your magic. Harry tells me you're going, and I approve."*

*"I can't leave now!"*

*"Harry said you'd say that. He said that if you 'pulled your usual crap' as he put it, he would have the elves put you and your things out the door. Don't worry, he isn't planning to sit here feeling sorry for himself. I've seen the look in his eye too many times after too many visits to the Hospital Wing. He's planning something."*

## Chapter 18 – Returns

*Potter Estate*

*Billiard Room:*

*"You know, it's a shame that you own this magnificent table, and still play like crap" Daniel smiled at him. "2 ball, corner." Click. Thunk. Another ball dropped in a pocket.*

*"Maybe I'll take up golf and use it as a putting green" Harry flipped another pound coin into the bucket he had set up in the billiard room for that purpose. It was over flowing. "I wonder if using those little spikes on the felt would change your game any?"*

*"Don't even joke about that. This table is a work of art. AND it's financing my retirement. 6 ball, side." Click. Thunk, and the metallic ring of another coin added to the pile. "You and Hermione are off for London tomorrow?"*

*"Yes. I'm not sure how long I'll be gone, I'll see her off at the station, then I've got some business. It will probably be December before I get back, if then." He looked embarrassed. "I need to ask a favor of you sir."*

*"Name it Harry. And my name is Daniel."*

*"Not to me it isn't sir, at least not until I'm done with what's coming, one way or another. The most lasting effect of my time with my family I guess. Respect for ones elders, first, foremost, and forever. I still need to earn the privilege of using your name."*

*The boy looked lost and afraid, but only for a moment. "The favor I wanted to ask is if you would consent to managing this property for me. The Death Eater attacks have left many people in need of help. There are many orphans. I'm going to try to get the worst cases sent here. I'll hire more Elves*

*to help with everything, but these kids are going to need the human touch, if you and Mrs. Granger are willing I'd like that human touch to come from you." He met Daniels eyes levelly. "Seeing how well Hermione turned out, I can't think of anyone better in the world."*

*"I'll have to talk to Emma, but I can't imagine she'll say no."*

*Harry sighed, and closed his eyes. So very quietly, he said "Thank god."*

*"Oh Harry?" Daniel looked a bit pained. "I'm sorry I got so upset yesterday"*

*"Don't worry about it Sir, I was being presumptuous."*

*"No, you weren't. I was being an ass. Emma and I discussed it last night. Go ahead."*

*Gourock Scotland*

*Train Station:*

*Harry left the ticket counter. "The train to Glasgow will be here in about 20 minutes. We'll have to get the tickets to London at the Queens Street Station, they don't sell them here."*

*Hermione was quiet. The departure from the Potter Estate was a somber one. Here parents wanted her to stay where it was safe, but understood what she needed to do.*

*"If we hide here and don't do what we can, we'll be hiding forever." Her mother had said. With Harry's magic gone she and Ron needed to rally the DA to protect the school. The young children deserved at least that much. No matter how much she wanted to stay on the Potter grounds hidden from the world, she had responsibilities.*

*"We'll have about 6 hours to burn in Glasgow, fancy a bit of shopping?"*

*"Sounds like fun." It did really, she could use the fun. After a break of about a week, last night she had the nightmare again. Harry and her mother slumping to the floor after being hit by the killing curse. Her father falling to the floor glassy eyed from another, and then the six of them came for her, her magic ineffectual in her fear. The six of them tearing at her clothing while her parent's lifeless eyes looked on, intent on taking the gift she saved for Harry...*

*She had risen from her bed and made her way to Harry, warnings be damned. He protested until she started to cry, then he took her into her arms and held her until she was once again sleeping, only happy dreams now.*

*After sad goodbyes to her parents, the young couple were walking toward the gate, when they heard the Malfoys calling. Narcissa was as beautiful as ever, still in that plastic doll way. Draco looked embarrassed. When she and Harry approached, Draco extended his hand.*

*"We'll never be friends Potter, but I owe you for my mother's life. I will pay you back."*

*Harry too his hand. "If you want to pay me back, take care of your mum, and live a good life Malfoy. Be happy. Raise kids that know they are better than everyone else by their actions, not by who their father is."*

*Bidding the Malfoys good bye, the couple again turned toward the gate.*

*"If things had been different, we could have been friends. The way you plot the destruction of your enemies is very Slytherian... Harry."*

*"Yeah, if things had been different. The way you came to an enemy to plead for your Mother's life shows you got a huge pair of Gryphindor's between you legs... Draco."*

*Hermione had smacked him for that. "Do you boys have to make everything about your dangly bits?"*

*Honestly." Harry had just smiled.*

*The train was pulling into the station, not as Victorian as the Hogwarts express, it was a fairly modern electric train.*

*"Well, let's go. Our adventures await."*

*Diagon Alley*

*Gringotts:*

*Harry and Hermione were ushered into an opulent office. An opulent office that appeared to be in a cave.*

*"Mr. Potter, Ms Granger, good to see you. I am Ragnak, Manager of this bank. How can Gringotts be of service to you today?"*

*Hermione was surprised that the Bank Manager knew her name. Knowing Harry Potter she could understand, but last she checked her personal vault has less than 12 Galleons in it.*

*"I apologize for wasting your time Sir, there seems to have been a mistake, my business with Gringotts is far too unimportant to take up your time Sir. I only wished access my vault to make a withdrawal, and hire the services of the Bank to establish a will."*

*"For the Potter Account, Potters who have reached their Majority have always dealt with the Bank Manager Mr. Potter. I personally assisted your father and grandfather when they reached their majority, I will assist you, and look forward to assisting your children."*

*Hermione and Harry exchanged looks, the Potter fortune must be a bit larger than either of them had imagined.*

*My sympathies for the attack on your parent's home Ms Granger. I must say you all acquitted yourselves well, with there being only one magic user in the home at the time. e Death Eaters killed, one by magic, two by Muggle weapon, and three rendered unconscious until they were captured by Aurors, one by magic and two by ..." he looked at a piece of parchment on his desk, "two by Muggle gaming equipment." He looked up at the couple. "The Auror report shows evidence that a killing curse was cast by one of the assailants, but no spell damage associated with that curse was found. Humor the curiosity of an old goblin if you will, what did the killing curse hit?"*

*"Uh, me."*

*"I thought as much, given what I've heard of your current condition." Noting the look on his face, Ragnak continued. "Gringotts takes great pains in being aware of our major account holder's situations."*

*"Thank you Sir. Harry handed over the parchment upon which he had sketched out his intentions for his will. "This is basically what I want to do, but I don't know all of my holdings. Could the estate experts help me with it?"*

*"Certainly. Could you return, say, Wednesday at noon?" Harry nodded. "Excellent. When you reached your majority, your trust vault was folded back into the Family vault. You will need this key." He held it out to Harry and signaled for Griphook to enter.*

*"Ah Griphook, Mr. Potter needs to go to his family Vault."*

*-----ooo000ooo-----*

*Following a substantially longer ride in the cart, they arrived at the Potter Vault. Griphook used his key to open the vault and stood aside as they entered.*

*There was so much cash. That did not make any sense to Harry, who remembered a primary school lesson on banks, how depositor's money was invested so as to earn interest, not laying about in a*

*vault somewhere. Hermione was looking at the books predictably. Harry, for something else. There. He opened the box... Perfect.*

*Kings Cross Station*

*The Corner Cafe:*

*"Every year I've seen this place, but we never got here early enough to grab something."*

*"Well we've certainly broken tradition this year. Two hours early" The tea was luke warm despite having just been served; the cakes were nice though "Hermione, I did something stupid the day before we left."*

*"I knew that something happened, Mum and Dad were in quite a state, and you just sat in your room. Did you try and give them money again?"*

*"No, I asked your parents for permission to ask you to marry me."*

*For the first time since he'd known her, Hermione was speechless. "Your father doesn't think it would be a good idea. That it might be a war marriage, rushed into due to the dangers we face. He makes a lot of sense."*

*"Harry?" tears were beginning to form in her big brown eyes.*

*"Before we left, he had reconsidered, and gave me his permission to ask. I thought you should know. I also think you should know that he convinced me. We are very young, and how much of this is the circumstance, and the knowledge that we will be separated? I don't think that affects how I feel about you, but it might..." She still wasn't talking, but the tears were really starting to flow. "So I thought I might ask you to think about the possibility of us. I love you Hermione. I want to be with you for the rest of our lives, how ever long that may be." From a pocket, he produced a ring. "This was my mothers, my grandmother's before her, and so on for at least 5 generations of the Potters." He produced a heavy gold chain. "If you're willing to consider me, wear the ring on this chain, and think of me. I'll know." Hesitantly Hermione took the ring and the chain. "If you decide your*



*answer is yes, just put the ring on your finger. It will resize to your finger. And I'll know."*

*"How do you know all this?"*

*"My grandmother's journal had several entries on her betrothal ring. I found the journal in the master bedroom. I've been reading it a lot. She loved granddad with all her heart. About half as much as I love you."*

*And he was swept into a hug from which he could hardly breathe. Amused commuters smiled at the kissing, crying couple.*

## Chapter 19 – Reactions

*Kings Cross Station*

*Between Platforms 9 and 10:*

*"Funny, I can see the entry way plain as day. I don't like to think about what my trying to use it would do. You're right, I should wait out here."*

*"Oh Harry, I can't even imagine what the trip will be like without you. At least when you missed the train 2nd year, I knew you were with Ron. Now you'll be alone."*

*"Hardly alone, Love. I'll have Goblins to hang around with. And Orphans to track down. On the plus side, my little problem isn't interfering with your ring."*

*"What do you mean? "*

*"The Ring has some serious old magic on it according to my grandmother's journals. Something about 'high elves'. I've never heard of them, but they evidently know their stuff, I can feel your emotions through it, it's odd really. I feel them as if they were my own emotions, but it's like there's a sign on them saying 'this belongs to Hermione, pay attention dummy!'and that's just when it's hanging around your neck on a chain. I shudder to think what it will be like if you ever wear it."*

*He looked deeply into her eyes and kissed her. Those green eyes just made her want to melt into him. "So no matter what happens, no matter how far apart we are, you're with me."*

*Hogwarts Express*

## *Heads Compartment:*

*The Heads Meeting with the prefects had gone well; Stephen Cornfoot of Ravenclaw was the new Head Boy. He, if anything, was more organized than she was and had run the meeting for the two of them, accepting her ideas, and adding them to the plan he had outlined to her before the meeting had begun. It looked like they were a good match.*

*Stephen had left their dedicated compartment to find his Housemates, saying he would return when it was time for their patrol of the train -- Let the prefects do their job Hermione, remember what a pain it was when some officious ass came down on you last year -- He was right, but sitting here, alone didn't seem right. Ron had said that he would be back as soon as his patrol was over, but that would be at least an hour, and she suspected that a visit to Luna might delay his return a bit more.*

*A knock at the door, and it slid open. Susan Bones entered. "Hello Hermione. I thought you might want some company."*

*"More than you could know Susan." The blonde Hufflepuff sat next to her "It's only been half an hour, but I can't believe how much I miss Harry" Susan nodded dully.*

*The door slid open again. Zabini, Goyle, and Crabbe entered unbidden.*

*"Yes? Can I help you with something?"*

*The tree seemed to find her question funny. Glaring at their laughter Hermione barked out "What do you want?"*

*"Well, some time between your legs, would be nice." The dark Slytherian laughed. "Then maybe some time in your mouth, it's important to be early, before both become sloppy messes. Some of our elders have odd appetites."*

*Hermione tried to raise her wand to hex him, but found that Susan was restraining her. A quick*

*glance at the dead eyes of the expressionless Hufflepuff spoke volumes. Her suspicions were confirmed seconds later when Zabini pointed his wand at her.*

*"Imperio!"*

*London*

*Fred Wilkin's Taxi:*

*Fred Wilkin had been driving taxis in London for almost 35 years. It could be quite lucrative, especially when one managed to pick up tourists who did not quite understand the exchange rate, and consequently over tipped exceptionally well. Yanks were especially good for that, with Canadians as a close second, though experience had taught him to always assume that they were Canadians. While Yanks did not mind the mistake, many Canadians for some reason viewed being called a 'Yank' as a form of insult.*

*Not that any of that mattered. The skinny kid in glasses he had just picked up at Kings Cross was very obviously English, which sadly led him to expect a substantially smaller tip, if any at all.*

*Fred was in the midst of one of the time-honored traditions of the London Cab. The unending one sided conversation wherein the driver went on at length about pretty much anything at all, when glancing in the rear view mirror, he saw his young passenger start suddenly, a look of terror in his eyes, that vanished as quickly as it started, replace by confusion.*

*Fred found a new topic.*

*Hogwarts Express*

*Heads Compartment:*

*The sense of warm well being that washed over Hermione because of Zabini's spell eliminated all resistance. Some portion of her mind was trying to get her to fight the effects, but so far with no results.*

*Goyle pulled a length of rope from his pocket. A portkey to take Hermione to their master. The Bones girl was just icing on the cake.*

*"Wait on the portkey Greg, why should the inner circle get first crack at these two? Given who they are and the cowardly 'boyfriends' they've collected, the odds are good that they're both virgins. I like virgins, they squeal so loud." The other two agreed. "But first, how about a little show you two? Get your clothes off, and make it sexy."*

*Hermione pulled her jumper off over her head, while Susan started to unbutton her blouse.*

*Gringotts Bank:*

*Bill Weasley was entered the Bank Manager's office nervously. It was rarely a good thing when an employee as junior as he was called to the Manager's office.*

*"Cursebreaker Weasley. Good of you to come. Sit."*

*"Thank you Bank Manager. How may I enhance your wealth?"*

*"I've heard good things about you Cursebreaker, and this confirms it. Very few wizards, even among our employees know the proper forms."*

*"Thank you sir, my father always made it clear to me of the importance of doing the proper things."*

*Ragnak nodded. And the proper form continues, giving credit to the father for what you are. This boy could be a goblin, an ugly one, but a goblin nonetheless. "Ah yes, head of the Weasley clan. Never late with apayment" from a goblin, there was no higher praise. Down to business. "How well do you know Harry Potter?"*

*"He's a family friend Bank Manager. He met my youngest brother on the Hogwarts Express their first year and bonded. He spends quite a lot of time at my family's home."*

*"He also credits you for the idea for a business venture that will generate a massive amount of profit for the bank. Torpkar is getting old and has been making noises about returning home to teach the cubs how to make steel. I need a replacement, are you interested?"*

*Bill swallowed. Department manager? For a wizard? Unheard of. "A great honor Bank Manager, but there are many in the department senior to me."*

*"When they generate the profits you did through your relationship with Harry Potter, then they can protest. Until then Torpkar is leaving tomorrow. I will need a new manager."*

*/Oh hell.../ "I accept Bank Manager. But I must know, what did I do to generate this profit?"*

*"Cursebreaker, what do you know about Horocruxes?"*

*Hogwarts Express*

*Heads Compartment:*

*The captive women had stripped to their knickers. Crabbe spoke for the first time. "Have them make out a bit."*

*Zabini looked over at him "And Malfoy always said you never had any good ideas." The command went out.*

*Susan took Hermione's face in her hands and started a soft gentle kiss that Hermione found herself*

*returning.*

*There was a knock at the door and Neville Longbottom entered the compartment "Hermione? Have you seen Sus..." he stared open mouthed at the scene before him.*

*"Get out Longbottom. Get out now." Zabini hissed. "This has nothing to do with you. Tell him girls."*

*"Yes please Neville, please go." Susan said*

*"Just having a little fun Neville" Hermione followed.*

*Neville looked into their eyes and his shoulders slumped in his familiar pose of defeat. He turned back to the door. Deep in their minds both of the women were screaming for him to get help, but no sound would come.*

*The Slytherins returned their attention to the women, who had received silent commands to begin again. The women's hopes disappeared when they heard the door slide shut.*

*Then everyone in the compartment heard the lock engage.*

*An enraged Neville Longbottom was pointing his wand directly at the Slytherin trio. His first spell, a silent bone breaking curse shattered both of Zabini's femurs, Goyle stood to raise his wand and was met by Neville's 'reducto' to the chest. Goyle slumped to the ground. Crabbe also stood, but tripped over Goyle's bleeding form, falling to the floor he found himself being kicked repeatedly by the women freed from the imperious curse when the pain of Neville's curse caused Zabini to lose consciousness. Susan repeatedly kicked him in the ribs breaking several, while ever the lady, Hermione concentrated on his crotch ensuring that the Crabbe line was ended.*

*His rage spent, Neville put the Slytherians into Full Body Binds, and he then gathered the two girls in his arms until they stopped shaking trying very hard to ignore the fact that they were almost*

*naked.*

## *Hogwarts Express*

### *Three Cars behind the Heads Compartment:*

*As was their habit, the Patil twins, Lavender Brown, Hannah Abbot, and Susan Bones had taken a compartment for themselves to enjoy a back to school gossip session. More than half an hour before Susan had excused herself to go to the toilet, and had not yet returned. The girls were more than a little surprised when a knock at the door found them looking at Neville Longbottom.*

*"Ladies, I need to leave Susan and Hermione with you for a few moments, he pulled the two girls into the compartment. "Please don't hassle them too much, they've had a hard time so far this year. Lock the door behind me, if anyone comes by including me, check them for the Imperious Curse, and verify who they are. If you will excuse me, I have some trash to take out."*

*And he was gone.*

*It was obvious to all in the compartment that Susan and Hermione had been crying. A few gentle questions and the story came pouring out. Of Susan being imperioed upon leaving the toilet, of what the Slytherians were planning to do to them, and what they had been forced to do. Finally what Neville had done.*

*Once Neville was finished with his self-imposed chore, he sought out Stephen Cornfoot, who then found and informed the Prefects of what had happened. Neville then stationed himself outside the compartment where his girlfriend was sitting and settled in to wait. As the word spread, the train was filled with some very angry young people. The Prefects and Head Boy suddenly found themselves with many volunteers to assist in the security of the train. Neville was joined at the door by a very large 5th year Hufflepuff and Cornfoot himself.*

*"Where are they?"*

*Neville gestured to the compartment with the shades drawn. "In there. I told them to lock the door*



*and not let anyone in. If I know those girls, they've gotten the whole story by now, and that compartment is filled with six extremely pissed off witches."*

*"Good thinking Neville, but I meant the assholes that did this."*

*Neville told him. Cornfoot started to laugh. "Well done indeed. How are they?"*

*"Zabini has two broken legs. Goyle took a reducto to the chest, and was bleeding pretty good. Crabbe will never have kids, and it probably hurts to breath."*

*"They could die like that," the Hufflepuff pointed out.*

*"And I'd feel real bad about that." Neville said. "It would probably put me off dinner for three or four minutes."*

*--==ooo000ooo==----*

*After the crying had stopped, the conversation turned to more mundane matters, like how dead the three Slytherians were. Then a few jokes about how lucky Neville was going to get the next time Susan got hold of him.*

*Hermione noticed a ragged doll in the bag on the floor in front of where she sat. She reached down and picked it up. It looked for all the world like a 12-year-old Harry Potter in miniature. "What is this?"*

*Lavender looked embarrassed. "It's a Harry Potter doll. Zonkos sold those years ago; I got him when I was nine. We were talking about those dolls last time we all got together, I remembered how much I loved that doll, so I brought him to school this year..." she hesitated. "All grown up, aren't I?"*

*"If so, so are we" Pavarti said, pulling her own doll from her bag, Padma did as well. Susan and Hannah each produced their own doll. The girls started to laugh. It felt good to laugh.*

*Hermione pouted. "Not fair, everyone has a Harry doll, but me."*

*"It seems to me that you've got the prototype." Padma pointed out. "And yours is the only one anatomically correct."*

*Hermione huffed. "Maybe, but I doubt yours snore or hogs the blankets."*

*Everyone stopped laughing and stared at her. Lavender found her voice first.*

*"Details. Now!"*

## **Chapter 20 – Discoveries**

*Malfoy Manor*

*Riddle's Bedchamber*

*"My Lord?"*

*No response came from the darkened room. Bellatrix ignited the lights in the room. Huddled in the bed was the object of her search.*

*"Make it stop"*

*"Make what stop my lord?"*

*Riddle was near panic "The voices. They won't stop talking to me! Make it stop!"*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*Molly's Kitchen:*

*Her 9th month had started. Penny Weasley was wishing that Percy had never touched her. Would this kid ever be born?*

*"Problems Sister Penny?"*

*"Percy got you down?"*

*"We could prank him into the stone age"*

*"You just say the word"*

*"And he's toast!"*

*"Percy's fine boys. No need to kill him or anything. I'm just uncomfortable."*

*"Add another reason to the list of why it's good to be a guy Forge."*

*"It's there Gred."*

*"So did the Healer tell you?"*

*"We talking Really Big Kid,"*

*"Or twins? We like Twins"*

*"Just one. And yes, the healer did tell us it's a big baby." Oh Joy. All her friends with children had their '300 hours of labor' stories.*

*Fred shot George a sly look. "Made any choices for names yet?"*

*"Let me guess, Fred or George?"*

*"Actually I was thinking if your little Weasley is a girl, Denise would be a good name"*

*"Denise Weasley... That does sound good. What if it's a boy?"*

*"Denephew obviously" and the twins ran for their lives when penny started flinging minor hexes at them.*

*Hogwarts Express*

*Three Cars behind the Heads Compartment:*

*"Details. Now!"*

*"It's not like that. We've been sleeping together to help each other through the nightmares we've been having. Harry and I have never been intimate."*

*"Oh yes Hermione, men and women sleep together all the time to avoid nightmares." Lavender shook her head. "I hope you're at least using a contraceptive charm."*

*"I don't need the contraceptive charm. Our relationship hasn't gotten that far. Harry is very old fashioned. He believes in virginity on the wedding night."*

*"That attitude is more common than some think." Pavarti said, elbowing her sister.*

*"Harry is terrified that he won't survive the confrontation with Voldemorte. He's not willing to make casual physical contact part of his relationships. He asked me to consider marrying him. He gave me this ring." She pulled the ring from around her neck. "It was his mother's and his grandmothers."*

*Padma gasped. "That's a betrothal ring."*

*Hermione nodded. "Harry called it something like that, yes."*

*The pureblood girls exchanged glances. "Sometimes I forget that you didn't grow up with magic." Padma hesitated. "That ring is a physical manifestation of his love for you. He could touch it because he's Potter of Potter. He gave it to you, the magics of the ring allowed this because he loved you. Watch." She reached out to the ring, hanging from the chain around Hermione's neck. As her hand grew close a visible aura manifested around the ring, and flung it's self toward Padma's hand. She jerked her hand back, in pain.*

*Shaking her hand, Padma continued. "And that was just from trying to touch it. If I was stupid"*

*enough to take the pain and force it on my finger, it would kill me." A shudder ran through the girls. "Hey, don't look at me; there have been women who tried it."*

*"What happens when I put it on?"*

*"Well, it depends. If you love him, it sizes its self to you and you bond with Harry. If you don't, it returns to Harry. The rejection may cause you damage, or may not, it depends on the family runes added to the ring."*

*"I guess it comes down to what you feel Hermione" Susan added. "If you truly love him, the bond will be sealed, if not, you reject him."*

*"Can bonded pairs change their minds? I mean if he finds someone better..."*

*"It's not slavery Hermione. Bonded couples have been known to find love with others, but it isn't very common." Hannah said. "The emotions needed to spark the magic are very strong. My Grandmother accepted her betrothal ring at 14; she and grand-dad have been married almost 120 years now." She smiled. "If you had been wearing that ring, Neville wouldn't have needed to deal with Zabini and his bookends. The magics in the Ring would have defended you. Not much use against a powerful wizard, but those losers would have wet themselves."*

*"Why didn't Harry tell me any of this?"*

*"He probably doesn't know. He had less of a magical upbringing than you did." Susan said quietly.*

*She was probably right. Hermione looked at the ring, holding its chain so that she could examine it. The ring was unspeakable beautiful. Something about it screamed of Harry's eyes. He hesitated for a moment, and then removed the chain from around her neck. Pavarti's hand touched her arm.*

*"Hermione, if you're thinking about doing what I think you're doing, you might want to wait. It's supposed to be an intense experience. You might want to wait until you're somewhere safe..."*

*"Where could I possibly be safer than this cabin? Surrounded by friends, with an honor guard outside the door. The only place I've ever felt safer was with Harry."*

*Her decision made, she removed the ring from the chain, and placed on the ring finger of her left hand.*

*Malfoy Manor*

*Throne Room:*

*Riddle raged into the room, and threw himself onto his throne. Bellatrix ran to the room to tend to him. Before she could say a word, Riddle roughly grabbed her arm and pressed his wand to her mark, sending out the call for all of his Death Eaters to immediately report upon pain of torture and death.*

*Diagon Alley*

*Gringotts Bank:*

*Harry was being led through the maze of passageways that led to Ragnak's office. Suddenly a wave of emotion washed over him and he knew that Hermione, what ever had frightened her earlier, had decided, and placed his ring on her finger. Suddenly his left hand felt odd... Looking down he saw that a larger version of the Ring had appeared on his hand. He stumbled as the emotions that he and Hermione shared washed over him, he stopped and leaned against the wall.*

*"Problem Mr. Potter?"*

*"No Griphook, everything is just wonderful. Something just took me by surprise."*

*Hogwarts Express*

*Three Cars behind the Heads Compartment:*

*The ring easily slid onto her finger, and resized its self to fit her. The completeness of Harry's love for her washed over her mind, then over her body. It built and strengthened and built again. A moan escaped her lips as her body convulsed and she rode the crest of orgasm.*

*The cabin was silent throughout her experience. When Hermione finally relaxed with a happy smile on her face.*

*"I've got to get me one of those rings" Lavender whispered.*

*The girls erupted into laughter.*

*Malfoy Manor*

*Throne Room:*

*It took almost 2 hours for all of the Death Eaters to appear, some from as far away as Japan. Riddle had become less patient by the second. The last to appear was killed as he entered the room.*

*"Let it be known" Riddle intoned. "If any of you ever so much as muss the hair of Hermione Granger, I will kill you in ways you cannot imagine. It will take you weeks to die, screaming for release ever second. I will flay the skin from your body, I will..."*

*Riddle's rant of the punishments involved for annoying Harry Potter's Mudblood whore went on for more than an hour, confusing all of his Death Eaters to no end. Riddle himself didn't understand it, but meant every word.*

*Hogsmeade*

*Train Station:*

*One of the nine Aurors on duty at the station saw Zabini, Crabbe and Goyle as the Express pulled into Hogsmeade. They were stuck to the exterior of the Heads' car by a sticking charm. Goyle had died, due to the hole blown in his chest by the reducto, he had bled out. All three were still under the full body bind.*

*"Who did this?"*

*"I did." The Auror turned to see Neville Longbottom (though he had no idea who the kid was) Neville offered the Auror 3 wands belonging to the Slytherians. "They attempted to rape our Head Girl and my girl friend. I found them, and stopped them. They are all marked," Neville gestured to their bared left arms clearly displaying the Dark Mark. "This contains a portkey" he offered a conjured canvas bag. "I don't know where it goes, but it was where they were going to send them."*

*"One of these boys is dead; do you know what you've done?"*

*"Your job?" Neville asked, before turning on his heel to join Hermione and Susan for the carriage ride to the Castle.*

## **Chapter 21 – Repercussions**

*Malfoy Manor*

*Throne Room*

*“My Lord?” The floor around his throne was strewn with wadded up sheets of parchment. The good kind that used his mark as a watermark.*

*“Bellatrix, what rhymes with World Domination?”*

*An odd question, even from a Dark Lord. “Rhymes my Lord? How do you mean?”*

*“Rhymes Bellatrix. You know words that have the same ending sound. Bat, Cat, Pain, Drain, I need a word that rhymes with ‘World Domination’.”*

*“I could send someone to get you a muggle Rhyming Dictionary my Lord.” On his left hand was an ornate ring. It almost looked like a...” MERLIN NO!*

*“Do so. The Poetry is hard work.”*

*“Of course my Lord” Poetry? Oh, please my Lord, no!*

*As she left for her errand, she could have sworn she heard him mutter:*

*“Damn it! Nothing rhymes with ‘Hermione’”*



## *Hogwarts*

### *Great Hall:*

*Hermione sat down to breakfast, marveling at how fast the year was going. Halloween and its associated feast was in only a few days. Newt level classes were challenging enough to allow her to forget that a part of her was missing, if only for short periods of time, and out of terror, she had found a new best friend.*

*Susan Bones was everything Ginny used to be, and more. Their shared nightmare at the hands of Zabini and his hench trolls had formed a bond that both trusted and needed. That and Susan was one of the few young women around who did not envy her relationship with Harry. Hermione had literally had no idea what she had let herself in for when she put that ring on her finger. Susan had her own hero in Neville, and was experiencing her own cases of envy from girls who the year before wouldn't have given Neville the time of day.*

*The aftereffects of that day on the Express were still being felt. The three of them had been questioned for hours. At first together, later apart. The group interrogations ended when Neville had almost crushed the windpipe of the Auror who asked Susan if she might not have led the Slytherins on, commenting on the way she had been dressed. The man found himself against a wall with Neville's forearm across his throat, and Neville's lips next to his ear asking for reasons why he shouldn't be killed right then, since he was, after all 'asking for it'.*

*The Interrogator attempted to press charges against Neville, which floundered due to the other Auror in the room having seen nothing of the incident (oddly enough he had been a protégée of Susan's Aunt Amelia before her death) and Kingsley Shacklebolt had suggested the man might benefit from a reassignment to the John o' Groats station. Some of the Muggle borns had taken to calling Neville 'Rambo' and claimed that he 'spoke softly and carried a tactical nuclear device'. Neville (and the vast majority of the rest of the students, not raised muggle) had no idea what they were talking about, but at least assumed that it was a good thing. Female Aurors started conducting the investigations after that and Hermione was no longer being asked if she had enjoyed the kiss that she and Susan had shared.*

*One oddity in her life was the constant barrage of mail that arrived at breakfast. Unsigned letters promising eternal love, and worst of all some truly horrible love poems. At first, she suspected that Harry or the Twins were having her on, but the birds delivering the notes and presents (usually flowers, sometimes jewelry, Hermione took no chances, and banished it all when it appeared) were not the usual owls, but an odd assortment of ravens, crows, and on one occasion a huge vulture. George might be trying to get his own back, but this was far too weird for even him.*

*Surprisingly, even the DA wasn't the load it had been in earlier years. Ron and she had started the meetings hoping to continue the training, to bring the lower years up to the standard that Harry had established, but Neville had taken that over too, displaying a repertoire of spells that neither she nor Ron had ever seen. Neville drilled the DA on all levels, drove them like a taskmaster, and having seen the results the DA loved him for it. There were rumblings about changing the name of the group to "Neville's Mob." When Hermione wrote to Harry reporting this, his rare response was a delighted one, with an offer to buy any equipment the Neville felt he needed, even sending along a personal note for his 'big brother'. (This puzzled Hermione until Neville explained his 'adopting' Harry into the Longbottom House.)*

*Slytherin House as a whole seemed ashamed of the actions of their former housemates on the Express. Daphne Greengrass had approached Hermione and Susan at dinner the first day of classes and publicly apologized for their actions. ("I've never liked you Granger, but no one should have had to go through that. It won't happen again.") The Slytherin women were mightily pissed it seemed, and the Slytherin men were quietly informed that while it wasn't possible for them to sneak into the women's dorms at night when they were asleep and helpless, the opposite was not true. The common experience of women superseded House loyalties, and the Slytherin men, like men worldwide seemed to recognize what side of the bread was buttered.*

*The only truly dark side of the year so far was Ginny Weasley's continued fall. A new guy every week, sometime more than one. Her record for being found in a broom closet was approaching the stuff of legend. Hermione mourned for her friend who no longer seemed to care about anything at all. Ron was, of course, in a state, sometimes to the point that even Luna couldn't bring him out of it.*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*Molly's Kitchen:*

*George came out of the floo at a dead run, followed closely by Fred. Percy was in the kitchen waiting for them.*

*"Percy? Well, spit it out!"*

*"I've got a daughter!"*

*“Well done Percy, you lucky beggar. Don’t know what she sees in you.”*

*Neither do I Fred, neither do I” Their older brother was walking on air. “Father will be home soon, go on upstairs Penny’s waiting to show her off. Mother and Fleur are with her, I’m owling Ronald and Ginevra to let them know.”*

*“Thanks Perc, and congratulations!”*

*Fred reached the door to Percy and Penny’s room first, they both burst in.*

*“FRED AND GEORGE WEASLEY! What do you think you are doing?” Molly was starting one of her trademark rants.*

*The twins ignored her and knelt at the side of Penny’s bed. There she held a tiny little bundle that contained her daughter.*

*“Where did we ever get the idea that she was a big baby? Look at that tiny thing!” George said in wonder.*

*“Good things, small packages.” Fred agreed.*

*“Fred, George, I’d like to introduce you to Denise Weasley.” Said a very tired, very happy Penny.  
“Denise, these are Deuncles.”*

*There was a pause for a two count, when both the twins fell to the floor giggling madly.*

*“We’re out classed Brother.”*

*“Not telling me anything I didn’t already know Brother.”*

*“We’ve got new names, Deuncle George”*

*“I like it Deuncle Fred.”*

*“You two deuncles want to hold her?” and she passed the tiny life into Georges’ arms.*

*Gazing into the tiny eyes, he held his breath in fear of breaking her. Fred reached in to touch her and Denise Weasley grasped his finger in her tiny hand. “Sweet Merlin” George whispered in wonder.*

*“You said it Brother.”*

*“Too bad about her boy friends”*

*“What do you mean by that?” Penny asked apprehensively.*

*“Before they get to meet you and Perc, they have to go through us. They aren’t good enough for our Niece.”*

## Chapter 22 – Pain

*Jempap*

*Battle Cavern*

*Naked except for a small loincloth Harry was filthy, exhausted, and sweating like a pig. His five squad mates stilled seemed fresh as when they had started this exercise 18 hours before. Damn it all to hell anyway, why did I ever think this was a good idea?*

//

*The Goblin translation charm was still working. He had no idea why, but it was. Other than his link to Hermione, it was the only magic left in his life. He was picking up Gobbletygook, but was far from fluent.*

*"There" Slorhook pointed. "That's our objective." The squad leader indicated the pulsing quartz crystal the size of a man's fist sitting in the center of a circle of stones. The circle was at the center of a large open area that offered no cover. "Your task is to get the stone and get it to me." Slorhook displayed what Harry had come to know was the Goblin expression of frustration; he hated the 'leader' tasks, not being allowed to 'play'.*

*"Earrip, Liphook, move around to the far side of the clearing, then approach the center and get me that crystal. Thutnose, Slikmor, stay here to back them up. Scavenge weapons." Harry nodded, and followed Thutnose in to the debris field to scavenge flint. Properly knapped it was as sharp as a scalpel. They gathered double armloads and returned to Slorhook. Harry removed his loincloth and fashioned a sling. This added to his range making it more of a match to his squad mates, over the last three months he had gotten quite accurate.*

*It had taken Earrip and Liphook almost an hour to stealthily make their way to the far side of the clearing. Moving slowly and low to the ground then entered the clearing. They had reached perhaps one quarter of the way to the pulsing crystal when from the very ground they stood upon, four Goblin warriors erupted, dragging them into the ground, leaving not a trace.*

*"Thutnose, you saw. They know we're here, use the stones, quietly. I want that crystal." He looked to Harry, who he had originally hated with a passion. That hatred had gradually mellowed into a*

*bemused tolerance due to the human's refusal to quit. He seemingly always failed, but never quit trying. A goblin could respect that. "Slikmor, do your best."*

*The remaining squad members exchanged looks, and separated to come at the crystal from two different directions. Thutnose entered the clearing first moving from stone to stone, avoiding the loose soil which were surely undermined by tunnels. Goblin tunneled through stone as well as dirt, but not as quickly and certainly not silently. He made it to the ring of stones before he too was ensnared by a pair of goblin warriors, who pulled him into the tunnels, leaving no trace that he had ever been there.*

*As Thutnose disappeared, Harry entered the clearing. In the three months, he had been here training with the Goblins he had noticed that Goblin sight, developed by generations in low light tunnels was attracted to movement. If he could move slowly enough, and light enough to not start vibrations in the ground that the tunnellers would be sensitive to, he might have a slim chance. He had abandoned the flint stones and wrapped the loincloth around his shoulders. This was going to be a long one. If his time with the Goblins had taught him nothing else, it was patience.*

*It took him almost 2 hours to make his way to the circle of stone, seemingly undetected. Another 20 minutes were needed to cross the remaining 10 feet. Now he was crouched next to the pulsing crystal, its bright light hurting his dark-adapted eyes.*

*There was no way in hell he was going to touch it. He didn't know anything about it beyond the fact that Slorhook wanted it. He slowly and carefully caught it in the cup of his sling. Exhausted, he knew that there was no way he was going to be able to make it back out of the clearing the way he came in. Aiming at the spot that Slorhook had been, he swung the sling, once, twice, and released on the third revolution, watching it sail out of the clearing just as a pair of warriors rose out of the ground and pulled him under laughing at this ineffectual struggles.*

*Slorhook was amazed as the crystal arced through the air to his hands. He had done it. No one had ever gotten the crystal before. The purpose of the exercise was to teach squads that sometimes, no matter what they did, their mission would fail, that there was no shame in failure if they never quit. His squad had indeed been wiped out, but the mission had been accomplished.*

*Tucking the crystal into his coup pouch, he moved out to his debrief. Not for the first time he needed to consider how he felt about being stuck with a weakling human on his team.*

*Diagon Alley*

*Gringotts*

*Three Months earlier:*

*"And that is your will Mr. Potter, with the obvious clause that if any of your beneficiaries kill you they inherit nothing."*

*"Given my luck Sir, we might want to change that to 'kill me unnecessarily' there may be situations where killing me would be a good thing, or at least not a bad thing."*

*"A most Goblin attitude Mr. Potter." Ragnak made the changes. "Your family and friends will be well taken care of if you pass." He looked to the young man who he was gradually coming to respect, if for no other reason than the respect the human showed to him. "With that taken care of, should we move on to our other business?"*

*Harry agreed, and Ragnak, in some manner Harry couldn't see signaled for the next group to come in. Bill Weasley and a team of nine goblins entered. Harry rose to shake Bill's hand, and then bowed in the goblin way to the others. The goblin newcomers were moderately shocked at this show of respect from a wizard.*

*"Cursebreaker Weasley will be heading up the team you requested for the Horocrux hunt." Ragnak passed the contract to Harry, who read it. Then he looked up with a concerned expression.*

*"This isn't what I asked for."*

*"I assure you Mr. Potter, it is entirely fair." Ragnak said stiffly. Bill was desperately trying to think of a way to silently signal Harry to shut the Hell up. One does not attempt to haggle with the Bank Manager in his own office.*

*"I'm sorry Sir, but this is wrong. The Contracted amount for the Horocrux hunt is listed as 500,000 Galleons. I believe I offered 500,000 thousand per horocrux. In addition, as I want to cover the wages for your Curse breaking team for the period of the hunt, plus 10% to cover their out of pocket*

*expenses. I also want to include a Million Galleon Bonus to the Bank if all four of the remaining horocruxes are found and neutralized before January 15th of the coming year." He looked into Ragnak's dumbfounded expression. "That last is your fault Bank Manager; you showed me how much money I've got. I figure why not spend some of it to ensure I have a better chance of staying alive?"*

*The utter silence continued in the room for almost a dozen heartbeats. "I must say Mr. Potter; I've never been a party where a customer negotiates to raise the fees he must pay."*

*Harry smiled. "I was told your curse breakers are the best of the best. I figured; why not pay for the best?"*

*The 'corrections' were made to the contract, and Harry signed it.*

*"Would you care to address your contract employees?"*

*"Thank you Bank Manager." Harry turned his attention to Bill and his team. "You know your jobs; you don't need to hear any instructions from me. I have researched your departments' history and know that you are indeed the best of the best. I've really only got one demand to make of you." His face took on a serious look; the most serious Bill had ever seen him. "Be safe. Don't take any chances. I'm the one who has to face the bastard responsible for these Horocruxes; there is no good reason for any of you to not go home to your families when this is over. Especially you Bill. The Lady Goblins might be mad at me if their mates were hurt making my life easier, but Fleur would hunt me down and kill me."*

*Laughter flooded the room, and Bill and his team left to get to work.*

*Laughing himself, Ragnak cleared his desk. "Well said Mr. Potter. Was there anything else I can do for you?"*

*Again, Harry got serious. "Well Bank Manager, there was one other thing..."*



## Chapter 23 – Exercises

*Jempap*

*Battle Cavern*

*"How did you cheat?"*

*Harry was getting angry. The goblin warriors were quite pissed that he had successfully retrieved the crystal. Evidently, it was some type of no-win scenario. So of course, with typical Potter luck, he had won, and was now losing for his trouble. He was tied hand and foot, laying among his squad mates, who were thrilled with what he had done. Less so about the debriefing masquerading as a torture session, but then they all were.*

*The questioner kicked Harry soundly in the stomach in response to his silence. His world dissolved into pain and darkness. Cold water was thrown on him returned him his situation.*

*"How did you cheat?" the questioner screamed into his face from above.*

*Harry nodded his acceptance of defeat and whispered his answer.*

*"I didn't hear you Slikmor!"*

*Harry's body language screamed of exhaustion and weakness, again he whispered.*

*Infuriated at the response, yet overjoyed that he had broken this weakling human, the goblin pulled him from the ground, and shook him "Answer me you pitiful weakling!"*

*Harry reacted with terror and slumped even more, whispering once more.*

*The Goblin warrior pulled Harry close to his ear. Harry then spoke in a conversational tone that everyone in the cavern could hear perfectly.*

*"Your mother sells at cost."*

*The warrior screamed his fury, and threw Harry to the ground among his squad mates.*

*Hogwarts*

*Gryffindor Heads Suite*

*Head Girl's Bedchamber*

*Susan (and Neville) had left more than an hour before. Ron (and Luna) only about 10 minutes later. For once Halloween had been a quiet day. After six exciting (and frightening) Halloweens, Hermione supposed they were due. No trolls, No one attempting to break into the tower, absolutely nothing had gone wrong. Unfortunately, there was also no Harry.*

*Harry.*

*When she was a child, she never saw herself with anyone when she looked to the future. She never had the knack for making friends, so she substituted hard work to stoke the raging fire that was her intellect. Her friends were books. Her playthings were ideas. Her safety lay in knowledge and family. There were the odd happenings that seemed to follow her around, the bully who suddenly found her nose bloodied when pulling on Hermione's hair, the way things she was looking for seemed to suddenly be in her hand. Other things, less mundane. Still, blessed with a family that some people could only dream of, she had been secure in her worldview.*

*Then the letter came. The letter with its promise of new things to explore and an explanation for some of the things that had been happening to her. Her worldview was shattered. When Professor McGonagall had come to the door to explain that the letter was in fact not a joke, and that the things that Hermione had been doing that so frightened her parents and herself were as normal as the menses that had started only a few months before. Despite her mother's explanations, Hermione had been terrified of her monthly cycle until her relentless research had defined what her body was*

*doing and she understood the mysteries of growing up.*

*Similarly, she was terrified of these strange abilities. Only study and experimentation would quiet her fears. The professor had shown Hermione and her parents to Diagon Alley and introduced them to the wizarding world, and Hermione, as was her wont, through her self into this new life with everything she had.*

*Her plan was simple, 7 years to hone her magic, and then return to the 'real' world for University. From there a research position and saving the world in some undefined way.*

*Then she boarded the Hogwarts express. She quickly met and befriended a boy named Neville Longbottom. A nice enough boy, even if he couldn't meet her eyes. He had lost his toad, so she helped him find it (actually she DID find him, sleeping atop of Neville's trunk... always the last place you look), but during the search she met two other boys. Ron and Harry. They did both meet her eyes, but weren't overly friendly. Looking back, she didn't know why that surprised her about 11 year old boys, but at the time, it did.*

*They had their conflicts for the first couple of months and their arguments, and then Ron was so hateful on Halloween, for some reason she still didn't understand, that drove her away crying. She had had far worse said to her in the past, and it never effected her that way. Then when she was about done feeling sorry for herself, she found herself facing the troll.*

*Amazingly, seemingly from nowhere, suddenly Harry was on its back, while Ron was trying to fight the moving mountain as well, all to protect her. That was when she knew she had friends.*

*They fought like siblings, and protected each other. They were good for each other. She often thought that they should be poster children for the wizarding world. The Pureblood, the Halfblood, and the Muggleborn friends, family.*

*Last year she thought that her heart had settled on Ron, that he needed her more than Harry did. She suspected that her problems were based in her thinking. Her heart didn't do what there mind told it to do. When she and Harry had finally bonded, there hadn't been any thinking involved. Just an all-consuming need. He needed her when his life was falling apart, she needed him when reacting to the horror of almost seeing her mother's death, almost seeing his death, and possibly worst of all, finding that it was well within her to kill without a thought.*

*Harry.*

*The Ring. Padma had explained it, but wearing it had opened vistas into Harry and herself that no one else had ever dreamed. At will she could call upon his love and have it wash over her as it had when she was first put the ring on. And she did this most nights, making up for not having him here with her. If that is what sex was like, she finally understood the lengths that her classmates went to find some alone time with their significant others. She found herself being far more sympathetic, on occasion not noticing the couple in the broom closet or up in the Astronomy Tower when she knew them to be sincerely in love and of an age...*

*/Harry, come back to me.../*

*Diagon Alley*

*Gringotts*

*Three Months earlier:*

*"So, what is your 'other thing' Mr. Potter?"*

*Harry looked in to the eyes of the ancient goblin.*

*"You know what I am tasked to do?"*

*"It is prophesized that you will fight Tom Riddle, that one or the other of you will slay the other, and that the winner's world view will rein."*

*"You are very well informed Bank Manager."*

*"It is my business to be. Wizards, almost all wizards, speak around goblins like they are furniture."*

*"If you are a betting goblin, I would suggest you place your bet on Riddle. He has the power, not me."*

*"I have been known to wager on occasion Mr. Potter. A certain Gnome in Zurich offered me most attractive odds to back you at an interbank conference. '100 to 1. Potter's a dead man.' I believe were his exact words. I am counting on you to win that wager for me."*

*Harry blinked. People were betting on his survival?*

*"Well then Bank Manager, I think that it's only fair I let you reduce your odds of losing."*

*"And how would you do that Mr. Potter?"*

*Harry sat silently for a moment, still trying to digest the thought that people were betting on his death. "I have been told since I entered the Wizarding world that Goblin Steel is the best there is."*

*Ragnak nodded no need to state the obvious.*

*"It occurred to me, that the only thing stronger than the steel would be the people that made it. I would like to request that you allow me to train with your security Goblins. What ever they do, I want to do." He gave Ragnak a pleading look. "Make me harder. Give me the Goblin edge."*

*Jempap*

*Battle Cavern*

*After being thrown, Harry twisted in the air to take the impact on his butt, making sure to stop his roll on top of his loincloth. The Interrogator hadn't noticed Harry had palmed his dagger despite being bound. He worked the blade through the ropes binding his hands, and then freed his feet. He then passed the blade to Thutnose so that his squad mates could free themselves. The Interrogator's*

*back was to them screaming commands to the rest of his team, Harry looked to Earrip for instructions, which were given in clan sign language when all four were ready, they moved. Harry had constructed his own loincloth from rabbit fur; the goblins saw it as a sign of weakness and ever examined it. What it hid was a length of piano wire, which Harry had looped and passed over the head of the Interrogator, pulling for all he was worth. Goblin warriors are substantially larger than the average goblin. As tall as a man, and immensely stronger, still they need air to breath. Harry hung on despite being slammed into the cavern walls. He felt two ribs break, but still hung on, as the warrior finally started to falter in his efforts, Harry pulled up closer, still holding tight to the make shift garrot. "Your mother sells at deep discounts! She sacrifices profit for friendship!" and the Goblin fell.*

*Harry spared him one last kick before joining his squad. "Guess I cheated again."*

*Liphook pushed a goblin short sword into his hand as they made for the exit to the room. Together, as they were trained, they made asquad under fire exit from the interrogation chamber.*

*Straight into the arms of their Squad leader Slorhook and Clan War Master Baglock.*

*"I thought you had taught them escape and evasion. Pathetic!"*

## Chapter 24 – Redemption

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*The Burrow*

*Molly's Kitchen:*

*Arthur read the letter again. Just home from the office, the late November weather reflected his current mood, dark and gloomy.*

*Molly was at the table working on a Howler.*

*"Just stop it Molly, you aren't going to send that."*

*"What do you mean by that Arthur? How dare you try and tell me how to deal with Ginny."*

*"I dare because this is YOUR fault Molly." He looked again at the letter. "Seven instances of being caught after curfew with a boy. Each time a different boy. Minerva said she herself caught Ginny three times in a week, each time with a different boy, each time at least partially undressed." Arthur removed his glasses and pinched at the bridge of his nose in a futile attempt to head off the headache that was starting to build. He was mildly disgusted with himself. He recalled a similar letter concerning Charlie in his 6th year, though that one concerned being caught multiple times unclothed in the presence of a single girl. His first reaction had been 'that's my boy'. Why was it so much harder with daughters? "When her reaction to Harry losing his magic became evident, what did you do? You sent her out after other boys. No mourning for Harry's loss, no time to evaluate her feelings for him, no talking about why how she was treating him was wrong, just 'fix it with affection from someone else'. Oh it's my fault as well for not putting my foot down when I heard what the two of you tried to do with young Neville Longbottom." He sat at the table himself, taking the quill and parchment away from her. "I will send the letters. I'm going to write Ginny and ask her to think about what she is doing. I'm going to write Ron and ask him to try and help his sister, and I'm going to write Hermione and Luna and ask them to look out for their friend. There will be no howlers to embarrass anyone from this house tonight."*

*Molly huffed, "Hermione Granger? She's engaged to Harry Potter now, you want her lording it in poor Ginny's face?"*

*"Molly, when did Hermione and Harry get last names in your mind? It's not like Hermione stole Harry from Ginny. She spent hours trying to get Ginny to speak to Harry. Their relationship only started when Ginny made it ever so clear that she was no longer interested, and even then, Harry and Ginny had only been dating for a few weeks. I recall thinking at the time, that their relationship just seemed to come out of no where, almost as if..." it was then he noticed that Molly's eyes had gotten wide, her hands were wringing a napkin in the way she did when she was hiding something. "Molly, you didn't."*

*"They were perfect for each other; he just needed a little push."*

*"And you supplied her with that little push. Damn it Molly. What if some girl did that to Ron, how would you feel?"*

*"That's completely different!"*

*The argument raged on for hours.*

*Hogwarts*

*Room of Requirements:*

*The entered the room to find it looking like the Gryffindor common room, sofas and chairs around a roaring fireplace.*

*"Ooh, Colin, this is lovely" Ginny Weasley purred into his ear. "I've never been here for a date, you're a genius."*

*"I don't know if this is really a date Ginny." He stepped away from her holding having taken her*



*wand from the pocket she kept it in. She hadn't noticed, and hopefully wouldn't discover it was missing. What he had to say was going to anger her, and she was too damned powerful for him to face on an even footing. "I'd like it to be, but I'm not all that sure you like me all that much."*

*"Of course I like you Colin." She smiled that smile that turned his insides to jelly. "I wouldn't be here otherwise."*

*"Wouldn't you? By my count, I'm the 4th guy you've gone out with this week."*

*"What is this?"*

*Colin sighed. "In the muggle world, it would be called an intervention. If I wasn't a coward, this room would be filled with all the people who love you, but Ron would skin me alive if I suggested it, Luna would ask odd questions having nothing to do with the situation, Fred and George would beat me to death for suggesting that their sister was doing what you are doing. That leaves you with me."*

*"The last person I would go to for help is you. I'm leaving." Ginny went to the door and found it locked, when she searched her robes for her wand, she found nothing. "Open the door Colin."*

*"Open it yourself. You don't want my help remember?"*

*She started to beat on the door in a rage. Impressed in spite of himself, Colin was glad that on top of the locking charm, he had cast silencing charms as well. After a few moments of no one responding to her calls and beating on the door, she raged about the room destroying what she could, turning over what she could not.*

*"Are you happy Ginny?" he asked setting the chair he had been sitting in back up on its feet before sitting again. "I've watched you for 6 years now. You've always been happy other than the time Voldemort possessed you first year, and I spent most of that petrified anyway. This year, you're looking hard for happiness, but can't seem to find it."*

*She flopped down in the one chair she hadn't overturned, and stared into the fire ignoring him.*

*"I know last year you got really happy just before Harry started dating you, and you stayed happy after the two of you pretended to have broken up in the common room." She continued to ignore him, but he suspected she was actually hanging on his words in a hope to find a way to get him to let her out. "I also watched Harry. From the time I learned about Hogwarts and read up on the Wizarding world, I wanted to BE Harry Potter. Since I couldn't do that, I tried to be his friend. I think I tried too hard and annoyed him to death. I ended up an acquaintance and not the confidant I wanted to be, but I still try to be his friend. I noticed how he went from eyeing girls like Padma and Pavarti and suddenly you became the total focus of his attention in like a day. I'm a guy, I know that it doesn't work like that. That's when I noticed you putting stuff in his drinks at meals." She turned to look at him, mouth open. He had seen her?*

*"It wasn't hard to figure out. I didn't say anything because it was making you happy and didn't seem to hurt Harry. I like to see you happy Ginny. It's important to me." He turned his gaze to the fire, embarrassed. "But then Harry was cursed and lost his magic. I saw how you reacted to his loss at St Mungos, but figured that you were just upset FOR him, not BECAUSE of him. Then I didn't see you all summer, when we returned, you started, well, /dating/."*

*"Hearing what the other guys call you is more than I can take Ginny. A 'mattress back' is one of the kindest nicknames you've gotten. I can't count the number of fights I've gotten into with idiots calling you a slut or whore. I just can't take it anymore." He started to sob quietly. "I'll do what ever you want me to Ginny, but please, please, don't let guys use you like this. I've loved you since first year. This is killing me." And sobs racked his small body.*

*Ginny left her chair and gathered him to her in a hug, holding him until his sobs stopped. /Colin loves me?/ They moved to one of the sofas and sat talking for several hours. It was well past curfew when they returned to Gryffindor tower hand in hand. They made it back without being found by anyone, and parted to go up to their respective dormitories. At that parting, they didn't even kiss. It would be a month before Ginny was comfortable kissing anyone again, but her free time would be spent with Colin.*

*Hogwarts*

*Gryffindor Heads Suite*

*Head Boy's Bedchamber*

*Luna cuddled into him following their love making. Her summer project had indeed bore fruit, and Ron continued to be an enthusiastic fellow researcher. Now he held her and stared at the ceiling in that way he did when he was worried about something. Perhaps he was ready to share.*

*"What's wrong Ronald?"*

*He tightened the hug he held her in, and kissed her on her forehead, just the way she liked it. "Just worried about Ginny."*

*"Oh, poo. You don't need to worry about Ginny. She's going to be fine tomorrow."*

*"What happened?"*

*"I don't know. Something tonight, but I am here with you, so obviously I don't see what it is. All I know is that starting tomorrow, she no longer disappears every night. At least not until May."*

*"What happens in May?"*

*"After Voldemort is defeated, she and Colin Creevey go off together to mourn and comfort each other."*

*Ron really didn't want to know that. He had found that he wasn't bothered with Luna's predictions of their lives together, but he found any references to the aftermath of Harry's final confrontation with Riddle to be disconcerting. He was horrified that if he knew for certain that something was going to happen to someone (Harry, the only one of their friends not mentioned in Luna's future past May) he would do everything in his power to stop it, and if Riddle survived to kill again, too damned bad. He wasn't willing to trade Harry for stopping that. It was better not to know.*

*Time for a happier thought. He had no expectation of surprising his cuddly little precog, but enjoyed her reaction anyway. Between the money he had saved over the summer holidays working for the*

*twins in Diagon Alley, and the loan he had negotiated from them (they had been particularly soft touches in the hours following Denise's birth) he had scraped together the Galleons he needed to purchase the engagement ring she had pointed out months before as the ring he would buy her. He reached over to the bedside table for the small box. "Luna Lovegood, would you do me the honor of agreeing to be my wife?" he opened the box and put it into her hand.*

*Luna sat up, squealing in excitement. Moving to sit astride him, she removed the ring from its box and put it on her hand, then lay atop him kissing him. After a few seconds, she giggled. "It feels like it might be time for a little more research."*

*Unable to believe his luck he held her still for a moment. "Any subject worth research is worth review..."*

## Chapter 25 – Confrontations

*Jampap*

*Training Cavern*

*Hand to Hand:*

*Harry flew through the air. Again. Smashing into the wall, he fell to the ground.*

*"Pathetic. A cub could have blocked that throw Slikmor. Get up, try again."*

*Harry shakily got back to his feet. War Master Baglock really didn't seem to like him much. It made him look wistfully back to his time with Snape, who hated him, but never seemed to actively try to kill him. Reentering the circle, he assumed (again) the ready stance.*

*Slorhook frowned. There wasn't a single member of the squad, including himself, who would have been able to stay in the ring with the War Master. What was going on?*

*Harry waited for the War Master to make the first move, when he managed to dodge the first stroke; Harry closed in to the War Master and drove his knee into the goblin's crotch as hard as he could. His joy turned instantly into horror when his knee cap impacted into something hard, and exploded into agony. The War Master's hands closed on his arms.*

*"Surely you didn't think that I would leave myself unprotected Slikmor? Your lesson begins now." As Harry lost consciousness he knew that the punishment being done to his body was being done by an expert.*

*"Enough!" Slorhook was on his feet, and put himself between his fallen squad member and the Clan War Master. "Killing him would serve no purpose." He maintained eye contact with the*

*furious Baglock. "Earrip, Liphook, get Slikmor back to the barracks. Get a medic to tend to him. Thutnose, sentry, outside now."*

*Slorhook waited until his squad had left the chamber. "I require an explanation War Master. I am his Squad Leader, his life is mine. What were you doing? I tried exactly the same maneuver on you when we first sparred at squad training, and you taught me the error of my ways and carried on with the lesson. You didn't respond with kill strokes." Slorhook's eyes never wavered from those of the War Master. "What is wrong with you?"*

*"That weakling has no place in our caverns"*

*"That weakling captured the crystal. He admittedly does fail at almost every physical challenge, but he never quits. You have trained less worthy Goblins, and never reacted like this. Even the training name you gave him is an insult. When you put him in my squad, I was angered, and treated him harshly. He never complained. He did everything I asked, does his best, and is first to volunteer for any duty. You know all these things; they are in my daily reports. Why are you doing this?"*

*Jampap*

*Leeblit Squad Barracks.*

*Slikmor's chamber:*

*Harry woke to the sensation of cool moisture on his crotch. /Oh god no, not since I was 4./ He sat up suddenly and opened his eyes to look into the eyes of a female goblin show was giving him a sponge bath.*

*"You're awake." She said, stating the obvious.*

*"I am. Thank you for your service Mistress."*

*"Mistress? Why do you address me so?"*

*"You appear to be doing the work of a healer, my culture tells me to address healers accordingly." He blushed, "I apologize if there was any insult, none was intended. I have never met a female goblin before."*

*"Just as I have never met any human at all before. I am a healer, though I do not use magic as you do... You are a wand user, are you not?"*

*"I wasn't, then I was, but am no longer, which is why I am here, learning to defend myself." He looked down at the bruises all over his body, "Just not very well it seems."*

*"I am Lorath, Daughter of Baglock, Healer for the Clan."*

*"I am Slikmor, Son of James and Lilly Potter, and major embarrassment for the Clan. Your father doesn't seem to like me much."*

*"Obviously if he named you Slikmor. Did he tell you what it means?"*

*Harry pondered for a moment. "It never occurred to me that it meant anything... I've always just thought of names as just names." Of course Harry probably means something. I'll have to ask Hermione. "So, what does it mean?"*

*"Sli means 'weakling' in the old tongue, Kmor means 'one with ideas above his station'. Your name is quite the insult."*

*Harry laughed. "It fits me I suppose. Compared to the warriors, I am indeed a weakling. Since I lost my magic, most of my ideas seem to be above my station. There are worse things to be."*

*She seemed shocked. "A warrior so insulted would swear avendetta. You are as unusual as my brother described."*

*"An accurate description is hardly an insult. Given my options, I either laugh or cry, I choose to laugh. Who is your brother?"*

*"Your squad leader. I don't know his training name, only his family name, which I cannot share."*

*Names were important to Goblins, yet another aspect of their culture that he would probably never understand. "I had no idea."*

*Slorhook entered the room, Harry struggled to stand, but his injured knee refused to support his weight, and he collapsed on the bedding. "Squad Leader?"*

*"I was unaware you were in Healer rotation for my Squad Lorath. Imagine my surprise to find you sponging down one of my troops."*

*"Brother, your descriptions of the human was accurate, I wanted to see for my self." She put her hand to Harry's chest and pushed him down. "As of right now, I out rank your squad leader Slikmor. Your knee won't support you for at least 3 days. Give the poultice a chance to work." Her attention returned to Slorhook. "You have no say in what healer treats your squad Brother, do we need this argument?"*

*"There will be no experimentation with the human Lorath. The family won't stand for it."*

*"Whom I mate with is no business of yours Brother"*

*/Mate with? What the hell?/ "Uh, I'm right here." The two goblins turned their attention to him. "I'm betrothed to a girl I love a whole lot." He turned his attention to Lorath "Not that I'm not flattered, but I..."*



*"Shut up Human. My brother jumped to conclusions. I have no such intentions toward you. Besides, " she looked at him in an evaluative way "You couldn't handle the ride."*

*Harry turned to Slorhook. "A friend would kill me, right now."*

*"A friend wouldn't have turned down my sister" Slorhook gave him a death stare. Then started to laugh.*

*Potter Estate*

*Kitchen:*

*Emma sat at the table in the kitchen ignoring the looks of disapproval coming from the Elves. There was something about a mere human being in the kitchen area that they deemed inappropriate. She smiled to herself. Dobby was going to take her to Glasgow after lunch to do some Christmas shopping. Daniel and she had found that they could blend into the general population quite easily here. Dobby monitored them on their trips to ensure that they were not found by the wizards who most certainly hunted them.*

*Hermione had written yesterday saying that she would be home for the Christmas Holidays. Emma had found a lovely old church in Gourrock where they could attend Christmas Services, It was Church of Scotland, but the differences were minimal. Hopefully Harry would be there as well. She doubted that he had been brought up with much religion, maybe he wouldn't be interested, but it wouldn't hurt to ask.*

*Harry's plans for opening an orphanage here on the estate had fallen to the side. The Ministry wouldn't allow it, the idea of Wizards being entrusted to non magic users was beyond consideration for some. His idea of training with the Goblins on the other hand seems to be in progress. Occasional letters from him telling tails of drills and exercises and discipline seemed to hide how much he missed them all.*

*It was surprising her just how much companionship she was getting from Narcissa Malfoy. Perhaps it was the isolation, or the horror of what her husband had done, but the woman had started out barely civil, and had gradually over the last three months become almost a friend. Daniel had taught Draco to play pool out of boredom on both of their parts, and amazingly they too had bonded. Unlike*

*Harry, Draco's playing had actually improved with time, and he won occasionally. Draco had in exchange introduced Daniel to Wizards chess, which while being the same game as the one they had grown up with, had an entertainment value for spectators that normal chess did not. The first time one of the pieces (a knight? She didn't remember) had argued with Daniel over the move he was making had her laughing like a mad woman.*

*She stood, and accepted the refill of her teacup from the elf, and left the kitchen to see what Daniel was doing and to get his suggestions for a Christmas gift for Draco...*

## Chapter 26 – Reunions

*Jampap*

*Leeblit Squad Barracks.*

*Slikmor's chamber:*

*It was the third day of his convalescence. The forced inactivity was driving Harry slightly mad. Another round of pushups hadn't taken the edge off, but at least his knee was only stiff and not the hub of agony in his universe. Goblin medicine was good stuff. No magic at all that he could see or detect, but the results couldn't be argued with.*

*His chamber was a frequent meeting point for his squad mates. Hostile toward his presence at first, they had come to accept him over time. His capturing the crystal had sealed the bonds between them. After all, with that success (for it was the success of the squad, not an individual) Leeblit Squad had become legends. There was already a book in the works about them. Goblin publishers promised huge profits for the story of the squad that succeeded despite being saddled with a human for comedy relief. The story was also rumors that the Goblin cinema was interested in the story as an action/comedy. Harry had seen a few Goblin movies. They were... different. Humans were usually villains, or at best, idiot sidekicks who lusted (!) after the goblin heroine, who kindly turned him down explaining that she didn't feel 'that way' for him, despite his 'wonderful personality'.*

*They spent as much of their off duty time with him as they could, smuggling in food and drink, most specifically NOT on his healer approved menus. Harry hadn't been much of a fan of most goblin foodstuffs, but they certainly knew their mushrooms. He had learned to love the varied fungi in all the forms they took in goblin cuisine. He had never experienced mushrooms in his muggle upbringing, and it seemed that the house elves never used them either. Harry was amazed at the omission. He was also amazed at the omission of Goblin Ale. That was good stuff.*

*Harry had discovered during his time with the goblins that there was no such thing as a Goblin 'mean drunk'. A drunken goblin was everyone friend. Just last night a very drunken Thutnose had thanked him for hours for coming to join the squad. Thutnose had been terrified that he would have been the kmightor (roughly translated to 'worst of the squad') if Harry hadn't been there. Thutnose was a goblin Neville Longbottom (prior to the DA); he was a goblin of very high status (equal to the War Master) and very little self-confidence. Harry assured Thutnose that he would continue to do*

*his level best to be bad at everything. Thutnose told Harry that he was a true friend. Then they both drank some more ale. It was a good night; the only thing it missed was Hermione.*

*His days were spent trying to get his body to work again, and dealing with healers. When Lorath had made the discovery of Basilisk venom in his blood, which had brought about a seemingly endless parade of Goblin healers to get a look at the oddity that was Harry Potter. Evidently, his survival of the Basilisk bite was unique. Wonderful. Being unique was so much fun. After the novelty of someone who could survive the basilisk bite, kill the basilisk, and remain pathetically below average in everything Goblins deem important wore off, his daytime visitors dwindled to just Lorath, who was uniformly disgusted with his lack of progress in healing. Harry was of the opinion that returning from a shattered kneecap in less than a week was phenomenal progress, but it seemed that he was misinformed.*

*At least he had received permission to leave Jampap for the 15-day Solstice stand down.*

*Hogsmeade*

*Train Station:*

*Hermione monitored the platform, ensuring that all the students were aboard before boarding the Express herself. It seemed silly to go all the way to London just to return to Scotland, but this was the way. While she could simply call Dobby to take her to the Potter Estate, as Head Girl she was needed on the train to help maintain order.*

*Nightmares of the last trip had faded, but she wasn't going to be alone at any point of the trip. Neville had made sure of that. In addition to the prefects, Neville had a rotating roster of DA members patrolling the train. With the new toys that Neville had given them to play with, Hermione suspected that some of the more enthusiastic members were actually hoping someone would start trouble.*

*Following a quick perfunctory meeting in the head's car, Hermione made her way to the compartment that Neville, Susan, Ron, Luna, Padma, and Hannah had claimed. Lavender and Pavarti were off somewhere with new(ish) boy friends. Hermione settled down to wait for her turn to patrol.*

## *Gourock Scotland*

### *Train Station:*

*The Train pulled into the station just 4 minutes behind schedule. Harry exited to the platform, and then passed through the turnstiles out into the street. He checked the time on the station clock as he passed it. 3 p.m. Plenty of time to hit the shopping district hopefully to find something for Emma. He had gotten something for everyone else in London before starting this trek. Assuming his shopping didn't take too long, he might even beat Hermione back to the estate.*

## *Potter Estate*

### *Main Entrance:*

*When Hermione and Dobby appeared in the foyer of the Manor, Daniel and Emma met them. Her parents gathered Hermione into a family hug. Not wanting it to end, they all held each other for what seemed like an hour.*

*“How was the trip?”*

*“Hogsmeade to London in 7 ½ hours, London to here in nothing flat. It seemed insane to waste all that time, but I had duties on the train to see every one got there safely.”*

*“Hungry?”*

*“Starved. What's for dinner?”*

*“Don't I get a hello?”*

*She looked in the direction of the voice. "Harry!" and ran to him, almost knocking him to the ground. Suddenly oblivious to her parents she all but raped him on the spot.*

*After a few moments of this, Daniel cleared his throat, and Hermione realized she had an audience, broke the kiss.*

*"You know, if you loved me, you'd wait to do that until I was dead."*

*"Daddy!"*

*Emma smacked him on the back of his head. "Don't you ruin my chances of getting Grandbabies to spoil."*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*Molly's Kitchen:*

*Molly was readying dinner when the door opened; Ron and Ginny entered and were gathered into a hug by the Weasley matriarch.*

*"It's good to be home Mum"*

*"It's good to have you home Ronald." Molly turned her attention to her daughter as Ron headed upstairs to his room to unpack. "Are you alright Ginny?"*

*"I'm better Mum, better than I've been in a while. I haven't been a very good person for a while."*

*"Your father and I think we understand dear. He's pointed out ... well, I'm glad you're home."*

*“Don’t worry Mum; I’ve gotten my head on straight now.” She looked into her mothers eyes.  
“Mum? No more potions, ok?”*

*“No more potions.”*

## **Chapter 27 – Yule**

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*Molly's Kitchen*

*Christmas Morning:*

*Molly was still angry. She slammed the serving platter on the table top.*

*“Mum I'm sorry you don't like it, but Luna invited me to Christmas dinner at her home. She thinks that it would be good for me to get to know her dad.” Ron had explained his plans at dinner the evening he and Ginny had returned from school. “And I agree. We are engaged. We'll be at lots of Christmas dinners here in the future, this one is for Luna.”*

*“It's not like the house will be empty Molly.” Arthur said, not particularly happy about the plans of their youngest himself. “Bill and Fleur, the twins and their girlfriends, Percy, Penny, and Denise, even Charlie's here. Don't let this spoil the day.”*

*“Mum, I really want to meet Colin's parents. We'll be here all day, and back by 8 o'clock to night, the only thing we'll miss is dinner.”*

*“Only dinner? Only dinner?”*

*“Mum” Charlie looked up to his mother. “Remember when we had this argument when I was 17? You kicked and screamed and guilted me into not going to Sarah Branch's home for Christmas, remember?” He turned his attention to the eggs on his plate and continued quietly “Do you suppose that might be why I wasn't at home for another Christmas for 5 years? How long was Bill gone? Ever wonder why? Ron's of age, hard as that may be to believe”*



***“Hey!”***

***“Shut up Ron. Ginny might as well be of age. Trust them to make their decisions. Don’t chase them away. It’s too much fun seeing the surprise on their innocent faces when the Twins lay into them.”***

***Malfoy Manor***

***Throne Room***

***Christmas Morning:***

***“My Lord?”***

***Riddle sprawled malevolently in his throne. The Power just pouring out of him. The time of distractions was over. He stared hatefully at the ring on his left hand, nothing he had done could remove it, and its effects were still being felt.***

***“Not a stone left standing Bellatrix. Salt the ground so that nothing will grow.”***

***“Of course My Lord”***

***Potter Estate***

***Family Room:***

***The elves had out done themselves. The tree was amazing, what Harry first thought were fairy lights, turned out to be actual fairies, tiny sentients that glowed with a beautiful silver light, and spoke with musical voices that brought to mind bells. All of the decorations were like something out of a Christmas catalog. It was amazing. He had planned to invite the Malfoys to join them, and had been pleasantly surprised to find that Emma had already done so. He felt like a child, so excited. He was up hours before the others, and was waiting to see if they approved of his gifts. In many ways, this was HIS first Christmas. His home, his holiday, his friends, family, and the Malfoys... He hoped everyone like what he had gotten them.***

*His thoughts drifted to his conversation with Daniel the night before*

*“Call me Daniel Harry.”*

*“I’m not really comfortable doing that. Maybe after Hermione and I are married.”*

*“I’m not interested in your excuses Harry. You are going to call Emma and Me by our given names or else.”*

*Harry blinked. “Or else what?”*

*Daniel smiled. “Or else I tell Hermione that you told me that no wife of your would ever have a career, that her place would be keeping your house and having your kids”*

*The blood drained from Harry’s face. “You wouldn’t. She’d do horrible things to me.”*

*A feral grin. “Try me.”*

*“There’s no reason for that... Daniel.”*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*Lovegood Residence:*

*After apparating Ginny to the Creevey home, he had come to Luna. She was waiting at the gate to their yard. Waiting for him. He still wasn’t sure if he believed in her precognitive abilities, but no*

*one could argue that she always seemed to anticipate her visitors. She melted into him as they met, after a separation of 3 days, her hands guiding his face to hers, so hungry for him. Nothing in his experience was like this, not Lavender, not Hermione, not the stories told by dorm mates and older brothers. All his life he had wanted to stand out, now all that mattered is that Luna Lovegood wanted him.*

*She led him inside to meet her father. Meeting wasn't right; he had known the Lovegoods all his life. His first crush was on Luna's beautiful mother long before he understood what he was feeling. But this was the first meeting as Luna's fiancé. The Elder Lovegood shook his hand, congratulating him on winning his wonderful daughter, with the congratulations came the look that said 'hurt her, I'll kill you. Slowly.' All men know that look, and recognize it for what it is, the gospel truth.*

*Eating in the Lovegood home was an amazing experience for Ron. Truth be told, afterward he would have no idea what he had eaten, all he knew for sure is that he was with Luna.*

*Leeds, West Yorkshire*

*Creevey Residence:*

*Ginny steeled herself at the gate of the Colin's home. A part of her hoped beyond hope that her reputation hadn't preceded her. She opened the gate and approached the door, which opened before she could knock revealing Colin.*

*He took her hand. "I was worried you would change your mind"*

*"Never." And she drew him into a hug. "You're stuck with me now."*

*"Oh good you're here." Colin's younger brother Dennis. "Maybe now Casanova will be a bit more helpful getting everything ready for dinner."*

*Colin took a swipe at Dennis, then still holding Ginny's hand, led her to the kitchen to meet his mother. "Mum, this is Ginny."*

*Carol Creevey wiped her hands on her apron just like Molly did. Ginny warmed to the woman before she spoke a word. "Welcome to our home Ginny. Colin's letters have spoken of you often."*

*"Thank you Mrs. Creevey, I'm honored to be here. Could you use some help?"*

*"It's just a normal dinner here Ginny, I don't know if there's anything magical that needs to be done."*

*"Oh," Ginny laughed. "I can't do magic yet, not for another year. My mum always taught us to cook and clean with out it, she says it builds character." She shrugged, "Truth be told, I'm not much of a cook, but I can clean and set a table with the best of them."*

*"All right then. Colin why don't you and Ginny set the table?"*

*Colin grabbed the plates while Ginny got the Silver, then they went to the dining room. "Good Job! Couldn't have done any better with Mum. If there's one thing she likes it's someone not afraid to work!" putting down their loads, he hugged her again.*

*"Oi, cut that out, we eat in here!" Colin chased Dennis from the room, while Ginny laughed.*

*Potter Estate*

*Foyer:*

*When the Malfoys came to the manor from the guest cottage, Harry greeted them as warmly as possible, and took Draco aside.*

*“I need to ask a favor Malfoy”*

*“A favor? What do I have that you could possibly want?”*

*“I want to get the Grangers out of the country. I have no idea what will happen to the Fidelous if Tom kills me.”*

*“You mean when.”*

*“Probably, yes, but I was trying to be positive.” He smiled. “I’ve inherited some businesses in New Zealand. I’m going to try to get them to go and evaluate them for me. I’d like you and your mum to accompany them for ‘protection’.”*

*“This plan of yours would also be an attempt to protect my mother and myself it seems. Why are you doing this?”*

*“Someone needs to go with them to keep an eye out for dark wizards. I figure, who better than you? I know you hate to be indebted to anyone, least of all me, so you’ll do everything you can to ensure that you don’t owe me anything by keeping them as safe as possible.”*

*“All right. I’ll do it, but you aren’t fooling anyone.”*

*Potter Estate*

*Family Room:*

*Harry was having a grand time handing out the presents. He distributed the take to everyone before returning to his own pile. The Malfoys were embarrassed.*

*“We didn’t ...”*

*“And when would you have? Leaving the grounds would put you in danger. Don’t worry about it.”*

*“Oh my god.” Daniel had opened his gift from Harry. “Blue Label? You got me a bottle of Blue Label?”*

*“It’s supposed to be good stuff.”*

*“Supposed to be? This is...” he looked up from the bottle to Harry “You have my permission to marry her.”*

*“Daddy!”*

*“If I’d known that was all there was to it, I’d have gotten you a case.” That got him smacked.*

*“Harry, thank you.” Draco was almost in tears. In his hand was a Gringotts vault key, with this he could care for his mother. “I’ll repay you; you’ve my word on that”*

*“It’s a gift Draco, a gift and a way to thank you for your help.”*

*“Ooh, these are nice.” Emma had opened her gift. A beautiful set of earrings and matching necklace. “The stones are beautiful, they almost look real.”*

*Narcissa leaned forward for a better look. “They are real.”*

*“They’re real?”*

*“I know diamonds. Those are diamonds. Good ones.”*

*“They’re real?” Emma’s eyes glazed over for a moment estimating the price. “Harry Potter, there is no way in hell you are spending this kind of money on me.”*

*He gave her his puppy dog eyes. “You don’t like them Mum?”*

*“No you don’t, don’t try that Mum stuff on me.*

*“Just think about it for a while, if you still don’t like them come next Christmas, I’ll return them. If I can find the receipt. Oh and if Moldy Shorts doesn’t kill me. Next Christmas, for sure.”*

*Hermione had finally opened her gift from Harry. She sat speechless just gazing at the first edition Dickens collection in her hands, she looked at him with her eyes tearing.*

*“Hey, what else would I get my favorite bookworm?”*

*Daniel opened the last of Harry’s packages; it contained airline tickets and four passports. “What’s this?”*

*“Well, since my orphanage idea fell through, I thought that I’d get the four of you to go take a look at some business I seemed to have inherited in New Zealand, you know, evaluate them to see if I should sell, or keep them. I respect both your and Mrs. Malfoy’s business sense. As a bonus, you can keep Draco out of trouble, and if need be Draco can GET you out of trouble. A win-win.”*

*“So you’re getting us out of the way.”*

*“That would be a cynical way of looking at it.” Harry tried to look offended.*

*“What if we say no?”*

*“Well, I’d be forced to have Hermione obliviate your memories, create new personas with new names, and give you an overwhelming desire to head down under, until such time as we finish with Moldy Shorts and come get you.”*

*“Like I’d do that.” Hermione huffed.*

*“Shush, I’m being threatening.”*

*“Well, you know Daniel; I’ve always wanted to see New Zealand.” Emma looked thoughtful.”*

*Narcissa seemed less than thrilled. “Is there at least shopping in New Zealand?”*

*Appleby*

*North Lincolnshire, England:*

*40 Death Eaters apparated outside the tiny mixed village of Appleby, and surrounded it. The vast majority of the 694 souls who called the village their home were just sitting down to Christmas Dinner. No one noticed when the anti-apparition wards went up over the entire town, nor did anyone notice when the every door and window of the village were suddenly sealed.*

*When the fires started, people noticed. The Muggle families died in horror not understanding what was happening. The Wizard families knew exactly what was happening, and died of an entirely different type of horror. St Bartholomew’s Church was the last structure to fall, as the Dark Mark*



*appeared over the ruins of the town. There were no survivors.*

*The last Death Eater to leave shook his head sadly. His father had season tickets to the Appleby Arrows' home games. He had always enjoyed going to those games with his dad. Well, Maybe the Arrows will reform after we deal with the muggles...*

## **Chapter 28 – Novo Annum**

*Glasgow Airport:*

*Draco was gazing through the plate glass looking at the passenger jet with a wary eye. Dressed in slacks and a polo shirt, he felt odd, and now Potter expected him to get in that metal monstrosity that somehow managed to fly without magic. Insanity plain and simple.*

*“Relax Draco; commercial airlines are the safest way to travel.”*

*“You’ve ridden in one Potter?”*

*“Me? Good lord no.” He grinned at the look on Draco’s face. “Hermione and I are taking a shuttle flight to London. It leaves about 30 minutes after your flight does. That will be my first muggle flight. Come on Draco, you never used to let me get to you like that.” He slapped the blond on the back. “Lighten up, from what I hear, Kiwi girls find cultured English accents like yours dead sexy...”*

*“Really?”*

*“Like you didn’t know...”*

*Kings Cross Station:*

*Hand in hand, Hermione and Harry arrived at the station, still having an half an hour before the Express was to leave for Hogwarts, they found a secluded corner near Platform 9 ¾ and treasured their last few moments together. Harry was in a good position to see Neville and Susan Bones approach the platform.*

*“Neville!” Harry took Neville’s hand. “Thanks for your help on the train last time Big Brother. Thank God you were there.”*

*Neville blushed; I didn’t do anything you wouldn’t have done if you had been there Harry.”*

*“Are you ok Susan?”*

*“I’m always ok when I’m with Neville Harry. He’s my Rock.”*

*“We’ve got to go Harry, got to assist the first years.” Hermione looked to him wistfully.*

*“I was hoping to see Ron and Ginny, but you’re right. I’ve got to get back to Gringotts.” He pulled Hermione to him for a kiss. “Be safe Hermione”*

*Gringotts*

*Curse Breaking Department*

*Potter Project Conference Cavern:*

*Harry entered the conference area, Bill Weasley and his team of nine curse breaking Goblins were waiting.*

*“Welcome to our facility Harry.”*

*“Thank you for the invitation Bill. You’ve done it?”*

*The eldest of the Weasley children gestured to the table where lay three enchanted items and a huge snake in a sphere of magic. “We’ve got all four. The Locket of Slytherin, The Cup of Hufflepuff, the Dagger of Ravenclaw, and Nagini the snake. We’ve yet to determine just how to go about breaking the curses on the items, or separating the soul fragments from them, but possession is 9/10s of the problem.”*

*“I’ve given that part some thought. I would ask that you all stand back.”*

*“Harry, what are you doing?”*

*“Just making use of the gift Tom gave me.” Harry smiled. He turned to Ragnak, who had accompanied him. “Bank Manager, if I am possessed, kill me. Don’t try for a cure, just kill me.”*

*“Mr. Potter, the Curse Breakers are trained to...”*

*“Bank Manager, breaking the curse on one of these almost killed Albus Dumbledore. I don’t want to risk any of these people. It’s my problem, I’ll deal with it. Might I bother one of your security Goblins for the loan of a sword?”*

*Ragnak narrowed his eyes calculating the risk to the bank; he then nodded to the security team leader, who handed Harry his sword hilt first.*

*“Thank you Glithort.”*

*Harry approached the table, when he got within 20 feet of the snake, the sphere of magic dissolved into nothing, and Nagini’s enchantments suddenly canceled. The 30 foot snake reverted to the five foot coral snake it had been prior to its capture by Riddle. The loss of its magics and protections disoriented the creature, and it convulsed on the table top. Harry swung the blade and severed the head. Without the magics or the life force of the creature to hold it in place, a fragment of Riddle’s soul was released. Without magics to sustain the soul fragment, it dissipated with a horrible shriek.*

*As soon as the other horocruxes entered Harry's area of null magic, the magics holding the soul fragments were sucked away and the soul fragments all died, one after another, each with its own death scream. Riddle's horocruxes were all gone.*

*Hogwarts*

*Gryffindor Heads Suite*

*Common Room:*

*Hermione cast an angry look at the door to the Head Boy's bedroom. Ron and Luna (and to a lesser extent Neville and Susan) had taken to making 'use' of the unoccupied room. More often than not they forgot to use privacy charms making Hermione an annoyed and more than a little bit jealous audience of one.*

*She closed her textbook, and gathered her things into her book bag before stomping up to her own bed chamber. She disrobed and pulled on her bed clothes (a Gryffindor team Jersey bearing the name 'Potter' that she had purchased as a joke at the World Quidditch cup. She had worn it while sleeping with him once. In the morning when he saw what she was wearing he had fallen out of the bed laughing)*

*After brushing her teeth and dealing with her before bed routines, she lay on the bed and extinguished the lights. For a moment, she accessed Harry's emotions. He was very pleased by something. Something had gone very right. She lay back and relaxed. She then used the ring to access his love for her again. It washed over her, overwhelming her senses. When the first orgasm hit her she cried out.*

*"Harry!"*

*Tuttington*

*Norfolk, England:*

*Bellatrix led her team of Death Eaters to the sleepy village randomly targeted by the Dark Lord to*

*spread the terror he sought. It took less than half an hour for all 732 souls who lived in the completely muggle village to die. The dark mark appeared over the remains of the village and the Death Eaters apparated away.*

## **Chapter 29 - Carpe Diem**

*Gringotts*

*Curse Breaking Department*

*Potter Project Conference Cavern:*

*"It's over." He slumped into a chair by the table. He gazed at the puddle of snake blood, wondering idly if it had ruined the finish of the tabletop.*

*"Mr. Potter?"*

*"It's over Bank Manager. His horocruxes are gone. If not for that damned prophecy, anyone could kill him now."*

*"But the prophecy remains Mr. Potter."*

*"I know." Enough elation. Back to work. "Bank Manager, might I have a moment of your time?"*

*Gringotts*

*Ragnak's Office:*

*"So, what can I do for you Mr. Potter?"*

*"Bank Manager, I would like to add these people to my will." He passed a piece of parchment to Ragnak, whose eyes widened upon reading it. "I try to take care of my friends Bank Manager."*

*Ragnak reflected on that for a moment, and nodded. "And?"*

*"You're starting to read me Bank Manager. I would like to execute the bonus option for beating the target on the Horocrux project. I would also like to know the protocol for awarding contract employees personal bonuses."*

*"That is completely unnecessary. The Curse Breakers are well compensated."*

*"Is awarding contract employees against bank policy?"*

*"No."*

*"Alright. I would like 10,000 Galleons to go to each of them. Their efforts likely saved my life."*

*Ragnak gave him a toothless Goblin grin "Goblins also believe in paying our debts, real and imagined. It will be as you say Mr. Potter."*

*"Thank you Bank Manager. I wish to contract Gringotts for one further service."*

*"Indeed Mr. Potter? What department do I need?"*

*"I believe that calling for War Master would be a good first step."*

*Hogwarts:*

*Neville Longbottom was patrolling the castle. He wasn't a prefect, but his actions on the train had given him a certain license to enhance the security of the castle when he could. Something was going on. This he was sure. Classrooms that were supposed to be locked were found open. Potion stores had been raided of restricted ingredients. He had mentioned all this to both Cornfoot and Hermione, both said that they would look into it.*

*If the pattern he was starting to see was accurate, this should be the classroom used tonight. He turned the knob and was unsurprised when the door opened to him. There in the unused classroom were two young men kneeling over a cauldron.*

*"Well look boys, we've got a snoop." To Neville's immediate left he found a sixth year Slytherin who had his wand pointed at Neville's head.*

*The two kneeling immediately whipped out their wands and cast hexes in his direction. Neville grabbed the throat of the Slytherin by the door and pulled him into position to act as a shield. His shield slumped to the ground as Neville cast a pair of full body binds on the pair by the cauldron. He laid his prisoners side by side on the floor next to the evidence in the cauldron. With a cutting hex he flayed the right sleeves of the robes they wore. The Slytherin who had been at the door was marked.*

*"Well, Happy Birthday to me..."*

*Dunoon*

*Argyll, Scotland:*

*Jacky Armstrong had been the Master of the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry Lissy for almost 9 years, his crew was a good one that made 10 crossings a day, almost every day of the year. He had left the Dunoon pier only three hours before. He could not believe what he was seeing now. Over the town floated what appeared to be a giant skull with a gigantic glowing snake flowing through the eye sockets. Below this floating horror was what was left of the town. The buildings were a flame, the streets cratered, and not a living thing visible.*

*This was insane. Dunoon was a town of almost nine thousand souls, there was no way for that many people to die in a simple fire in only 3 hours.*

*The only survivors of the town were the passengers of Armstrong's ferry and the few others who were not in the town when the disaster, whatever it was, happened.*

*Gringotts*

*Ragnak's Office:*



*Once the War Master had arrived, Harry outlined what he wanted to do, and what he would like to contract the Goblins to do for him.*

*"Existing treaties are quite clear. Goblin troops cannot take action in this without sparking another war."*

*"I understand that War Master. I do not want your troops to fight; in fact, I have no wish for Goblin troops at all. I asked for you for your expertise, which the Bank Manager and I have negotiated at the standard consultation fee plus 200 percent due to your obligations to the Goblin Nation and the constraints this is putting on your valuable time." He gestured to the map he had traced out. "I need your expertise to counter my uneducated assumptions."*

*Baglock looked over the drawing. It was a good plan. He made suggestions to make it better. "And where will you be for this?"*

*Harry pointed to where he intended to be. Baglock nodded. "Perhaps I've misjudged you Slikmor."*

*"The name you've given me has been demonstrably accurate War Master. Only time will tell if your assessment was correct or not."*

## Chapter 30 – Payback

*Gringotts*

*Mine car access:*

*“Harry!”*

*Harry looked up to see Bill Weasley coming toward him.*

*“I can’t thank you enough Harry. That bonus will...” the older man drew him into a bone crushing hug that would have put Mrs. Weasley to shame. “Now I can buy Fleur the house she wants.”*

*“I’d wait a bit before you buy any property. I’m going to be liquidating some properties in a about a month, according to the estate department I’ve got some nice houses. If you like one of them, maybe we can work a deal.”*

*“Harry, you already done so much.”*

*Harry waved off his protest “What’s the good of having it if I can’t use it to make myself happy. Happy Weasley’s make ME happy. Your family have been so good to me Bill, I’d give it all to them if they’d take it. Besides it isn’t real likely that I’ll be using it.”*

*“Harry, don’t be like that.”*

*“Just being honest. As far as anyone can tell, magic can’t be used on me. However, this is Tom Riddle’s doing, he surely knows how to control it. The prophecy says I have to be the one to kill him, but I can’t see that happening, at least not directly.” Harry gave him a dangerous smile “But I have*

*cooked up a little surprise to focus his attention a bit.”*

*The Mine car to the Goblin Training Caverns of Jempap rolled up. “I’ve got to go Bill; my squad leader will skin me alive if I’m late. Give my love to Fleur!” he jumped aboard the mine car and it left the access platform at a high rate of speed.*

*He does not expect to survive. He thinks he is going to die, and still he is still going to do what everyone expects him to do. Bill shook his head, awed by the bravery of the younger man. His younger brother routinely went with Harry to these confrontations. Bill resolved to make sure Ron got the respect he deserved from the family from now on.*

*Jempap*

*Blade Cavern:*

*This was not supposed to be happening. This was supposed to be the first time his squad dueled with swords. Slorhook was losing. Losing to Slikmor.*

*It had been obvious at the beginning of the week that Slikmor had never touched a blade before. He conducted the drills teaching the stances and grips needed to use a Goblin sword successfully. Slikmor was clumsy and slow as always.*

*Then the first practice duel started. Slorhook always started with the weakest so Slikmor was the first to face him. They used wooden blades to reduce the probability of death, but not injury. Slorhook should have crushed Slikmor in seconds, but the human was parrying every thrust. He could not match Slorhook in strength, but his reflexes and speed gave him a killing edge. Slorhook had yet to make contact with Slikmor’s body but had been tagged himself at least 10 times in the 10 minutes the duel had been going on.*

*“Enough.” Slikmor stopped his attack instantly at the command. “Thutnose, you’re next”*

*Slikmor regarded him solemnly. “Why were you going easy on me?”*

*“Don’t question my training.” Slorhook growled. The Human bowed and left the circle.*

*Slorhook decided he needed to speak to his father that night.*

*Gringotts*

*Curse Breakers Department*

*Potter Project Conference Room*

*“10,000 Galleons, as a Personal Bonus from Potter.” Kpintho said. “On top of our share of the Bank Bonus for bettering the dead line, which is another 20,000 galleons each. Your young friend got any other jobs he needs done Weasley?”*

*“Harry believes in rewarding excellence. He’s a good kid. I doubt he’ll be contracting with us in the near future. He doesn’t expect to survive his confrontation with Voldemort.”*

*“Could we help?” asked Wintzip, the eldest of the curse breakers at almost 400 years of age.*

*“I don’t see how. The rules for Goblins and Humans interfering in the internal affairs of each other are fairly strict.”*

*“I don’t mean can the Goblin Nation help, I meant can WE help. That human put 5 years pay in my vault when he didn’t have to, simply to thank me for the work I was doing anyway. I see a debt there.” There were nods around the table.*

*Gringotts*

*Ragnak’s Office:*

*Ragnak look curiously as most of his Curse Breaker department filed into his office, having requested this meeting.*

*“Yes Curse Breaker Weasley?”*

*“I’m only here as your Department Head Bank Manager. These Goblins wish to ask for something, which as a Human, is none of my business.”*

*Curiouser and curiouser thought Ragnak quoting his favorite human author. “Is this true? Is this purely a Goblin issue?”*

*Wintzip, the eldest of the Curse Breakers present responded in Gobbledegook “It is Clan Master.”*

*“Thank you for your time Curse Breaker Weasley, you may return to your duties, I will deal with this Goblin matter.” What could this be about? They couldn’t be upset at Weasley’s promotion, not with the gold his contacts had earned them all.*

*After Bill Weasley left the room, Ragnak again turned his attention to Wintzip. “What is your request?”*

*“We would like to be ejected from the Goblin Nation.”*

*“In the 300 years I have held this office, I have been asked for many things, but I have never had this request before. Might I ask why?”*

*Kpintho spoke up. “We have heard of the project in progress outside the Hogwarts grounds and wish to be there when it is executed. We wish to assist Vault Holder Potter in his fight, but we do not want to drag the Goblin Nation into war.”*

*“Human politicians call what you are asking for ‘plausible deniability’.” Ragnak thought aloud.  
“Will Weasley be there as well?”*

*“We believe so Clan Master.” Said Wintzip. “Curse Breaker Weasley has spoken of the life debts owed to Vault Holder Potter by his Clan.”*

*“If you are found, our records will show that you all were ejected from the nation today. If you are not found, we never had this conversation.”*

*“Thank you Clan Master.”*

*“Gringotts pays its debts. Go with Profit and Honor.”*

*Gringotts*

*Holding Cells*

*May 1st:*

*“Are you sure you’re alright with this Fleur?”*

*“Of course I am mon amour. We must assist ‘arry. If zis works, we will assist him in ways he knows not.” She kissed her new husband, the father of the child growing inside her.*

*She looked through the one-way view port and her eyes widened in recognition.*

*“Besides, I know this one. Once properly prepared, ‘e will be parfait!”*

*Composing her self Fleur entered the holding cell.*

*“Bonjour André”*

*“Fleur? Fleur Delacour?”*

*"Weasley maintenant, je me suis marié."*

*"Félicitations."*

*"Merci. Nous recherchions un mangeur de la mort pour extorquer l'information hors de, imaginons que ma surprise quand je trouve celui ils m'apportent être un vieux camarade de classe."*

*"Je ne vous dirai rien."*

*"Je ne m'occupe pas. Je ne m'occupe pas du tout. La vraie raison je l'ai offert pour ceci pour que la chance remercie les mangeurs aléatoires de la mort de la façon dont mon fiancé a été blessé. Vous rappelez des relations de ` avec les êtres magiques avec Mme Trouseau?"*

*"Je crois ainsi."*

*"Vous vous rappelez pourquoi on devrait ne jamais nuire au compagnon d'un Veela?"*

*Andre Bouchold's eyes widened as panic set in.*

*"Vous ne pouvez pas faire ceci, vous ne pouvez pas!"*

*"Vous joignez le monstre qui blessent mon Bill? Garçon, naturellement moi idiots bidon."*

*The screams were horrible. Not for the first time Bill Weasley resolved to never under any circumstance make his lovely wife angry.*



## Chapter 31 – Countdown

*Jempap*

*Battle Cavern*

*May 5th:*

*“Leeblit squad finishes it’s training today. Your squad has achieved some of the highest scores in recent memory, despite having a coddled human among you.” Baglock paused to down another tankard. Goblin ceremonies tended to be drinking binges, and this one had already been going on for 6 hours.*

*Harry sat up, forcing himself to focus. Damn, this Goblin ale is good stuff! “Coddled Weakling Human, right here!”*

*“Shut UP Boy!” Baglock wheeled on him. “No one who can score on me using blades is a WEAKLING.” And he started in on another drink.*

*“Sorry War Master. Just Coddled Human then.”*

*“Damned right. It’s not your fault. You’re only a Human. You would have made a great Goblin. An ugly one, but a great one.” The War Master was thoroughly in the bag. “So we’re gonna fix that. Slorhook, do your presentation, before none of us can stand to talk.”*

*Slorhook stood. “Squad to attention!”*

*Leeblit squad stood rigidly.*

*“One of our number has distinguished himself. He is weak. He is slow. He has no stamina. He IS good with blades, but his most significant ability is the inability to quit. Even when captured, the sneaky little bastard still managed to steal a blade and free himself and his squad while Chitcox Squad were squawking among themselves. It is directly due to his actions that all of the members of this squad have been enriched to the levels of the ruling Banking Guild instead of the pittance normally allotted to the Security Guild. This enrichment will only continue, as the Epic adaptation of the book “Leeblit Squad and the Quest for the Crystal” is performing well in theaters all over the Goblin Nation despite the fact that the mincing actor they have playing me is no where near handsome enough. The War Master and I have discussed this at length, and have decided that the Goblin Security Guild must NEVER owe a debt to a Human, so the solution is to make him a Goblin.”*

*“Harry Potter. Slikmor is no more, that was your training name, and you are training no longer. I would invite you to join my family, Clan of Gleellop. Be my Brother, Brother to my sister, so that she’ll stop sniffing around you.” Lorath threw a tankard at his head, that he dodged “Be my father’s adopted son, so that he might expunge the debt he feels he owes you for how he treated you before he saw your worth. Join us.”*

*Harry blinked. “Thank you Squad Leader, War Master, Healer Lorath. I am not worthy of this honor. I have responsibilities among my own kind.”*

*“I decide who is worthy Potter, not you.” Baglock thundered, and then his tone softened. “Your responsibilities would not be affected by joining us, you would not lose, only gain allies. We all want this.”*

*What to do, what to do, what to do. “I thank you again War Master. I accept your generous offer.”*

*“Then as of this day, your family name is Pledtor.” Baglock slammed down another tankard of ale. “I do believe we’ve just written the sequel to the movie...” He extended a sword to Harry. “This is for you. For a Goblin Warrior it would be a very short sword, for you, it is a dealer of death. Use it on that lunatic Dark Lord of yours. Take solace in this. If you fall in Battle, his fight with you becomes a fight with the entire Goblin Nation. We will destroy him for you, no charge.”*

*“Thank you War Master.”*

*“And this is from your squad mates” Slorhook held up a human sized suit of Goblin mail. “It is magic free, and will turn most blades with no damage to the mail. Wear it when you kill your lunatic.”*

*“Thank you all. I only wish...”*

*“Shut up and get to drinking Pledtor. You’re behind, and the next round is on you.”*

*Harry tossed a handful of Galleons on the bar, and took another tankard for himself.*

*“Welcome to the family little Brother.” Lorath looked at him in that amused way of hers.*

*“Thank you. Pledtor?”*

*“Ple means ‘beaten, but not broken’, dtor means ‘user of blades’.”*

*Harry considered his next words. “I made an impression I take it?”*

*“Hmm. The proceeds from the Book and movie do not hurt. Security Guild is profiting from your association with them. I’ve been asking around, as far as the Goblin Nation is concerned, where ever you go, it rains gold on Goblins.”*

*“I’m nothing special.”*

*“I believe the fact that you are the first Human adopted into the Goblin Nation for 8 centuries shows the lie of that statement.” She smiled at him. “I’m going to have to learn to live with a troublesome little brother.”*

*Gringotts*

*Ragnak's Office:*

*6 May*

*"I was glad I could catch you before you left Mr. Potter."*

*"Thank you Bank Manager. So it's done then?"*

*"It is Mr. Potter. These are the remotes you asked for. Completely muggle, no magic involved at all. Operation is simple, this switch turns it on, this switch readies the device, and this button is the trigger."*

*"Thank you Bank Manager. I cannot thank you enough for the help you have extended me."*

*"The least I could do for the adopted son of my younger brother." Ragnak smiled at the look of surprise. "You didn't know? Everyone usually comments on how we share the eyes of our mother."*

*"I'm sure you do, someday I hope to meet the rest of the family. Any news on your bet?"*

*"Oh yes, the odds have improved."*

*"Good."*

*"200 to one now."*

*Harry choked. "I thought you said the odds improved."*

*"Improved in the payout. If you win, I will get a healthy return for my 15"*

*"You bet 15 Galleons on me?"*

*"You need to learn more about banking young nephew. I would never bother with a 10 galleon bet. Or a 10 thousand galleon bet. I bet 10 million Galleons on you winning at 100 to one. And an additional 5 million Galleons when he upped his odds to 200 to one. If you win, even if you die, you will single handedly allow me to destroy the liquid assets of my competitor in Zurich. I've never cared for Gnomes, no business sense."*

*Diagon Alley*

*The Daily Prophet:*

*7 May*

*"I'm not printing this. It would be insanity."*

*"Mr. Titus, this is my public statement to Voldemort. It is news. You are supposedly the editor of a News Paper."*

*"It isn't going to happen Mr. Potter."*

*"I believe it is Mr. Titus." He handed the older man a file. "These documents will tell you that I have just yesterday, in conjunction with Gringotts, acquired a controlling interest in the Prophet. Either you print this, exactly as I have written it, or I will be hiring someone who will. I am a very good friend of Luna Lovegood; I don't believe it would take her long to talk her father into stepping into your shoes to run this paper."*

*“You can’t do this. I’ve been the editor of this paper for 20 years.”*

*“And in those 20 years, published stories that alternatively lionized me, and drug me through the mud. You should not annoy people with the capability of buying your job out from under you. Just this once, the Daily Prophet will tell the story I want told, and tell it the way I want to tell it.” He took a scrap of parchment and made a quick note. “This is your banner headline tomorrow. Disappoint me and you will be lucky to be judging Witch Weekly’s Best Smile contest.”*

## Chapter 32 – Challenge

*The Daily Prophet:*

***BOY WHO LIVED: Voldemort is a Coward***

*Says to Dark Lord: Your days are Numbered! I Kill YOU on the 25th*

*Diagon Alley - London*

*In an unprecedented interview, Harry Potter, also known as "The Chosen One" has issues a challenge to He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. These words are those of Harry Potter and in no way reflects the views or opinions of the staff of the Daily Prophet.*

*Tom, you gutless coward. Are you ready to quit hiding behind your Death Eaters and face me like a man? It is well reported that through the abject cowardice that has marked your entire life, rather than face me in battle you spinelessly used the Imperius curse on a defenseless muggle to attack me, to rob me of my magic. Fine, one point to He-Who-Hides-Behind-Women. I challenge you, you coward to meet me at the gates of Hogwarts (outside the wards so that you don't soil yourself in fear) on the 25th of May this year. (I have to specify THIS year so you don't fail to show up don't I Tom, how sad is that?) We can end this once and for all, face to face like men. You remember Men don't you Tom?*

*Bring your Death Eaters. Bring all of them. When I've warmed up on you, I could use the work out. I'm going to beat you so badly, your mother, who killed herself in order to avoid you, will feel it. Bring your Dementors. They don't run away like you and your Death Eaters, so at least I'll have a challenge. Bring your Werewolves. I like killing werewolves almost as much as I like killing Death Eaters. I'm coming for you Tom. You had best show up, you don't know what I'll do to you if I have to come looking.*

*I know what you're thinking Tom, kidnap my friends and hide behind them. You are just so pusillanimous that you're likely to do just that. You disgust me. It won't matter if you do, no matter who or what you hide behind, I'm going to kill you.*

*And don't claim this isn't about you Tom Marvolo Riddle. Do not hide behind that stupid anagram "I am Lord Voldemort". Seriously how stupid is that? How old were you when you decided that was cool? Six? Oh hey look, I can do anagrams too. Call me: Pyjamas The Terror. Yeah, Pyjamas The Terror is at least 20 times cooler than 'Lord Voldemort' and it doesn't lead to nicknames like Moldysshorts.*

*Just so I'm clear, I'm coming for you Tom Riddle. I am giving you until the 25th of May at 1p.m. (I prefer to do my killing after lunch) to get your affairs in order, and to dredge up the testicular fortitude to face me. You'll disappoint me as usual. We've faced each other what? 5 times. And each time you ran screaming like a little girl. Come on Tom, have you got what it takes?*

*Last warning: If you pull your usual crap and send a herd of your 'Death Eaters' (and don't get me started on that stupid name) then I'll kill them and come looking for you Tommy. That would make me angry. You wouldn't like me when I'm angry.*

*Yours in eternal hostility;*

*Pyjamas The Terror. AKA Harry Potter*

*The Quibbler:*

*Harry Potter to face Voldemort in Personal Combat*

*By Luna Lovegood staff reporter*

*Hogwarts, Scotland.-It is announced to day by this reporter that Harry Potter, also known as The-Boy-Who-Lived, the Chosen One, Pyjamas The Terror, He-Who-Picks-The-Rasins-From-His-Rasin-Toast, and My Boyfriend and Lover's Best Friend will be challenging Tom Marvolo Riddle AKA Lord Voldemort, He-who-must-not-be-named, You-Know-Who, The Dark Wanker, MoldyShorts, and Snickerdoodle (the last only used by Bellatrix Lestrange during intimate moments) to personal combat, just off the grounds of Hogwarts on the 25th of May.*

*The Battle will include Death Eaters, Dementors, Werewolves, and Nargles, though the Nargles will not be noticed in the mayhem. There will much carnage, many explosions, a sprinkling of a muggle invention called 'roofing Nails', and most unfortunately, Miss Lavender Brown's hair style will be ruined.*

*On the fashion front, the Death Eaters will of course be dressed in their drab all black robes with optional white masks. You-Know-Who will be in a flowing black robe that covers him from head to toe, not allowing this reported to confirm or deny the rumours of his exceptionally small genitalia, although confirmation of that rumour would go along way in explaining that whole 'take over the world' fixation. Might someone be compensating for something? Pyjamas the Terror will be wearing a fetching suit of Goblin chain mail, which will accentuate his bum. As nine out of 10 girls at Hogwarts will tell you, his bum is his best feature, and this Reporter is please to tell you that the effect of the Goblin mail will render it 'tasty'.*

*Harry will of course win, unless he doesn't in which case this reporter will be quite vexed with him.*

*British Rail*

*Overnight Express*

*London to Glasgow:*



*Harry put the Prophet away. Just as he wanted. Too bad he hadn't found a thesaurus, he wanted to call Tom a Coward a couple more times in different ways.*

*The Quibbler on the other hand perplexed him. How the hell did Luna find out any of that stuff? He hadn't told her. He hadn't told anyone outside of Gringotts. She even knew what he was wearing. WHAT? My bum is 'tasty'? Why am I just finding this out now?*

*Pyjamas the Terror. That was growing on him...*

*Malfoy Manor*

*Throne Room:*

*Riddle sat on his throne the smell of the destroyed body of the Death Eater who brought the articles to his attention still hung in the air. So Potter is challenging me. We will see who is the coward.*

*"Bellatrix, arrange to have all or my Death Eaters at Hogsmeade on the morning of the 25th."*

*"Of Course My Lord"*

*Riddle returned his attention to the papers. The Quibbler confused him more than angered. How had this Lovegood discovered Bellatrix's pet name for him? And what is this about 'exceptionally small genitalia? He had never received complaints.*

*"Bellatrix. Are my bits small?" Riddle asked, casting a quick crucio at the guard who dared laugh.*

*"Of course not My Lord."*

*"I didn't think so." Back to the story. Wait a minute; Potter's bum was 'tasty'?*

## Chapter 33 – Preparation

*Hogwarts*

*Great Hall:*

*May 12th*

*Hermione entered the great hall more than a little flustered. The previous night she had found a copy of the Quibbler on her rounds and suddenly understood what everyone had been laughing about yesterday. She spotted Luna just sitting down at the Ravenclaw table and crossed the room to her.*

*"Good Morning Hermione." The blonde-haired girl said brightly, arranging her eggs and bacon into a face on the plate in front of her. "Don't you love being artistic with your food?" she curved the rasher of bacon into a smile for her happy plate, and then stabbed the smiling face in the left egg yolk eye with her fork. "It allows you to work off hostility so easily."*

*"I'm more of a Tea and Toast for breakfast person my self." Hermione said sitting down across from Luna. "I wanted to talk to you about your article in the Quibbler."*

*"Oh yes, I was hoping you would. I was planning a second article on the subject, and could really use your insight into the subject, what with your being Muggle born and all."*

*Somewhat confused, Hermione asked, "How can I help?"*

*"Since you are Muggle born, you would know..." Luna leaned closer in a conspiratorial manner whispering, "What are Muggles trying to tell us in their 'paint by number' pictures? What is the code to unlock the secrets?" She looked around to see if anyone was paying attention. "I've tried all the permutations I could think of, but nothing seems to work."*

*Hermione pinched the bridge of her nose, conversations with Luna could so often lead to migraines. "They're just Pictures Luna. They let people with little artistic talent enjoy the act of creation by proxy. That's all. No secret, no code."*

*"I see. Sworn to secrecy are you? I understand. Just be aware, I am an investigative reporter, I will get to the bottom of this cover up, and the secret will be made public!"*

*"That's fine Luna, actually I wanted to speak to you about this article." She unrolled the issue of the Quibbler she had found.*

*"Oh. You didn't know that the girls think Harry has a nice bum?"*

*"Yes, no... Luna, putting out all this information, it could be dangerous. You could make Voldemort angry."*

*"He couldn't be all that angry, I clearly labeled the information as rumour. I only have a single source on the size of his dangly bits. To report as fact you need at least two sources."*

*"Not that Luna... Wait. What possible source could you have for the size of Voldemort's bits?"*

*Luna looked a bit offended. "An impeccable one I assure you. Oh Myrtle!"*

*Moaning Myrtle drifted into the Great Hall and approached Luna. Hermione was shocked, she had never seen Myrtle outside of the girls toilet she haunted.*

*"Yes Luna?" her attention shifted to Hermione "Oh, it's you."*

*"Hermione was wondering who my source was for the size of Tom Riddle's genitalia."*

*"Oh him. His was the first I ever saw. Not long after I died, I started peeping in the plumbing. His is the cutest little thing." She held up the pinky on her left hand. "about like this." Myrtle giggled "No wonder he was always so angry."*

*"You see Hermione, an excellent source, if only I could have gotten a second witness. I wonder if Bellatrix Lestrange would consent to an interview."*

*Desperate to change the subject Hermione said, "So, Myrtle, it's been a while since we last spoke, how are you?"*

*"About the same, still dead. People still throw things at me."*

*"Hermione is engaged to Harry Potter."*

*"Really? Lucky girl. That one will never want to take over the world to prove anything."*

*"Oh yes, you mentioned that before. I meant to mention that to you Hermione so that you can get some stretching exercises in before the 24th."*

*"What? No, we... I... I've got to go. Good speaking to you both." And Hermione almost ran from the Great Hall.*

*"Oh dear, we may have embarrassed her"*

*"I don't see how Myrtle. We gave her good news didn't we?"*

*Hogwarts*

*Room of Requirements:*

*May 12th*

*Susan and Neville sat together in the parlor that the Room of Requirement had provided them. A fire was in the hearth, the warmth permeated their bodies, it had been a wonderful evening together. Neville had his arm around her, and they cuddled closer.*

*"I wonder why Harry chose to end it here."*

*"Probably so that he would have the DA to back him up." Neville was not all that sure if that was the reason, but the part of him that wanted to help Harry hoped it was.*

*"We could die." Susan had been worried ever since she read the Prophet article. "Was it wise to challenge V-Voldemort so blatantly?"*

*"I was as shocked as you. But the more I thought about it the more I was certain that it was part of Harry's scheme to ensure that Voldemort actually show up. I'm sure there's more to it."*

*"I've been talking to Luna." Susan hesitated. Many people wrote Luna Lovegood off as a, well, loon. Susan had always found her to be exceptionally helpful and informed, if not exactly lucid. "She says that Harry's going to win."*

*"Ron said something about her being some kind of seer."*

*"She says she can see her own personal future. She says Harry's going to win, but no one she knows will ever see him again." She started to cry. "It's not fair. He's only 17. Why aren't there armies of adults there to fight these monsters? Why is it Harry?"*

*"It's because they're afraid. Harry's afraid too, but more than that he's angry. If Luna's right and he does die, he would be the first to tell you that he would far rather die on his feet than on his knees. His one regret will be leaving Hermione. If only they had realized what everyone else saw a lot earlier."*

## **Chapter 34 – Arrival**

*Hogwarts*

*Great Hall:*

*May 20th*

*Hermione was enjoying the conversation that accompanied dinner tonight. The theory behind love potions was always a popular topic among the Gryffindor Witches. Most at the table claimed to find the idea of USING such a potion to be a horrible idea (and an insult to their female sexuality), but the theory of how that worked was fascinating. Dinner was (as usual) wonderful. She made a mental note to go down to the kitchen later to thank the Elves.*

*From behind her she heard Luna say "Hermione, there's someone here to see the head girl."*

*Hermione turned and saw only Luna. "Who needs me?"*

*"There's a boy in the Entryway that is too embarrassed to come through, the head boy is busy: she nodded toward Cornfoot who appeared to be breaking up a fight between a pair of first years, "I thought that you could handle it."*

*"Did someone prank him?"*

*"I think you need to see this for yourself."*

*Hermione excused herself from the conversation and left to sort out the problem. She got to the Entryway a few moments later and did not see anyone.*



*"Hello? Did someone need help?"*

*"I think I'm having heart problems." Harry stepped from the shadows. "It seems to be missing. Have you found one?"*

*She ran to him and enveloped him into her arms with asqueal, covering his mouth with her own. She vaguely heard a round of applause start behind her, she broke the kiss and turned to see most of the DA applauding the pair being together again.*

*"Thanks everyone. I think I'd best go find the Headmistress to see if I can spend the night." He took Hermione by the hand and together they headed off to the Headmistresses office.*

*As they approached the Gargoyle that guarded the door, Professor McGonagall came out to meet them, her spy network was evidently pretty good. "Mr. Potter, welcome back."*

*"Thank you Professor, it's good to be here, I've missed the staff than this old castle so much. I hope you don't mind I'm having a little party on the 25th just outside your gates."*

*"Why would I mind getting good seats for a party like that?" She turned serious. "I take it your magic problem hasn't cleared up?"*

*"No Professor, if anything it's worse than when I last saw you."*

*"Then what are you going to do?"*

*He smiled "I'll do what you taught me Professor, my best. I've got a plan, don't worry."*

*Harry saw that her worried look did not change a bit. "Let me say that getting her without magic was a lot of fun. From London to here, 5 different trains, a ferry, three busses, and then an 8 hour hike cross country. Is there any chance an old student could beg a bed for the night?"*

*The Headmistress smiled, "I believe the Head Boy room in the Gryffindor Heads suite has been empty fairly often this year. I'm sure you would be comfortable there for as long as you want it."*

*"Thank you Professor, with your permission, I need to get some sleep, I'm exhausted. Could I look you up tomorrow?"*

*"I'm always available for my former students. Good Night Mr. Potter, Ms. Granger" and she returned to her office.*

*Hogwarts*

*Gryffindor Common Room:*

*May 20th*

*Hermione led Harry up to the Gryffindor common room, where pretty much every Gryffindor was waiting for them, everyone wanted to shake Harry's hand or hug him, or in the case of the 7th year girls kiss him. Hermione tolerated it for as long as she could before she dragged him to the entrance of the Heads suite.*

*In the Head suite common room Ron, Luna, Neville and Susan were waiting. Their greetings were affectionate and short. The girls reading Hermione's body language and pulling the men in their lives out of the suite. She then led him by the hand to the Head Boy's room. Where they kissed. Had it been 4 months? She broke the kiss when she absolutely had to breathe, and excused herself.*

*Hermione went to her own room, brushed her teeth, and undressed. She then pulled on a nightshirt and returned to his room. He was not there, but she could hear the shower running. She got into the bed and waited. Harry came into the room still toweling himself dry, startled to see her there.*

*"Get your ass into this bed Potter," she growled.*

*Hogwarts*

*Gryffindor Common Room:*

*May 20th*

*Lavender, and Pavarti had invited Padma, Susan and Hannah to the common room to discuss the lucky witch that Hermione Granger most certainly was.*

*"I don't know what he's been doing, but Merlin, what abody." Lavender said playing with her Harry doll.*

*"Hermione said he was learning non magical combat" Padma offered, pulling her Harry out of her book bag. "It seems Luna was right, his bum IS tasty."*

*"Who are you and what have you done with my sister?" Pavarti laughed, "since when are you thinking such thoughts?"*

*"I've always had them Pav, I just don't act on them." Padma sniffed. "Though I must admit, if anything were to happen to Hermione, I'd be willing to console him."*

*"If Luna is to be believed, it's Hermione that's going to need consoling," said Susan gloomily. "Ron is saying that she's some kind of seer. And she doesn't see Harry after the 25th."*

*"I don't know if I believe all that seer stuff." Offered Hannah who was teasing Susan with her Harry doll "most of the predictions seem awfully vague. Harry has literally walked into hell more times than he's played Quidditch, he's still here. My money's on Harry kicking You-Know-Who's butt."*

*"I think you're all missing the most important of Luna's predictions." Lavender interjected. "The battle is supposed to ruin my hair do..."*



## Chapter 35 - The Calm

*Hogwarts*

*Griffindor Heads Suite*

*Head Boy's Bed Chamber:*

*May 21th*

*Hermione woke slowly, luxuriating in the warmth of the bed, and the happy realization of who was spooning in behind her. His deep rhythmic breathing told her he was still sleeping. A tiny spike of disappointment clouded her morning. They had yet to consummate their relationship, despite her willingness to do so. Despite her hints to him. Despite her asking him to make love to her. Once again, his damned nobility had kept them both from doing what they so wanted to do.*

*Their night had not been chaste; no, far from it. They had explored each other's bodies at length with fingers, lips, and tongues. Hermione had been preparing for several years, and via books considered herself well versed in the male anatomy. From Photos anyway. Her research had led her to clinical textbook studies of Human sexuality as well as pornography, both muggle and wizard. She had considered herself well versed on the subject. In theory perhaps, last night had demonstrated to her that the practical was a far different thing, even when compared with her self-explorations. When she had taken him in her hand, she had no way of evaluating the relative size of him. Perhaps Luna and Myrtle were joking with her. He had discovered her breasts; she had discovered how much she enjoyed the attention he paid them. When he brought her to orgasm with his hands, for the first time she could remember, she lost all cognitive thought, a single phrase running through her mind as her body found its release: better than the ring, better than the ring, better than the ring, BETTER THAN THE RING! After recovering, she had returned the favor, amazed by how messy the male version was, yet exciting at the same time.*

*Together they had left the bed for the bath and cleaned each other, always maintaining contact. They then returned to the bed and cuddled in gentle conversation until sleep claimed them both.*

*As much as she wished otherwise, she needed to get up. She had class and needed breakfast so that she would be able to concentrate. Sliding out of the bed as quietly as she could, she tried searching for her nightshirt. It was nowhere to be found. Harry had pulled it over her head last night and that*

*was the last she had seen of it, where was it now?*

*Giving up on the search, she did the only thing she could, she padded to the door of his bedchamber naked, opening the door slowly and peeking out, vowing to herself that if Ron or Neville were there waiting for her as they sometimes were she would hex them into greasy puddles. They were not. In her own chambers she showered and dressed, then after checking that Harry was still sleeping, left for breakfast and the day's classes.*

*Hogwarts*

*Quidditch Pitch:*

*May 24th*

*"Neville, Colin. Good of you to come. Sorry it's so early, but I've got a lot of people to see today"*

*"You only have to ask Harry. What ever you need."*

*"Neville, I trust you with my life. More importantly I trust you to stay behind if I ask you too."*

*Neville stiffened "It's my fight too Harry."*

*"We all stand with you Harry!"*

*"I know you do Colin. And it is your fight as well as mine Nev. I would never insult you by suggesting otherwise. There are reasons for what I am asking you to do. It's easier to show you than try to tell you. Neville, cast at me. It doesn't matter what, transfigure me, hex me, curse me, what ever."*

*Neville raised his wand and tried to cast the Aguamenti charm. Nothing happened.*

*"See? Colin, go stand by the far goals, then cast something long distance at me."*

*Colin ran to his appointed spot, turned, and cast Avis. A flock of seven or eight small twittering birds circled his head twice before he directed them to Harry. When the flock got within 25 feet of Harry, they dissolved into nothing. Colin ran back, his eyes wide in confusion.*

*"That is why no one can come with me. If they are near, they cannot do magic. Conversely, the Death Eaters cannot cast on me from a distance. Others would be defenseless and unable to attack. It's best that you all wait until I signal for you to come help." From a shoulder bag, Harry produced the small silver box and a pair of Omnioculars. "Neville, this is for you," he handed over the silver box. "This is what is going to win the war. When I head down the hill to the gate, I want you to flip this switch labeled #1." He demonstrated and a green light came on. "Green means it's on. When I reach the first of the Death Eaters, flip this switch labeled #2." He demonstrated that as well, a red light came on. "Red means Danger." Harry handed Colin the Omnioculars. "After you help Neville with the remote - no offense Nev, but it's a Muggle thing and Wizards can get confused by them some times. - I want you to keep an eye on me with these. If I go down for any reason tell Neville to push the button." He returned the toggle switches to their original position then pointed to the button. "As soon as you push the button, get everyone DOWN. Lay on the ground until all the noise stops."*

*"Turn the box on, Arm it, and push the button if you fall. Got it. What have you wired it to Harry?" asked Colin who obviously knew what Harry had done.*

*"Believe me, you don't want to know. Just make sure everyone gets down."*

*"I don't understand it, but I'll do it Harry."*

*"Thanks Nev. There's just one more thing..."*

*Christchurch New Zealand*

*The Latimer Hotel*

*May 24th*

*The Grangers and Narcissa Malfoy returned from the latest 'tour' of a Potter property (where it was becoming blatantly obvious that the word was out that these visitors were to be treated like royalty) all the businesses were well run, and very profitable. There was no reason for these visit other than to get the four of them out of the UK.*

*On the way to the 'Executive Suite' that was set aside for their use (this hotel was also one of Harry's properties) they stopped at the indoor pool. There was Draco, holding court with just about every young woman staying at the hotel.*

*The Three adult smiled at each other and made their way to the express lift to the penthouse suite. Once safely behind the door of the suite, they could talk.*

*"One way or the other it's over tomorrow."*

*"Young Potter has to win. We can't do this for ever, no matter how pleasant it is."*

*"He'll win." The adults were startled by Draco's voice. They had not noticed him coming in. "He always wins. At Christmas, I saw the look on his face that shows he has wheels turning in there. I saw the same look every time before he took one of my plans apart and made me eat it. I don't know what he's got planned, but that lunatic Riddle and Father will both wish they had stayed in bed."*

*Hogwarts*

*Gryffindor Heads Suite*

*Head Boy's Bed Chamber:*

*May 24th 11:45 pm*

*Hermione had purposefully stayed away from Harry all day. She knew that he was looking for her, but she needed the space to think. The common room was empty, she stood at the door to his*



*bedchamber.*

*She quietly entered and eased the door closed behind her. She could hear his deep rhythmic breathing and knew he was asleep. She removed her clothing as her eyes adjusted to the dim moon light. He lay on his back, his left arm over his eyes, quiet snores coming from his open mouth.*

*Naked she slid into the bed beside him, then pushed the blankets and sheet to the foot of the bed and straddled him.*

*"Hermione? What?"*

*"You listen to me you selfish ass. You have been teasing me with this damned ring for nine months now. Tomorrow you're going to go off and do the stupid thing you do and probably get your self killed. You know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I love you.."*

*"Of course I do, I"*

*"You shut the hell up. I'm not finished. I'll tell you when you can talk again. I know you love me. The only thing that keeps us from being married is a fucking ceremony. FINE. I HERMIONE TAKE YOU HARRY TO BE MY HUSBAND DESPITE YOU BEING AN INSUFFERABLY NOBLE OLD FASHIONED FATHEAD WHO DOESN'T KNOW A GOOD THING WHEN SHE'S SITTING ON YOU. IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH, FOR RICHER FOR POORER UNTIL DEATH DO US PART." She was screaming. She needed to calm down.*

*She looked into his eyes, tears streaming. "Now you talk."*

*"I Harry take you Hermione to be my wife despite the fact that I don't deserve you in any way and never will. In sickness and in health, for richer, for poorer until death do us part." He smiled that crooked smile that she loved so much. "Do I get to kiss the bride?"*

*"You get to make love to the bride, or I'm going to sit on top of you and cry all night Mr. Potter."*

*He pulled her down for the kiss. He did not get any sleep that night.*

## **Chapter 36 – The Storm**

*Hogwarts*

*Grounds ¼ miles from Front Gate:*

*May 25th 12:50 pm*

*Harry lowered the omnioculars. Tom was early. Good, let's get this over with. He had the trouser portion of the chain mail on and was pulling the tunic over his head. Hermione glared at Lavender and Pavarti for ogling his chest as the mail settled in place.*

*“I love you Hermione.”*

*“I love you....”*

*“Yeah, yeah, everyone loves everyone.” Ron interrupted. “Don't even try it Harry. We told you before we tried to get past Fluffy first year, we are together. You go, we go.”*

*“I know that Ron. That's why I got the Goblins to make you two some mail as well, it's over in that trunk by the tree.”*

*“Too Right!” Ron had seen the looks Harry was getting. He was deliriously happy with Luna, but it never hurt to advertise. Luna walked over to the trunk with Hermione, who was walking with a slight limp.*

*“Stiff today?” Luna asked.*

*“A bit.” Hermione answered.*

*“I told you to use some stretching exercises” Luna grinned at her.*

*Ron got to the trunk first “Oi Harry! There's no mail in this trunk.”*

*“Yeah, I know mate. Sorry! Neville? Luna?”*

*A pair of “Stupefy” rang out, Hermione and Ron slumped to the ground nervelessly.*

*Harry crossed to the pair. “If Tom doesn't kill me, these two probably will.” He knelt and wiped a bit of dirt from Hermione's face. “I love you Hermione. Goodbye my love.”*

*“Neville lets get the remotes turned on.” Neville and he both got their remotes. And flipped the #1 toggle switch to on. A pair of green lights came on. Harry turned to the staff and the DA. “Thank you everyone for your support the last couple of days. Please everyone remember, when Neville tells you to get down, get DOWN.”*

*Harry Potter turned and started the walk down to the waiting horde of Death Eaters. When he reached the gate, he flipped the #2 toggle switch to on. He was rewarded with a bright red light. Exiting the gate and the wards, the air was full of Dementors. Anti-Apparition and Anti-Portkey wards bloomed. That sneaky bastard Riddle was making sure he couldn't leave. Harry wondered if Riddle noticed the Goblin wards as well. Probably not.*

*Riddle was sitting on the raised throne he had conjured to match the one at the Malfoy estate. He smiled when the Dementors started their attack.*

*Harry looked up to the Dementors and felt – Nothing, nothing at all. He smiled. Time to bait the trap. He concentrated on his ring, and the emotions the pair shared washed over him. The psi portion of the Dementors mind locked on to the happy emotions and they descended on him amass. Being creatures of magic, they were reduced to nothing as their magic was stripped away by Harry's field of null magic and that Dementor magic was amplified and channeled to Tom Riddle. His body reacted to the incompatible Dementor magic by shattering the bones in Riddle's legs.*

*Harry never broke step during the Dementor attack, and reached the Death Eaters who parted to let him pass. Out of the crowd bound Fenrir Greyback. Even untransformed he was a homicidal maniac. Harry drew his goblin sword from its scabbard on his back and went into his guard stance. Greyback feinted to the left. Harry read the feint for what it was and moved to his left with a slicing thrust that Greyback ran right into, the killer was disemboweled and died minutes later, screaming in agony.*

*Harry continued on.*

*Hogwarts*

*Grounds ¼ miles from Front Gate:*

*May 25th 13:07 pm*

*“Greyback is down!” Colin reported, his eyes never leaving the omnioculars.*

*“Wake Hermione and Ron up Luna” ordered Neville. “They'll already be pissed at me as is. Don't want to make it worse by making them miss the end.”*

*“Ennervate!” said Luna aiming at Hermione. She knelt down and pulled Ron into a sitting position and again said “enervate!” aiming her wand at him. As he blinked back into consciousness, she started to kiss him. Ron forgot for the moment that he was supposed to be angry with her.*

*“Where's Harry?”*

*Padma helped Hermione to her feet and took her to Neville who pointed him out as hundreds of spells arced through the air to dissipate against Harry's field of Null Magic.*

*“Damn you Harry Potter, you stupid stubborn man. Damn you to hell, you can't do this alone!” Hermione screamed into the wind. She felt a hand on her shoulder and turned to look into the tear-filled eyes of her favorite teacher, the older woman pulled her into a hug.*

*“Men like Harry do things like this, its part of the reason you love him.”*

*Site of the Battle*

*Killing Ground:*

*May 25th 13:11 pm*

*Harry lost count of the killing curses that had hit his barrier. In the distance, he noticed that with each spell impact on the barrier, which he felt not at all, Riddle jerked in his absurd chair. The ground along his path was strewn with the bodies of Death Eaters, and other than Greyback, none of them were his doing. They were victims of Fratricide, the bad aim of their fellow Death Eaters. Harry continued his trek to Riddle.*

*Riddle was in bad shape, and it was just dawning on him why he was being damaged so badly. The curse that had depowered Potter was still in effect, any magic directed at him was paid forward to Riddle 10 times. Riddle cast Sonorus on himself*

*“Stop casting. I will deal with him myself!”*

*Harry completed the rest of his trek to Riddle unimpeded. At 50 feet, Riddle raised his wand.  
“Crucio!”*

*The spell arced over the distance between Riddle and Harry and dissipated at the barrier to magic. Riddle screamed.*

*The Death Eaters did not understand what could be hurting the Dark Lord, but boy had not done anything.*

*Harry continued. When he got to the platform the throne was on, the platform and throne dissolved to nothing, the still screaming Riddle fell to the ground, then the magic that composed Riddle’s conjured body began to dissolve and recreate its self over and over and over.*

*“That looks like it hurts” Harry said, smiling widely at Riddle. I thought you should know, I’ve destroyed your Horocrux. I killed your snake.”*

*Relief flooded Riddle’s eyes. “You fool, you can’t stop me. I didn’t create a single horocrux, I made six, and you will never find them. I will return Potter, and I’ll kill your mudblood whore while you watch.”*

*“Oh I’m sorry Tommy.”*

*“I AM LORD VOLDEMORT”*

*“Yeah, yeah I know, and I’m Pyjamas the Terror. Mine’s way cooler. Did I say Horocrux? I meant Horocruxes. Let’s see, “Harry dug into his bag. “Diary, “he dropped it to the ground in front of Riddle, “ring,” if fell on the diary. “ Cup,” added to the pile. “Dagger” it fell and broke the cup. “Locket”, “And the Snake.” Nagini’s head in a glass sphere rolled to the ground. “By my count, that’s six. Do you want to check my math Tommy?”*

***“Damn you Potter.”***

***“Now is that nice? Before you go, I thought I’d let you know the prophecy you wanted so much. Do you want to hear it? “The one with the power to vanquish the - Dark Lord approaches... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies...”***

***“You know, you really screwed up. If you had just left me alone as a baby, no one could have opposed you. Still, if you had left me alone after you were reborn, I still couldn’t have opposed you. It is funny really. Professor Dumbledore always thought the scar you gave me was how you marked me your equal, but it was this wonderful curse of yours that did it. You know what that means don’t you Tommy? The Architect of your defeat, is you, you stupid bastard. You just couldn’t leave well enough alone, which is why you lost. Which is why you’re going to die.***

***“Goodbye Tom” Harry swung his sword and severed Riddle’s head from his body. With no horocruxes to anchor his life to this plane, Riddle was dead. Finally dead. With Riddle’s death, the protean charm integrated into the dark mark activated, and all of the death eaters fell to the ground in agony. Bellatrix Lestrange managed to cast one last curse before falling.***

***Since it no longer had a place to channel the magic to, Harry’s null field collapsed. He was struck by the last crucio cast by the death eaters before they fell. He fell to the ground screaming.***

***Hogwarts***

***Grounds ¼ miles from Front Gate:***

***May 25th 13:13 pm***

***“Harry! Harry has been hit by a curse, he’s down. Neville he’s down.”***

***“Everyone down!” Neville smashed his thumb down on the trigger button on the remote.***

***Site of the Battle***

***Killing Ground:***

***May 25th 13:14 pm***

***At 12 locations around the site of the final confrontation between the forces of Riddle and Potter caches of muggle C-4 high explosive detonated. The charges were shaped to force the blast inward toward the Death Eaters. In front of the charges were paper cases of Muggle roofing nails that were coated with silver as a special gift for the surviving Werewolves.. These tore through the huddle Death Eaters already in agony from the link of their Dark Marks and their dead Master. Hundreds were shredded and died in agony.***

***The Goblin war engineers were firm believers in the adage anything worth blowing up was worth***

*blowing up REAL GOOD. Four small canisters of an explosive powder were kicked into the air by small explosive charges. When they reached a height of 20 feet, small charges inside the canisters spread the powder in an almost aerosol manner. The four clouds of powder joined in the center having blanketed the entire killing ground. This single larger cloud was ignited by a thermal charge. Almost instantaneously and intense fireball bloomed reaching temperatures of almost 3000 degrees Celsius and the overpressure wave snuffed the life of most of the survivors left in Harry's trap. The Pressure wave and Thermal pulse of the detonation propagated away from the center of the killing ground at slightly less than 10,000 feet per second.*

*Hogwarts*

*Grounds ¼ miles from Front Gate:*

*May 25th 13:14 pm*

*Lavender Brown hugged the ground as she had been told. What she did not know was that her latest Hairstyle, a retro 'beehive' style was high enough to be in a partial line of sight with the killing ground. The thermal pulse from the explosion lit her hair on fire. Pavarti saw what happened, and cast a quick 'aguamenti' spell to douse the flames. Lavender was unhurt, but her hair was almost completely gone.*

*Hermione started to scream hysterically. Her link to Harry was gone, she watched in horror as her ring, her link to Harry dissolved away into nothingness.*

## Chapter 37 – One Tin Soldier

*Site of the Battle*

*Killing Ground:*

*May 25th 14:36*

*Ron kept moving, if he stayed too long in one place he was likely to become ill. He was trying to think of the bodies at his feet as anything but bodies. The Explosions had thrown bodies and parts of bodies everywhere. Riddle had been found almost immediately his body on one side of the field, his head on another, unburned for some reason. So far, 6 survivors had been found and were in the hands of the Ministry Aurors who showed up, as usual, too late.*

*The first thing the Aurors did was order everyone out of the killing grounds to ‘preserve evidence.’ They were ignored. Then one of the Aurors (the same one who asked if Susan might not have led her attackers on back in September. Coincidence?) laid hands on Neville to force him off the field. The Auror was hit by 19 different hexes simultaneously. Luckily Auror Shackbolt showed up before a new war broke out between the Aurors and the DA.*

*It was Tonks who finally found him. The Goblin Mail had burnished badly in the heat, but had protected him from the firestorm. His boots still smoked, his face was charred but recognizable, the cowl of the mail fell back as she lifted him and his hair was exposed in all of its trademark mess.*

*Ron refused to believe it until he tugged off the gauntlet on the right hand. He completely lost his composure when he saw the final damnable evidence. The blood quill scars on the back of his hand clearly read ‘I will not tell lies’.*

*Composing himself, he took his friends body from the sobbing woman. Has he always been this light? How could someone so strong be so light? There would be no apparition. No portkey. Harry Potter had made his last trip as a living man by nothing more than the strength of his body. He would make his last trip as the Hero that saved them all by the strength of the body of Ron Weasley.*



*Hogwarts*

*Hospital Wing:*

*May 25th 14:45*

*Lavender's hair was already growing back, Madam Pomfrey said that it would be back in all its glory by dinner tomorrow. Lavender shooed Pavarti away to join Padma and Hannah in consoling Hermione. Susan came running in.*

*"They've found him." She wrapped Hermione in a hug. "I'm sorry Hermione, he's gone. The Ministry tried to take him, Ron has him and is bringing him back to the castle. The DA is holding the Ministry goons off for now."*

*Hermione nodded dully. Madam Pomfrey had given her a dose of an especially strong Calming draught. It was hard to think. "Dobby"*

*There was a pop and the diminutive elf stood before her. "Yes Hermione Potter?"*

*The girls noticed the surname change and looked at her closely.*

*"Dobby, could you please go to Gringotts? Tell the manager of the Potter vaults that I need my parents as soon as possible please."*

*"Dobby do that Hermione Potter" and he disappeared with another pop.*

*Christchurch New Zealand*

*The Latimer Hotel*

*May 27th*

*A knock at the door interrupted the morning meal. Draco excused himself from the table and answered it. There waiting a goblin in a muggle suit.*

*“G’Day, might you be Daniel Granger?”*

*One of the few bits of wisdom from his father that Draco had taken to heart was ‘always be polite to the Goblins. They control access to your money’. “No sir, he’s having breakfast, would you come in?”*

*Draco lead the Goblin to the table where his mother and the Grangers had stopped eating and were looking at the small being with interest. “This is Daniel Granger sir. Mr. Granger, this is?”*

*“Oi, we’re not all that formal hereabouts Mate, my handle’d be Oddbit. I’m here at the request of the ‘ome office. Lady Potter asked that we get you lot ‘ome as soon as possible.”*

*“Lady Potter?”*

*“Surprised us too, twernt no Lady Potter until two days ago, now there is. We got this portkey, should take you right to the ‘ome office.”*

*The Three adult looked to each other in confusion.*

*“All of us, or just her parents?” asked Draco.*

*Oddbit shrugged, makes no difference to me, the ‘ome office didn’t specify, but unless you’re wantin to stay, it’s an ‘ell of a lot faster than one of those aeroplane things.” Oddbit reflected for a second “Oh, I forgot to say there was a message. ‘Voldemort is dead.’ We were all wondering at the Brisbane office, who is he?”*

*“No one of any importance. I think we’ll get ready to go. Cissy? Draco? Are you coming as well?”*

*“I think we shall Daniel, thank you.”*

*“Just grab what you really need, the bank will take care of the rest of it for you, all part of the service for our best customers.”*

*“Thank you Oddbit” said Emma as she went to pack to see her daughter.*

*Site of the Battle*

*Killing Ground:*

*May 28th*

*It had been decided, somewhere, by someone that Harry would be buried at the site of the final battle. Professor McGonagall had transfigured a large stone that Hagrid had his brought in into an 8-foot tall obelisk. On each side Hermione engraved a verse. The obelisk was covered with a tarp to wait its official unveiling at the official ceremony. Other than the time she spent on the obelisk, Hermione had spent almost every moment with her parents. The headmistress came to her asking if she would address the audience at the ceremony. Hermione begged off.*

*“Ron will do it. It will be quite memorable.” Offered Luna.*

*“Luna, I don’t speak in public!”*

*“For Harry?”*

*“Damn it... sorry professor. All right, I’ll do it.*



## **Chapter 38 – Requiem**

### *Site of the Battle*

#### *Memorial Service:*

*The service was running into its 4th hour. The Minister alone rambled for an hour and a half about how he supported Harry at every turn. Finally, it was Rons turn. He approached the podium with the speech that Hermione had helped him with, and that he had practiced until the small hours in the common room. Of all his friends, Luna was the only one unhelpful.*

*“You’re wasting your time. You aren’t going to read that.”*

*“I met Harry Potter on the Hogwarts Express when he... when he...” He stopped and angrily wadded his prepared statement and threw it to the ground. “I can’t do this. I’ve been here listening to people lie for the last 4 hours. Not one of you two faced liars knew Harry Potter. Not one of you liars consistently supported Harry Potter.*

*Madam Brassly, you were on the Wizengamot when it convened in full session to try Harry for Use of Underage Magic. You have just given a speech listing how you admired him. You are a liar.*

*Madam Umbridge, do we really need to discuss your torturing Harry with a Blood quill forcing him to scar his hand with “I WILL NOT TELL LIES” for the crime of saying that Voldemort had returned? Have you forgotten the life time ban for playing Quidditch you handed him for daring to defend the memory of his mother, who you called a ‘mudblood’ to his face. Or your threat to use unforgivable curses on him? If you are still here when I get done talking about the rest of the liars who came here to praise Harry in death after abusing him in life I will hex you into a large greasy puddle you unspeakable bitch.”*

*“You Mr. Titus, you spoke of your admiration for Harry. Odd isn’t it that you alternated between calling him an attention seeking child and savior of the wizarding world. You are almost the worst kind of lying bastard, you lie for money. Pathetic.”*

*“And you Minister, just last summer you attempted to have the House of Potter declared extinct, to confiscate his inheritance because you are an unspeakable bastard. I was left in possession of pensieve memories detailing your every dirty dealing with Harry and Harry’s interests. I am going to see those memories published, your political life is over you will never be elected to anything for as long as you live.”*

*He turned his attention to the crowd. “None of you deserve to be here, none of you are worthy of his sacrifice, not even me. I’m the worst of all. He was my friend and I betrayed him so many times over the years. There have been exactly 5 people in Harry’s life who always looked out for him. Minerva McGonagall, Flitus Flitwick, Two of his teachers who supported and nurtured him in a world that so routinely treated him like trash. Dobby, a house elf who rebelled against his master to protect Harry because Dobby saw him as a “Great Wizard”. Luna Lovegood, who sees the good in everyone, loved him like a brother, and His Fiancé Hermione Granger who has supported and helped him even when he was a prat. You all make me sick. I make me sick. I’m finishing Umbridge, you’d best be running.”*

*Ron left the stage. There was a pause and the crowd exploded in applause.*

*Headmaster McGonagall gestured and the tarp evaporated. It was white ivory and 8 foot tall. On each side was engraved Hermione’s favorite verse “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (St. John 15:13).on each side, as well as the inscription “Sacrificed all for Others – 25 May 1997 – Harry James Potter.”*

*McGonagall was gazing at the obelisk, “the quotation you chose is quite lovely Ms Granger where is it from?”*

*“From the bible Professor.”*

*“Ah.” She paused. “Ms Lovegood was quite correct.”*

*“About what Professor?”*

*“Mr. Weasley’s presentation WAS quite memorable.”*

*Hogwarts*

*Gryffindor Heads Suite:*

*Common Room*

*Hermione and her parents were sitting in her common room.*

*“So what are your plans Love?”*

*“I guess I’ll finish up here Mum, get my N.E.W.T.S.. I guess I’m going to come home if that’s ok. I think I am done with the Wizarding world, at least for now. I thought I’d look into University.”*

*“Of course it’s ok Love.” Emma pulled her only child into a hug. “Are you ready to talk about Harry?”*

*“I don’t know. Part of me is so angry at him for going without me. He had Neville and Luna stupefy Ron and me to keep us from following him”*

*“How many Death Eaters were there?”*

*“The Aurors said just short of 700 Daddy.”*

*“So, he stunned you two to keep you from following him in to an area full of magic users you couldn’t possibly shield yourself from unless you were so close to him you wouldn’t be able to use your magic. Also to keep you out of a trap that he couldn’t spring until he killed the head Death*

*Eater, and then couldn't get out of himself. You're right to be angry at the selfish bastard."*

*"Daddy!"*

*"I'm sorry Hermione. He did what he had to do to do what needed to be done AND keep you safe. As far as I'm concerned the only thing he did wrong was not survive."*

*A moment of silence passed between them. "So when are you going to explain being 'Lady Potter'?"*

*"What?"*

*"The Goblins are calling you 'Lady Potter' now. They said you suddenly appeared on their roles with no warning."*

*Hermione gasped and covered her mouth with her hand.*

*"What did you just think of Hermione?"*

*"I think I may have married Harry."*

*Her mothers eyes narrow. "You think you MAY have married him?"*

*"I told you about the magical ring. He had been in my mind for months and months. Not him, but his emotions, his feelings for me, his desire for me. It was driving me crazy. Then he got here, and we were together, we slept together." She blushed. Her father's mouth set its self in a firm line. "But he wouldn't consummate the relationship. He said it wasn't right, said it would be a violation of your trust. The night before he died, I screamed at him that the only thing that kept us from being married was the ceremony, and that I wanted him so I said the classic verse to him 'I take you' and all that, he said it back to me. There aren't really any laws covering a magical wedding, couples*



*exchange vows and their intent seals their magic to the bond. Despite being depowered, the magical monitoring systems must still have detected our pledges, and that we meant what we said. I would have to check to find out what it means. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do this behind your backs..."*

*Again her mother pulled her into a hug. "Love that is possibly the single most romantic thing I have ever heard. I just wish he was still here to love you."*

### *Site of the Battle*

#### *Potter Memorial:*

*The five girls had snuck out of the castle and traveled to the memorial as quietly as they could. They approached the memorial, careful not to disturb the everburning candles and flowers left at the obelisk by others to honor the man they had all lost.*

*Pavarti started. She held out her Harry Doll, and pressed it against the north face of the marble spire. "Thank you Harry for everything you've done, for being my friend, for the Yule Ball, for being such a good man, no matter how we treated you." She transfigured the doll to marble and sealed it to the pillar.*

*Lavender stepped up to the west face of the obelisk with her Harry doll. "Thank you Harry for never treating me like some kind of slut like so many of the other boys did. For teaching me to defend myself and for sneaking those looks at me when you didn't think I was looking. You made me feel so special." She transfigured the doll to marble and also sealed it to the obelisk.*

*Susan went to the east face of the pillar. "Thank you Harry for the times you stopped Malfoy from touching me, that always made me feel valuable and safe. Thank you for your kind words and the hug when my Aunt was killed. Thank you for being you." Her doll joined the others sealed to the obelisk.*

*Hannah took the South face. "Thank you Harry for everything you have done. Thank you for the kind words in the hall when I was feeling bad. Thank you for the attention when my Parents were killed. Thank you for being you. Thank you for having such a tasty bum." The others smiled and Hannah blushed as her Harry joined the others.*

*Padma finished “Thank you Harry for showing us what men are supposed to be like, for allowing us to get to know Hermione through you, because we probably would have ignored her otherwise and been the poorer for it. Thank you for allowing us to get to know Luna through you because she introduced us to weirdness at levels we had never imagined. And thanks a whole lot for sticking me with Ron Weasley at the Yule Ball you prat.” She levitated her doll to the top of the obelisk, completing the transmutation.*

*She turned to the others “Lets get back.” They left for the castle arm in arm.*

*They never noticed the small tabby cat with markings on its face that looked a bit like spectacles.*

## Chapter 39 – Loose Threads

*Gringotts*

*Ragnak's Office:*

*July 1st.*

*"Mrs. Potter, Mr. and Mrs. Granger, good of you to come in early so that we may discuss our business before the reading of the Mr. Potter's will."*

*"Harry and I never really got married."*

*"Our files show that the two of you evoked marriage vows at... " he referenced a piece of parchment on his desk "oh yes, 12:03 am on the 25th of May, this year. Divorce was no longer an option as soon as Mr. Potter died I'm afraid."*

*"Two kids say some words and they are married? And this is legal?"*

*"Mr. Granger, legality doesn't really have any meaning in marriages between magical beings. If their magic allows it, it happens. I have read of the legal constraints that your world places on the state of marriage, but there are no such requirements among magic users. Mr. and Mrs. Potter loved each other deeply and sealed it by admitting it to each other. For a normal magical union, that is enough. Mr. Potter's condition complicated things, but the presence of their betrothal rings made up for Mr. Potter's lack of magic."*

*"Do not worry Mrs. Potter, having been married to Mr. Potter has no meaning in the non-magical world, and no responsibilities in the magical one unless you accept them, Mr. Potter's will made very sure of that."*

*Gringotts*

*Main Lobby:*

*July 1st.*

*Hermione and her parents left Ragnak's office in stunned silence. Fully half of Harry's fortune had gone to Hermione, with significant amounts being bequeathed to Daniel and Emma as well. Bill Weasley hurried up to them.*

*"I want you to know I had no idea he was going to do that. I certainly didn't ..."*

*"Relax Bill. Harry didn't want the Potter name to die with him. What better way to ensure it's continuation than to transfer the titles to an honorable man? Besides his real masterstroke was bequeathing the Daily Prophet to Luna."*

*"Hermione, really this isn't right, especially since..." He stopped*

*"Since what Bill?"*

*"Nothing, it's not my place to say. So, you're leaving our world for a while?"*

*"Yes. I need to get away, I don't know for how long. Maybe forever. I don't know yet. Potter Manor is lovely, you and Fleur will love it." She looked to her parents. "We've got to go."*

*The Crowds in Diagon Alley parted when Hermione passed, her parents in her wake.*

*Diagon Alley*

*Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes:*

*Staff Room*

*“Some day, eh Gred?”*

*“You said it Forge.”*

*“I always said that Harry was more Weasley than anyone knew.”*

*Fred reread the copy of the instructions Harry had left for them. “A Million Galleons”*

*“Yep.”*

*“A Million Galleons. With a condition.”*

*“A Weasley condition.”*

*“There IS an out. If we don’t do it, we get 1,000 Galleons.”*

*“Yep.”*

*“Of course if we take the default amount, this parchment will follow us around for a month making chicken clucking noises.”*

*“We aren’t cowards. Even Harry feared out powers”*

*“Yep.”*

*“But.”*

*“We aren’t going to do it..”*

*“We COULD do it.”*

*“But we won’t.”*

*“Not because Hermione would hunt us down and kill us.”*

*“Try and kill us.”*

*“No, kill us. We’re talking Hermione here.”*

*Fred considered for a moment. “You’re right. But justifiable fear isn’t the reason we aren’t going to do it.”*

*“I’m ashamed to admit it you’re right.”*

*“We won’t do it because...”*

*“Yeah.”*

*“Because... because it would be wrong.”*

*“The shame of it. We’ve been inflicted with morality.”*

*“Morality stronger even than our greed. The shame indeed. No one must know.”*

*“Ever.”*

*Fred nodded. George picked up the parchment. “We are sorry Harry. We will not be desecrating your memorial. We won’t change the inscription to read “Harry and Tommy sitting in a tree” We won’t be painting it day glow colours. We won’t make your body into a tap-dancing inferni. We just won’t do it. We will never do any of the things you suggested.”*

*The parchment tore its self free of George’s grasp, folded into an origami bird, and said, “Buc buc buc buccah!” The origami bird glowed for a second and split into two, spread their wings and each flew to the shoulder of one of the twins, continuing to ‘buc buc’. The twins sighed, it was going to be a long month.*

*George looked again at the documents that had accompanied the parchment. “It says here that Fleur did the spellwork on these little pests... You think she’d like to do a little contract work for us?”*

*“Wouldn’t hurt to ask.”*

*Ottery St. Catchpole*

*Lovegood Residence*

*Luna’s Room:*

*Ron gazed up at his fiancé, as she rocked her hips oh his pelvis. She took his hands and placed them*

*on her breasts. "Again?"*

*"Again? Woman I'm not a machine."*

*"Oh, poo. We make love three times and you're no good to me? I'm going to have to take over your care from Molly, she obviously isn't feeding you enough to maintain your strength." She lay down on him, pulling him into an embrace. "Your punishment for your weakness will be to cuddle me while I plot the destruction of my competition!"*

*Ron laughed. "You're strict, but fair Luna my love. What competition do you believe your self to have?"*

*"Why Daddy and the Quibbler of course. I love him of course, but since I have become a News Paper Magnate, I realize that he must be destroyed ."*



## Chapter 40 – Epilog One

*Guilford, Surrey  
University of Surrey:  
October 1998.*

*Hermione arrived at the lecture hall, early as usual. She nodded to class mates upon recognition, and found her usual seat. This was a light class, Classical Literature, she had read all the books covered before the first day of class, and so far enjoyed the interaction of the class while discussing the meanings behind the meanings of the texts.*

*It wasn't long before he entered, coming from an earlier class. Marcus Steward was tall, toned, and blond with big blue eyes you could swim in. Her heart started beating faster at the sight of him. He already had a reputation in this and other classes for having opinions that were contrary to that of the professors. He held that, even the classic works were nothing more than the authors telling a story they wanted to tell, and that any deeper meaning existed only in the mind of the reader. Last week he had declared that the 'deeper meaning' important to an author was that the royalty cheque cleared.*

*She was aghast at that idea. It didn't stop her from smiling when he took his seat next to her and quietly took her hand in his and held it through the entire class.*

*St. Mungos  
Maternity Ward:  
January 2000*

*Colin took the tiny bundle from the arms of his wife, cooing at the little face, and then handed his new son to his father in law.*

*Arthur Weasley was ecstatic. His third grandchild. He turned to Molly. And she stole little Arthur David Creevey from him.*

*"Still think of him as a halfblood Molly?" he whispered so that only his wife could hear. She gave him a shocked look, and then hung her head in shame. She carried her first grandson back to his mother and gathered Colin in a bone crushing hug.*

*"I'm so sorry Colin; I've been a fool about..."*

*"Don't worry Mum, I figured that as soon as we could turn your Mumness on, you'd come around. Ginny and I make good kids."*

*"That you do Colin."*

*"Oi, it seems to me I did all the work" Ginny piped in a happy tired voice.*

*“Right, so it’s only fair I take all the credit!” He took her hand, and looked into her eyes, “We’re a team, you and me!”*

*Bergen, Norway  
Fløysletten meadow:  
July 2000*

*Ron stretched as he exited the tent. The air up here was wonderful. Luna and her father were out on the trails searching for the elusive Crumple-Horned Snorkack. Exhausted from his second season with the Cannons, this was exactly what he needed; the quiet and solitude of the Norwegian forests were the balm his nerves needed. And too think, at one time he envied Harry for his fame.*

*Harry.*

*Over two years since Harry was lost to them. Luna had held him while he cried like a baby in the beginning. But time heals. The last letter from Hermione told of her impending marriage to a classmate she had met at the Muggle School she attended. It was hard to think of Hermione with anyone but himself or Harry, but he had Luna, and Harry was gone.*

*Harry.*

*Oh well. Ron sipped tea from the mug that he carried. Something rustled in the bush in front of him. He approached it and knelt down to see what was hiding. It was small, almost a sphere, no more than 8 inches across, with Blood Red fur, the noise it made was like a throaty thrum, it almost as if he felt its call more than heard it. When the little creature opened its eyes, it was as if its fur parted and a pair of blue sapphires appeared in the depths of its pelt. It had no visible nose, but it made sniffing noises when Ron offered the tiny creature his hand, then (somehow Ron could see no means of movement) it moved onto his hand, and climbed up his arm to settle on his shoulder and rub its self against his neck, making multiple purring sounds like several happy cats.*

*When it started with its purring an appendage (Tail?) extruded from the body mass to a length of 30 inches or so, and wrapped its self around his arm, and from between the eyes extruded about 3 inches of some kind of antler. The longer the little creature purred, the better Ron felt.*

*Ron returned to the tent to start lunch for Luna and her father, his new little friend purring happily, especially when offered bits of food. It was especially partial to bits of chopped tomato.*

*When Luna entered the tent, humming “Weasley is our King” (which she had single handedly made into the Cannon’s anthem. The Crowds sang it constantly during games. He would have to send Draco Malfoy a thank you note, just to rub it in.) and stopped dead in her staring at the creature on his shoulder, her father came behind her and did exactly the same thing.*

*“Oh hi there. Lunch is almost ready.” Ron noticed their stares. “Oh this is Scarlet. He wandered into camp this morning, and sort of adopted me. Cute little guy. Know what he is Dad?”*

*The elder Lovegood couldn’t speak, his mouth just opened and closed to open again. Luna finally said “Ronald, that is a Crumple-Horned Snorkack. Daddy and I have been looking for one for 8 years and one just walked up to you?”*

*“I guess so.” He smiled “Always the last place you look, right?”*

*Luna reached out to touch the Snorkack, it thrummed at her touch. Her eyes widened to an unusual intensity. “He walked up to you and made himself you familiar? How is this possible Ronald?”*

*“I don’t know, he just came along. He’s my familiar now? Cool.”*

*“Cool indeed Ronald” she turned to her father. “Daddy, Lunch will be a bit late, Ronald and I need to celebrate.” Her attention returned to Ron, she had an odd look on her face. “Celebrate a whole lot.”*

*Her father smiled and grabbed the plate that Ron had the prepared ingredients for sandwiches on. “No problem Poppet, take your time, I believe I’ll retire to my tent with this to listen to the Wireless.”*

*Luna nodded and watched her father leave the tent. She then took a fist full of Ron’s shirt and led him to the bedroom of their tent and she resumed humming ‘Weasley is our King.’*

*Afterward Ron reflected that he needed to find little furry creatures much more often.*

*Longbottom Manor  
Neville and Susan’s suite:  
September 2001*

*“To Susan, the first of us to marry!” Lavender lifted her glass.*

*“Like it’s a surprise to anyone at all. Neville sealed this deal that back on that day on the Express.” Said Padma following the toast. “Rumour has it that Hermione has or is about to marry a Muggle man she met at the school she’s going to.”*

*“And Ron keeps asking Luna to marry him, but she still says he can’t until he wins the World Cup” Hannah said shaking her head “I mean sure, he’s got the Cannons winning for a change, but...” “She noticed the looks she was getting from the other girls “My dad’s a big Cannon fan, I hear these things.”*

*“Sounds to me like some one has some unrequited feelings for one of the golden trio” grinned Susan.*

*“I have not. But if he ever slips Luna’s leash, I’m there.”*

*Laughter filled the room. In the next room Neville looked up from his Herbology periodical, and decided that he didn’t really want to know.*

*...---ooo000ooo---...*

*London England  
University of Westminster:*

*March 2002.*

*Draco Malfoy looked across the table at the young woman and sighed silently to himself. How the hell had he gotten himself into this situation?*

*Potter's will had bequeathed the position of Head of the House of Black to him with a small maintenance allowance for the upkeep of the properties Potter hadn't liquidated from the estate. Potter left him with a title, and no money beyond the gift given that last Christmas. Draco got the title only because his Aunt Andromeda and cousin Nymphadora had turned it down.*

*After casting about for a few weeks in the face of public hostility to the name 'Malfoy' he turned to a man he considered his best and probably only friend. Daniel Granger had earned his respect during the long months at the Potter estate. Despite being a Muggle with no idea of how the magical world worked, he was a fount of common sense.*

*"It seems to me that you need to generate an income. If you go the executor of the Trust, I'm sure he would allow you to continue your education. I've seen how your mind works Draco; I would wager that you would do well in the Law."*

*That made sense. His mother further suggested that he speak with his Uncle, meaning Ted Tonks of course. A short conversation with the man sent Draco to Remus Lupin, the executor of the Potter Trust.*

*That meeting went very well considering their history together. Potter exhorted his friends and family from the grave to forget the past and get on with their lives. Lupin agreed to finance Draco's studies at a Muggle University with a loan to be repaid following graduation, a stipend to cover living expenses was offered without being asked for, and Draco gratefully accepted it and took Remus's hand to seal the agreement.*

*That was three years ago. Since then he had excelled in his studies. The School of Law loomed in his future. Then he met this woman. This Sheena MacKenzie. Whenever he took a position, she took the opposite. If he said up, she said down. He said left, she said right. It was infuriating. Worst of all she started to occupy his dreams. She wasn't the type of woman he pictured himself with. She wasn't a model like beauty. She didn't demur to him. She certainly didn't respect his opinions, but they were on the same track and had many classes together. She called him an unread boob. He called her an uncultured poser.*

*Then they were assigned a research project requiring 7 weeks of research to even begin the joint paper. They fought and argued over every aspect of the paper, from the opening line to the conclusion. Then last night, in the middle of an argument over some minor point of tort law that he couldn't recall right now, they had somehow ended up in her bed.*

*Draco was hardly a virgin, but he had never had an experience like last night. Passion that intense could not possibly be good for you. Even now, he wanted to scoop her up and take her back to the bed for more.*

*She looked at him over her cup of tea. "So..."*

*"Yeah." He said feeling stupid. "Should I apologize?"*

*“Do you feel you need to?”*

*“I lost control last night, and I... I hope I didn't...”*

*“You know, for an unread boob, you're pretty cute when you're embarrassed.”*

*His mouth opened and closed without sound.*

*“This is where you insult me. As best I can tell it's what we use for foreplay.”*

*“Foreplay?”*

*“Last night was fantastic.” She rose from her chair and slid on to his lap “If you think you're getting out of here without another couple of hours in my bed you're insane.” And she kissed him, hard.*

*“What makes you think I'd want a poser like you?”*

*She giggled, rising from his lap she pulled him back to her bed.*

*Ala Shan Plateau Mongolia  
424th Quidditch World Cup  
August 2002*

*“Hello Herm-own-ninny.”*

*“Hello Viktor, how are you?”*

*“I am well, and you?”*

*“Very well indeed. Viktor, this is my husband, Marcus Stewart.”*

*“How do you do? I am Viktor Krum, and you are a very lucky man.”*

*Marcus laughed, “You aren't telling me anything I don't already know Mr. Krum. Hermione tells me you used to play this game, do you still compete?”*

*“Please call me Viktor”*

*“Marcus” the two men shook hands*

*“No, I no longer play. It is young mans sport, but I play in two world cups, so I can brag to grand children some day.” Krum looked to the pitch wistfully “I am Commissioner of sport now*

*“LUNA!” Hermione called waving the blonde woman over to them. “Luna did you ever meet Viktor Krum?”*

*“No, I saw you at a distance of course; I was just a third year when you visited Hogwarts.” She*

turns smiling *“Hello again Marcus. I see you are keeping Hermione happy.”*

*“That is a mutual pleasure Luna. It is good to see you again.”*

*“This was most excellent game! Your husband best keeper in generation maybe more. Has never been shut out in World Cup final before.*

*“Thank you Viktor, from you high praise indeed.” Ron Weasley, still in his playing robes made his way through the crowd of admirers to his Luna who he pulled into a kiss. When he finally broke it, he said to her “Now?”*

*“Now.”*

*“Marcus, Viktor, Hermione, It’s been good to see you all, but Luna and I have to leave right now.”*

*“Is there something wrong Ron?”*

*“Hermione I’ve been asking this minx to marry me for more than 6 years. Every time she told me not until I played for England in the World Cup and played a shut out at keepers against a team in blue robes. Barbados fits that bill. We’re going to get married right now before she can add any other conditions to the deal.”*

*Stewart Residence:  
July 2008*

*Marcus was mowing the front lawn when he suddenly felt a presence behind him; he turned to see two men in expensive suits standing on the sidewalk watching him. He stopped the mower.*

*“Bill, good to see you again.” He extended his hand to Bill Weasley.*

*“Marcus.” Bill shook his hand warmly. “This is an associate, Neville Longbottom. Would it be possible to speak to you and Hermione?”*

*“Certainly, she’s inside with the Danni and John, come on in.” He led them through the door. “Hermione, visitors!”*

*“Bill, Neville, how are you. More importantly, what do you want?”*

*Neville spoke. “It’s time for you to come back Hermione. We need you.”*

*“Nice of you to lie like that Neville, but I doubt you need me.”*

*“Of course we do. There is going to be a vote of no confidence for the Minister next Tuesday. He is going to lose, badly. I am in a position to become the next Minister.”*

*Bill continued. “We are going to clean house. There isn’t going to be a whiff of corruption in the entire ministry when we’re done, and we need honest incorruptible witches and wizards to step up and serve. People like you Hermione.”*

*"I've got my work."*

*"You just finished your most recent project, and haven't found a new one yet. This is important Hermione, having Lady Potter onboard" Neville suddenly looked stricken. "I am sorry Mr. Stewart I didn't mean."*

*"Marcus, please." He smiled. "I've long since come to terms with being the second man Hermione loved, but only because he met her first. One on one I'd have kicked his ass."*

*Their children ran into the room "Mum! Mum! John made a mess!" both children stopped wide eyed at the visitors.*

*"Danni, John." Hermione knelt next to her oh so grown up 7-year-old daughter and her 5-year-old son. "This is Mr. Weasley and Mr. Longbottom. They are some of Mums special friends."*

*"Ooh that means you can do magic?" the little girl, an image of her mother bounced excitedly in place.*

*"It sure does." Said her father. "Hermione why don't you just go ahead and do what we both know you want to do, and go with these men to measure your new office for drapes? While you're talking business I'll get the kids to your Parents house for dinner as planned, and you can meet us there when you're done."*

*Granger Residence*

*Game Room:*

*July 2008*

*"So they came to ask her to return."*

*"Yep." Marcus was racking the balls on the table. Danni and John were upstairs being fussed over by their grandmum.*

*"And she's going to go back to work for them?"*

*"Yep."*

*"Crap."*

*"Yep. Pay up."*

*Daniel knelt down next to the bucket in the corner of the room closest to the table, and counted out 50 1-pound coins. "I still say...."*

*"Ah ah ah, you were wrong. Just stand there in your wrongness and just be wrong. While you're at it, just pay up."*

*"Fine." He handed over the coins. Marcus saluted him with his beer.*

*"I'm getting them all back."*

*“Maybe. Are you going to play or bitch?”*

*Daniel lined up his shot for the break. Four balls fell in the pockets. He smirked “I guess that makes me solids.”*

*He kept smiling as four coins were flipped into the bucket.*

*...---ooo000ooo---...*

*Granger Residence:  
July 1 1998*

*Daniel pulled into the driveway of his home with his wife and daughter quietly sobbing. It had been a rough day, the meeting with the head Goblin, the reading of Harry’s will, the press. He still could not believe the boy was gone.*

*Emma was the first in the house, through the back door that entered through the kitchen, and she gasped in alarm. Hermione reacted instantly with her wand out pointing directly between the eyes of the man at the kitchen table. He was blond and had blue eyes, he wore denim jeans and a polo shirt. He stared quietly looking at her wand.*

*“Who are you?”*

*He smiled. “I used to be called Harry Potter Hermione.”*

*Cold fury burned in her chest. She cast every detection charm she could think of, this stranger had no magic. There was no magic affecting any part of him. “Nice try. Who are you?”*

*“Something that only Harry and Hermione would know? How about ‘I Harry take you Hermione to be my wife despite the fact that I don’t deserve you in any way and never will. In sickness and in health, for richer, for poorer until death do us part.’” He smiled a smile that was not crooked in any way. “Do I get to kiss the bride?”*

*“How?” Hermione gasped.*

*“Where have you been?” Emma whispered.*

*“How could you let her think you were dead you son of a bitch?” said Daniel.*

*“When the explosives went off, I got mangled pretty good, then the fuel air bomb, well that toasted the rest of me. The Goblins were pissed. They had this great plan for grabbing me before everything went boom, but the tunnelers mistook Tom’s last flopping around for me, and they grabbed him by mistake. It took them a while to find me. Their healers worked on me for weeks. They tell me it was touch and go for a while. When they got me stabilized, they turned me over to Fleur. She’s responsible for how I look.”*

*“But Veela body sculpting is temporary.”*



*“Yes it is, but Bill had the bright idea of combining it with Goblin stabilization magic. It is normally used to stabilize the tunnels, but when applied to Veela body sculpting, it makes the changes for all intents and purposes permanent. Hurts like hell too, glad I was out of it.”*

*“So the body they found...”*

*“The carcass of a captured death eater, sculpted to look like me. He was awake for the process; the Goblins said that Fleur scared them. Bill was pretty proud of that.”*

*“Why didn’t you let me know? Why didn’t you trust me?”*

*“Hermione I trust you with everything. They woke me up yesterday; I was not lucid until this morning. The Goblins did not want to get your hopes up, I was that messed up. It is their way. They’ve manufactured an identity for me. I’m Marcus Stewart now. If you want we can be together.”*

*“Harry you idiot. If you ever pull anything like this again, I will personally kill you completely to death. Of course I want to stay with you.”*

*“Daniel? Emma?”*

*“Welcome home son.”*

*“Who else will you be telling Harry?”*

*“No one. Harry Potter is dead, let him rest in peace. Let’s keep it in the family.”*

*...---ooo000ooo---...*

*FIN*