

# Harry Potter and YASMWTS

by

Clell65619

# Table of Contents

Harry Potter and YASMWTS.....	1
Chapter 1.....	3
Chapter 2.....	35
Chapter 3.....	60

## **Chapter 1**

The last of the Death Eaters fell to his Lover's blasting curse. Harry shot Padma a quick smile while moving to intercept the curse that shot from the shrouded doorway of the dilapidated shack with a metallic shield charm. The shield stopped the curse, but shattered from the force it dissipated. Harry reached up and pulled the woman down into his prepared defensive position.

21 year old Padma Patil was a most delightful foxhole companion. Far better than any of the others who had shared Harry's DPs over the course of this war.

"Harry" the Indian Witch said giggling, "I appreciate the gesture, but this is hardly the time or place is it?"

"It's always a good time to have my cuddly Padma on top of me. Besides, you need to get out of his line of fire. Old Tom may be on his last legs, but he's still a powerful spell caster. I'm not winning this stupid war just to lose you."

Hermione slid into the hole to Harry's right. "I think this is all that's left. Is he in there?" she asked nodding toward the ramshackle shack.

"Yeah, I can feel him." Harry said sitting up while keeping Padma on his lap. "He's in there all right. Malevolent bastard's hurtin' something awful. Good job on researching those spells ladies. Where's Neville? Is he all right?"

"He's coming Harry. He found Bellatrix and they had what he called a 'meaningful conversation'. That's over, he stated his position rather pointedly, but he needs to heal up a bit before he can get up here."

"Pointedly?"

"It seems that you aren't the only Gryffindor who can summon Godric's sword."

Ginny Weasley dove into the same hole as the others. "Madam Pomfrey's working on Ron." She gasped out, winded from her run. "It looks bad, but she thinks she might be able to save his legs."

"And Malfoy's father?" Harry asked.

"That particular family is no longer a problem, Ron saw to that." Ginny said with more than a little dark satisfaction as she pulled several revitalizing potions from her belt pouch and handed them around to the fighters. Early in the war Ginny had found that fighting with her brothers and fighting in a war were very different things. After that disastrous time in the Ministry Ginny had thrown herself into the Healing arts. She was the reason so many on the side of the Light were still among the breathing. "Harry." She said in a threatening tone staring at the vial in his hand.

"All right, all right." Potter unstopped the vial and tipped the contents back making a face at the vile taste. "Pushy Witch."

"Potter!" the communications mirror clipped to Harry's arm spoke with a tinny voice.

"Go ahead Nev."

"All the fingers and toes are working again. I'm about fifteen meters to your rear. Got any room for me in there with you?"

"That's a no Nev. This hidey hole is pretty full as it is with me and three witches... I've never been one to share."

"If one of those three is my wife, she had better not be smiling too much when she crawls out of there, or I might get jealous. WHOA! I stuck my head up for a look around and your buddy Tom just about took it off for me. It looks like he's the only one left. By my figures we've got another twenty minutes

on the Anti-Transport wards."

"Right. Give me about ten minutes to finish giving Hermione that smile, and then I'll deal with the light stuff in the shack."

"So how are you planning on giving me a smile Harry?" Hermione growled dangerously.

"By giving you one last chance to drill me on that time spell you found."

---===oooOOOooo===---

Agony laced throughout the entire left side of Tom Riddle's body. Despite his affectation of the *nom de guerre* of Lord Voldemort, in his own mind he was, and always would be Tom Riddle.

The pain that threatened to consume him came from his latest confrontation with the Potter boy. The entire situation was insane. Riddle had fifty years of experience on the boy, yet ever time they faced one another the boy had become stronger with a larger inventory of magic and seemingly endless supply of the most damnable luck.

This morning acting on a tip supplied by Lucius' son Riddle and his Death Eaters had come to lay a trap for Potter, only to find that they were the ones that had become trapped. His first indication of failure was when the odd neon orange curse arced through the air hitting his left arm. This curse caused the arm itself to explode and Riddle's entire left side to burst into flames. Then Anti-Apparation and Anti-Portkey wards bloomed.

Riddle's 'loyal' Death Eaters quickly learned that these were not the normal garden variety wards. These wards didn't prevent apparition, no not at all. What they did was splinch anyone who tried to apparate into nine pieces, pieces that resisted the normal healer reconnection techniques. The wards did prevent Portkey travel, but they had an unexpected added feature. Any Portkey activated within the ward boundaries exploded, mangling those attempting to use the devices. Fully half of his Death Eaters were lost to these new wards in the first seconds of the battle.

Riddle had finally doused the flames, but none of his available battlefield healing potions or charms affected his charred flesh in the slightest. Another curse hit him full in the face, slicing to the bone, costing him his right eye and ear. Riddle stumbled into the cover offered by the tumbledown shack as his Death Eaters were destroyed by an Army made up of children barely out of school.

It had been Potter who had hurt him so badly. It was always Potter.

It was over. The grim realization of his certain death hit him like a physical blow. Over the last four years Riddle had felt the destruction of his precious Horcruxes, one at a time until only Nagini remained. The Dark Lord knew that he didn't dare attempt splitting his soul yet again, to do so would be immediately fatal. So he kept Nagini close to himself at all times.

Until she too disappeared one night, and he was awakened by the pain of his last Horcrux dying. This was when he knew it was over. That he was going to die. That was when he resolved to bring down as much of the magical world as he could before someone got lucky and ended his life.

His left arm was completely gone; blood soaked what remained of his robes on his right side. Potter was coming. The thrice damned boy would be thinking that Riddle would be an easy kill after tagging him so easily twice. A coughing fit wracked Riddle's body. But Potter was in for a surprise. Riddle had been saving a special spell. Casting it would probably kill him, but he would take Potter into death with him.

--===oooOOOooo===---

"Ok, I've got it." Harry grinned at the three women who shared the hole with him. This should do it. It's all over today."

"Be careful Harry." The three women all said at once, as if they had rehearsed it.

"I swear to Merlin Harry Potter." Padma continued. "If you get yourself killed, I will learn Necromancy, raise you from the dead, and yell at you for the rest of my life. I'll get married and teach my children to yell at your resurrected corpse and you will be on the receiving end for the rest of your

death."

Harry pulled the beautiful witch closer and nuzzled at her neck. "I wouldn't want to be on the receiving end of one of your lectures Padma, I'll be careful." He tapped the mirror with his wand. "Longbottom"

"I'm here Harry."

"Well it took a while, but your wife is finally satisfied."

"Oh Harry!" Hermione huffed.

"Hermione, how could you?"

"Very funny Neville. I see we will be speaking about your sense of humor later."

"Neville, now that you're in trouble with your Mrs., I'm ready for Riddle. Nev, I need to be ready to take the bastard out if he gets past me. He's in a lot of pain, and the damage isn't healable without the counters Padma, Hermione and Lovely Luna came up with."

Over the mirror a most un-Neville like giggle came through. "Thank you Harry... But we wouldn't want to make Padma jealous would we? There are few things worse than a Ravenclaw witch looking to exact revenge."

Reflecting that Luna Lovegood must be in Neville's DP, Harry continued. "I'm going to get everyone still standing to nail the shack with a blasting curse, then back off so that I can deal with him."

"What if blasting the shack kills Voldemort?" Luna asked.

"Then we all go to a bar and I'm buying." Harry said simply. "Then, after I'm good and drunk, I'll go to Hogwarts and kick Trelawney in the ass for putting me through all this by giving a bullshit prophecy that turned out to be utterly wrong." He tapped his wand to the mirror again "Everyone."

Harry paused to allow his mirror to connect to the mirrors of all the DA members. "This is it folks, the big one, what we've been training for."

"Harry" Alicia Spinnet's voice came over the mirrors. "If you don't stop channeling Ollie and kill the bastard so we can all go home, I'm going to hex you myself."

"Ok, ok. Sheesh. Try and inspire a sense of occasion..."

"Harry?"

"Ron, you're hurt. Stay where you are." Ginny said.

"Harry..." Ron's voice was weak. "Kick his ass."

"Everyone." Harry said again, trying not to think about his injured friend. "On 3, everyone hit that shack with blasting curses. Ready? One... Two... Three!"

--====oooOOOooo====--

From Riddle's perspective, the universe exploded. The shack was almost instantly reduced to splinters and Riddle found himself air born, crashing painfully to Earth. Something was wrong with his right leg, he struggled to stand.

"That looked like it hurt a bit Tom."



Riddle made it to his knees. "Don't call me by my filthy Muggle Father's name."

"You're not really in a position to make demands Tom. Are you ready for the next great adventure?"

"Not going to take me prisoner Potter? No trial?"

"No, I don't think so. After what you've done, I'm taking no chances with you. You've killed too many, destroyed too much. You're beaten now, but your magic will heal you eventually. I don't trust any prison to hold you long. No, it ends today."

"How is this possible? How can you possibly be winning?"

"The explanation is really pretty simple Tom. Where you surrounded yourself with vicious psychopaths who kissed the hem of your robes out of fear of you, I surrounded myself with brilliant witches and brave wizards who routinely tell me I'm an idiot out of love for me. There was never any doubt that I was going to kill you."

"You can't kill me! I am immortal. If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you could possibly imagine."

Potter blinked, and then grinned widely. "The Dark Lord Voldemort has seen a Muggle Movie?" Harry could see the look of disappointment on what was left of the wounded wizard's face. "Hey, Muggle raised, remember? You quote one of the most famous movies in the world and you're surprised that I recognize the line? Is that where you get all your speeches Tom? From adventure movies? Will you 'Be Bak'?"

"Damn you Potter."

"Good bye Tom." Harry raised his wand. "Tempus Progressio!"

Riddle saw his last chance to survive; he raised his own, wand "Verso Adjectamentum!"

--===oooOOOooo===---

From Hermione Longbottom's vantage point, she could see that something had gone very wrong. Harry had executed the Tempus perfectly. The spell that left Harry's wand was the proper color, a golden torrent of magic that was designed to age its target two centuries, but that torrent had been intercepted by the purple of whatever spell that Riddle had cast. Between the two men a swirling maelstrom of magic pulsed in silvers and grays and blacks and reds.

She had no idea what it might be. It couldn't be their wands reacting to each other; neither of the men used their phoenix cored wands any longer. She could see that both of the combatants were trying to stop what was happening, but seemingly neither could stop the spells. The sphere of wild magic was growing larger with every second. She watched opened mouthed as the sphere engulfed Riddle, and still it grew. She tapped the mirror on her arm with her wand. "Everyone."

"Everyone back out of here. We don't want to be swept up in that. Everyone backup at least 500 meters, and be ready for more if we have to." She broke the connection on the mirror and looked to Ginny. The two friends saw that Padma wasn't going to leave. "Padma, Harry wouldn't want you here. Come on." Hermione and Ginny half pulled, half led Padma to a safer location. They turned around just in time to see Harry swallowed up by the magical tempest.

Over the next three minutes the sphere doubled its size, and then suddenly vanished without warning. In its place what had been ground ripped up by spell fire was now a pristine meadow. Where there had been a destroyed shack stood what appeared to be a newly constructed hunter's cabin. Where the two most powerful wizards in the world had stood, there were now two small forms huddled together on among the grass and wildflowers.

Hermione and Neville shared a glance, until they noticed that Padma was running toward the magically repaired land and they, along with most of the survivors of the DA chased after the Indian Witch.

---===oooOOOooo===---

Harry Potter opened his eyes. Where was he? How had he gotten here? The last thing he remembered was being thrown into his cupboard by his angry uncle, and then suddenly he was in this... field.

Sitting among the tall grass and flowers was another boy. Harry didn't recognize him, but he seemed to be crying. Harry hesitantly took a step toward the other boy, and then he realized that he was naked. Harry immediately knelt down in the grass. He could see that the other boy was also naked.

"Hi."

The other boy looked up with tears in his eyes. "Where are they?"

"Who?"

"The big boys." He wiped at his eyes. "They were hitting me and then they weren't." He looked around. "Where are we? In a park?"

"I don't know. One minute I was in my cupboard, and then I was here with you. Why are we naked?"

"I don't know." The boy looked down again. "They'll be back."

"I'm Harry."

"I'm Tom."

"Harry! Harry!"

"Well, someone found you." Tom said looking toward the adults running toward them. "The one that's

yelling is pretty. She looks foreign though."

"You can see that far?"

---====oooOOOooo=====

Minerva McGonagall entered the Hospital wing of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry at a run that belied her age.

"Hermione?"

"Hello Professor. Sorry about dropping in on you like this, but Poppy said she needed more that her field hospital had to offer."

The older woman nodded. The school was empty for the summer months; even most of the staff was gone. She looked to the first bed. "Is that really Harry?"

"Yes. He's six years old."

"How is that possible?"

"I don't know. The other boy is Tom Riddle."

"WHAT?"

Hermione's eyes flicked to the sleeping pair. Her silencing charms had held. "Tom is also six years old. As far as he knows he was at the orphanage this morning, receiving a beating from some of the older

boys, then he was naked in a park with Harry."

"You brought Lord Bloody Voldemort into my school?"

"No, I brought six year old Tom Riddle into your school Headmistress." Hermione continued to stare at her oldest friend. "Harry cast a spell that was supposed to age Voldemort two hundred years. Voldemort responded with a spell that I didn't hear, but part of it was 'Verso'. It was intended to reflect what Harry did. Somehow, the two spells combined and created a sphere with a radius of approximately two hundred feet. When the spell affect terminated, everything within the spell affect was deaged. A destroyed shack was returned to its original condition, the ground around the shack was all torn up with prepared positions and generalize spell damage, after the affect it was a pristine meadow in the middle of a battlefield."

"And you know for certain that they are both six years old? Really six?"

"When Voldemort was attacking Harry through their link, Headmaster Dumbledore directed Professor Snape to teach Harry Occlumency, which of course the bastard just couldn't bring himself to do, preferring to mind rape Harry instead."

"Yes, I know."

"What is less known is that I tracked down books on the subject and Harry and I learned together that following summer. Harry was interested in defending his mind and when he could he discontinued the study. I on the other hand found the subject fascinating, and continued on with it. The natural extension of Occlumency is Legilimency. I've been a Legilimens for two years."

Hermione turned to face her former teacher. "I'll probably never reach the level of proficiency that Professor Dumbledore employed, or even that of Snape, but I can enter the mind of someone who has no defenses. It was useful against the Death Eaters, and I've looked into the minds of both these little boys." Tears started flowing down her cheeks. "The Harry Potter I knew is gone Minerva. That little boy sleeping in that bed is Harry Potter as of his sixth birthday, when he was punished for asking why he didn't get a birthday present like his cousin Dudley did. The memories of the next 15 years aren't repressed, they just aren't there. That other little boy isn't the Dark Lord; his latest memories are of HIS sixth birthday when he was beaten by older boys in the orphanage to that they could take the chocolate bar that the orphanage gave to each child on their birthdays. He has no memories of anything past that

date. He doesn't know about magic. He's just a little boy."

Minerva McGonagall turned her attention to the two sleeping children. "Chippy?" she called.

There was a small pop and a House Elf appeared at McGonagall's side. "Yes Headmistress?"

"Chippy, I need the Book. Could you get it for me please?"

"Yes Headmistress, right away." The elf popped away, only to return scant seconds later laden with a large leather bound book.

"Thank you Chippy." Minerva opened the book. "Oh my."

"What is it Minerva?" Hermione asked.

"Two new names appeared in the book today. Harry James Potter and Tom Marvolo Riddle. They are both scheduled to begin Hogwarts on September first 2007."

"No one can know."

The two women turned to face the new speaker. Hermione reached out and pulled Padma into a hug. Padma continued, "The idiots in the Ministry would do everything wrong. They'll try to put Harry on a pedestal and profit from association with him. They would try to punish Riddle for what his older self did."

"Far too many people were there Miss Patil." Minerva said gently.

"People who followed Harry." Hermione said. "We'll talk to them. They'll understand why Harry has to have died today."

"We need to tell them now." Padma insisted. "We have to get everyone telling the right story now."

---===oooOOOooo===---

It had taken most of an hour to explain to the surviving members of the DA what had happened and what they needed to do to protect Harry. Most were readily accepting of the new reality, but some were resistant to the idea of Tom Riddle still being alive. In the end, the DA agreed to what needed to be done, binding their silence via a magical vow by unanimous consent.

After the bulk of the DA had left to join the celebrations of the (final?) fall of Voldemort, McGonagall, Flitwick, Madam Pomfrey, the Longbottoms, Ginny and Ron Weasley, Luna Lovegood and Padma Patil remained, having an impromptu meeting over dinner.

"I don't know how to explain it." Poppy Pomfrey was summing up her report of the physical condition of her two patients. "By every detectable indication they are both six years old. This isn't a deaging like what some potions can do, that is easily detectable. From the bones of their hands to how the plates of their skulls are fusing together, medically, they are six years old."

Ron Weasley shifted uncomfortably in his chair, he was still weak from his injuries and he knew that if Poppy had her way she would be in abed next to the two little boys under discussion, but he was too stubborn to admit that she was right. "What about magically?"

"Magically, their magical cores are at the normal point of development for a child their age." Poppy answered. "Given who they are, the levels are on the extreme high end of 'normal' but they are normal." She hesitated, and then carried on. "What is possibly the single most significant thing I've found in my examinations is that Harry's scar is no longer a curse scar, rather just a simple scar that is healed nicely and barely visible. Just like any other four year old scar obtained by a young child."

That got everyone's attention. "What does that mean?" Luna Lovegood asked.

"I don't know." Poppy admitted.

"We have to protect Harry, no matter what. Imagine if the Ministry got hold of him." Hermione said quietly. Those around the table shuddered at the thought.

"I understand protecting Harry." Ginny broke in. "But Riddle? We should have him locked up in Azkaban for what he did."

"That's the problem Ginny." Luna said. "Little Tom up in the Hospital Wing hasn't done anything."

"Of course he did..." Ginny almost screamed. "Back in our first year he..."

"No Ginny." The blond shook her head. "Harry destroyed Voldemort today. Voldemort was the one who did that to you and did other things to so many others. Whatever Harry did destroyed Voldemort and left behind little Tom. An innocent who never was Voldemort and should not be punished for the crimes that monster committed."

"Harry was also destroyed today." Everyone at the table looked to Padma as she blinked back tears. "The little boy upstairs isn't my Harry and probably never will be."

"Someone will need to speak with the Brethren." Filius Flitwick said. It took a moment until he realized that everyone was staring at him. "Oh, sorry. Someone will need to speak with the Goblins to verify Mr. Potter's status. We will have to find his will, as the Goblins will only speak with whomever he assigned as executors."

"I have a copy of the will." Padma said quietly. "The executors are Hermione and me."

Hermione nodded. "We'll have to speak with them tomorrow or the next day. The only way we can protect the pair of them is to have them vanish into the dozens of magical orphans that the war has



produced the last few years."

"Hermione and I want to adopt Harry." Neville spoke up. "That would change his name in almost all the records." The big man smiled. "It's a bit sooner than we wanted kids, but..."

"We will have to find a couple willing to take Tom." Luna said. "We can't just cast him into another orphanage, not even a magical one without chancing a repeat of history."

"We can't lie to whoever is willing to take him." Ron pointed out. "They need to know who he is... was... might have grown up to be." The redhead struggled with the concepts of time displacement. "You know what I mean."

"And they need to know what has happened to them." Padma said firmly. "Neither of them are stupid, both will notice the changes of the dates around them, especially Tom."

"I'll speak with them." Hermione said.

"We'll speak with them." Padma corrected.

---===oooOOOooo===---

Harry woke and immediately wondered where he was. Sitting up he looked about attempting to figure out just where he was.

"Good morning Harry."

Harry felt a flush of relief upon recognizing the voice of the boy he had met in the field. "Good Morning Tom. Where are we?"

"Dunno. It's nice though. A lot nicer than the orphanage."

"You're an orphan? So am I. My Mum and Dad died in a car crash."

"I dunno about my Dad, but my Mum died when I was born." His face clouded. "I don't remember her."

"Me neither." Harry admitted. "I live with my Aunt and Uncle and cousin. But they don't like me much."

There was a pop and a small... something was suddenly at the foot of their beds.

"Good morning young Masters." The creature said cheerfully. "Would you be wanting breakfast?"

The two boys goggled at the creature with the floppy ears and the huge eyes.

"Wha... What are you?" Tom asked summoning all of his courage to speak to the... person.

"Kinny is Kinny." The elf explained. "Kinny is good elf, Kinny works for Hoggywart school for Wizzy folk. Kinny clean Hospital, and feed sicky Wizzyfolk. You be wanting breakfast?"

"Yes please. Thank you." Harry said still trying to believe what was happening.

"Kinny be back." And the little creature disappeared with a pop.

"What was that?" Tom asked.

"Kinny I guess." Harry offered. "I guess this is some kind of Hospital." The boy paled. "What if we're in a loony bin? What if we imagined that?"

Tom thought for a moment. "I don't think two people can imagine the same thing."

"How do we know we saw the same thing? What if I'm imagining you?"

"Well, if you're imagining me, quit it and start imagining your Mum. That's what I'm going to try." Tom said closing his eyes tightly and concentrating.

Harry considered the other boy's words for a moment and shrugged. He also closed his eyes and concentrated on seeing his mum.

The return of Kinny Elf was heralded by another pop. Kinny was surprised to see that the two young masters had their eyes closed and their faces all scrunched up. "Did young Masters not want breakfast anymore?"

Harry opened his eyes. Nothing had changed, except Kinny (whatever he/she/it was) was back. "Yes. I guess breakfast would be nice." He said hoping for but not really expecting something filling.

Harry and Tom were both amazed at the trays that hovered over their beds, both by the act of hovering and by the amount of food being offered them.

"Oh, thank you Kinny!" Tom exclaimed as he dug into the eggs and bacon on his plate.

"Yef. Thk oo." Harry agreed with his mouth full.

---===oooOOOooo===---

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Neville looked his wife in the eye.

"I need to do it Nev." The bushy haired woman peered once again through the scrying mirror into the hospital ward watching the two boys starting to play together. "This is Harry. He went through hell for us."

"I can do it alone Hermione."

"Padma, it's got to be worse for you." Hermione Longbottom squared her shoulders. "Neville, I think you should wait out here."

"All right. But I'll be watching, we all owe Harry so much..."

"Neville... There are two boys in there."

"I know. Be careful."

---===oooOOOooo===---

The opening door caught the two boy's attention, the two women who had run up to them in the field they had found themselves in the day before entered. Harry and Tom exchanged looks before they both sat down at the table they had been trying to move to a better spot in the room.

"Good Morning." The pretty dark skinned woman said. "We never really introduced ourselves yesterday. My name is Padma."

The two boys nodded wide eyed.

"And my name is Hermione." The woman with the wild hair said. She continued. "And you two are Harry and Tom. You're probably wondering what's going on."

"My uncle is going to be really mad that I didn't come home last night." Harry said. "Can you explain to him what happened?"

"And the Matron has probably told the Bill that I ran away." Tom added. "I'm going to be in trouble."

"You don't need to worry about your uncle Harry. The Matron hasn't called the police Tom. Neither of you have to worry about that." The brunette hesitated for a moment. "I've got a lot to explain to the two of you. I warn you that it will be hard to believe, but I think you both need to know. First of all, what year is it?"

"1933." Tom said confidently.

"1986." Harry said.

The two boys looked at each other. "1933."

"No, 1986. Teacher writes it on the board every day."

"That's dumb. I'd be fifty nine in 1986."

"I was born in 1980."

"Boys. Today is July 19th 2001."

"What?" Tom said incredulously.

"That would make me..." Harry counted on his fingers. "Almost 21."

"And I'd be almost seventy five."

"What did you think of Kinny?" Padma asked.

"What happened to him?" Tom asked.

"Nothing happened to him. That's the way he and his people are."

"But he didn't look... human." Harry said. "Uncle Vernon would call him..."

"Vernon Dursley would call him a 'freak'. He called you a freak as well didn't he Harry?"

"Yes." The boy hung his head in shame.

"You're not a freak." Tom said. "You're goofy, but not a freak."

"Neither of you are freaks." Padma said gently. She drew her wand from the sleeve of her robe and levitated a drinking glass from one of the shelves that lined the room. Both the boys watched in wide eyed amazement. As soon as the glass settled on the table top Padma murmured an incantation and the

glass flowed into the form of a silver thimble.

"How did you do that?" Harry asked while Tom looked on in shock.

The woman smiled. "Magic."

"Uncle Vernon said that there was no such thing as magic."

"Vernon Dursley is an ignorant ass Harry." The woman who called herself Hermione said. "Padma and I are Witches. Our magic is part of us. Using our magic we can do things that other people can't do. The two of you have that magic as well. You are Wizards."

"I can't do magic." The two boys chorused.

"Not yet." Hermione said. "But you will. You will be two of the most powerful Wizards the world has ever known."

"How do you know that?" Tom Riddle asked. "Does it have something to do with that whole date being wrong thing?"

"Just tell them Hermione. Just tell them."

The bushy haired woman looked to her friend, and then turned back to the boys. "Let me tell you a story. There was a woman named Merope Gaunt. Merope was a witch, but not a very skilled one. She came from a family that had once been very wealthy but that had squandered all their money, so there was no way to pay for Merope's education. Merope fell in love with a man with no magic, who didn't know she was alive. In order to have the man she loved she dosed him with a love potion, and they ran off together to live in London. After they were together for about a year, Merope became pregnant. She loved her baby and her husband so much that she couldn't bring herself to keep dosing him with the love potion. When the potion finally cleared from his system, the man abandoned Merope and returned to his family's home." The two boys listened to the story with rapt attention. "Heartbroken at the loss of

the man she loved, Merope became very ill. Desperate for help she stumbled into an orphanage just as she began to give birth to her son. Merope's son was born as healthy as can be, but poor Merope died soon after, but not before she named her son for his father and her own. Tom Marvolo Riddle."

"Me? Merope was my mum?"

"Yes she was. Tom grew up in the orphanage, where life was hard. The older children picked on him, and the staff was not as supportive as they might have been. Over time Tom became very angry. He found he could do things."

"What kind of things?" the dark eyed boy asked.

"He hurt people in ways they didn't understand. He stole trinkets from the other children; he found that he could make things happen. He was discovering his magic. When Tom was eleven years old, he had a visitor who told Tom that he was a Wizard. The visitor offered Tom an invitation to attend the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry on a scholarship. Tom leaped at the chance to be with others like himself, and he attended the school to learn his magic. But every summer he had to return to the orphanage, where he hated being because it made him feel weak." Hermione conjured a glass of water and took a sip. "Tom hated feeling weak, so he went about using magic to make himself stronger. After he left school he even took a new name, a name he created by rearranging the letters of his birth name. Tom Marvolo Riddle transposed to form 'I am Lord Voldemort.'"

"In order to feel safe Lord Voldemort decided that he needed power. To have power he needed followers, so he decided to use the Magical worlds own prejudices against it."

"What are prejudices?" Harry asked.

"That's judging people without knowing them. There are people in the world that would look at the color of Padma's skin and think that they are better than she is. There are people who would look at Padma and me and decide that we aren't as good as they are simply because we are women."

"Oh." Harry said, though he really didn't understand.



Some in the Magical world see five types of people. There are Muggles, they are people without magic, there are Muggle Born, and those are people with magic whose parents weren't magical. I'm a Muggle Born. There are Pure Bloods, they are people whose families have had magic for a long time. Padma is a Pure Blood. And there are Squibs, they are children of Pure Blood families who have no magic."

"That's four." Tom noted quietly. "You said there were five kinds."

"Yes she did." Padma interjected. "The fifth kind is the Half Blood, that's a person who has a parent who is Pure Blood and a parent who is either Muggle or Muggle Born. Tom, you are a Half Blood, and so is Harry. Tom's mother was a Pure Blood Witch, and his father a Muggle. Harry's father was a Pure Blood Wizard, and his mother a Muggle Born Witch."

"Some Pure Bloods" Hermione continued, "But not all, or even most, believe that being a Pure Blood makes you better than anyone else. It was with these people that Lord Voldemort found his followers."

"But that doesn't make any sense." Tom interrupted. "Lord... I mean, if I'm a Half Blood, why would the Pure Bloods follow me?"

"They followed Lord Voldemort Tom, not you. We'll get to that in a minute. Lord Voldemort was one of the most powerful wizards to ever live. The Pure Bloods that followed him saw his power and believed him to be a Pure Blood like themselves. Lord Voldemort was doing horrible things to himself to make himself even more powerful until he was hardly human any more. He and his followers started a war here in Britain, looking to put Voldemort in power over everyone. Then there was a prophecy."

"A prophecy?" Harry asked.

"What's a prophecy?" Tom echoed.

"A prophecy is a way of telling the future. The prophecy said that a child was to be born who could defeat Lord Voldemort. Voldemort heard this prophecy and found that the child that could defeat him was named Harry James Potter."

"Me?" Harry squeaked.

"Yes Harry. You." Padma said picking up the tale. "Lord Voldemort attacked Harry's home when Harry was a little more than a year old, and in the fight Harry's Mother and Father were killed."

"But Uncle Vernon said that they died in a car crash because they were drunk!"

"Vernon Dursley is a liar as well as many other bad things Harry. After Lord Voldemort killed the grownups, he tried to kill you, Harry. This is when something happened."

"What?" Tom asked. Padma was surprised to see tears in the boy's eyes. Hermione was right about this child.

"When Lord Voldemort tried to kill Harry his Magical Curse was reflected back, and Lord Voldemort's body was destroyed."

"He... died?" Harry asked.

"No, his body was destroyed. His soul and his mind survived. Lord Voldemort was condemned to travel the world looking for a way to regain his power and his body."

"Harry was taken to his only living relatives." Hermione said picking up the story.

"The Dursleys." Harry said.

"Yes." Hermione nodded. "The Dursleys. They didn't want Harry and punished him for every imagined

misbehavior. Harry grew up in these conditions, always punished, always unhappy and so very lonely. Then when Harry was eleven years old, he had a visitor who told Harry that he was a Wizard. The visitor told Harry of his place at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry and I met on the train on the way to school on September first 1991."

"And Harry and I met when we were waiting to be sorted before the welcoming feast." Padma interjected. "This was when the dark Lord Voldemort started attacking Harry, in revenge for Harry destroying the dark Lord's body as a toddler. Harry and Voldemort fought many times both before and after Voldemort regained his body. For almost ten years they kept ending up in one battle after another, until yesterday."

"Yesterday." Tom repeated.

"When we showed up here somehow." Harry nodded.

Padma nodded. "There was a huge battle, lots of people died. Harry and Voldemort were the last fighting, and something very odd happened... Harry cast a spell, and Voldemort interfered with it, and it just absorbed them both. When the magic cleared, you two were in their place."

"Tom, you are not the dark Lord Voldemort." Hermione noted. "You are someone completely different. Harry, you are not the Harry Potter I followed in to Battle yesterday, you are someone completely different. There are people, stupid people, who would punish Tom for what Voldemort did, and who would idolize Harry for what the adult Harry did. What we want to do is protect you both. We will find a good magical family to take you in Tom, so that you can grow up safe. Harry, my husband Neville and I would like to adopt you."

The sudden talk of adoption shocked both the boys. Tom had lived his whole life wishing for someone to take him away from the orphanage. Harry had spent all of his wishing that some relative would come and rescue him from the Dursleys.

A family. Harry thought. Someone who wanted him, but... He looked to Tom.

"Ms. Hermione?" He asked.

"Yes Harry?" She had a pretty smile.

"Thank you, but I think I'd like to stay with Tom."

"Don't be a dummy Harry."

"I'm not a dummy Tom. Voldysnort probably got that way because he was lonely. They said that Old Harry was unhappy and lonely until he started school. You and me, we're the only kids with old guy names. If we stay together, then neither of us will be lonely."

There was silence in the ward for a moment, and then Hermione stood up from the table with tears in her eyes. "I guess we'll need to make other plans then. If you boys need anything, just call for Kinny. Kinny is an elf and she will help you with whatever you need."

The two boys sat quietly as the women exited the room.

"You dummy. You don't give up a chance for a family like that!" Tom said furiously as he smacked Harry in the arm.

"I'm not leaving my only friend Tom." Harry pouted rubbing his arm.

"We've only known each other a couple of hours, Dummy!"

"So?" Harry said smacking Tom back. "How long does it take to make friends anyhow?"

The two sat staring at each other for a moment. "You know, I think that Padma lady was your

girlfriend."

"EW!"

"I bet you kissed and everything." Tom said teasingly.

"I am NEVER doing that!" Harry thought for a moment. "You are my friend aren't you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Only a friend is mean to you about a girl."

---===oooOOOooo===---

Neville Longbottom continued to watch the pair of boys through the scrying mirror as he comforted his wife. He could only recall Hermione being this emotional one time before that being the evening he had proposed. A six year old Harry, who acted just like the Harry Neville knew. More worried about a friend who was little more than a casual acquaintance than about himself. It reminded Neville of a slightly older boy who had mounted and flown on a broom stick for the very first time to retrieve the rememberall of a boy with whom he had exchanged perhaps a dozen words.

Harry had been Neville's friend when everyone else was calling the scion of the Longbottom clan a near squib. Harry had encouraged Neville to ask Hermione out, had gotten Neville drunk enough to ask Hermione if she would marry him. Harry had stood by Neville when Hermione came down the aisle of the Muggle Church in that beautiful dress and kept him from collapsing in a dead faint.

Harry.

Neville leaned down and kissed his wife on the forehead. "Would you excuse me for a moment?"

---===oooOOOooo===---

Once again the boys looked up when the door opened, and they watched as the large blond man approached.

"Good morning boys. My name is Neville Longbottom."

"Good morning sir." Harry said.

"Good morning Mr. Longbottom." Tom added.

"Hermione, the lady in here with Padma a few minutes ago is my wife."

"I didn't mean to make her cry sir." Harry said in a worried manner.

"Don't worry Harry; No one is angry with you. I was watching and listening to your conversation with Hermione and Padma. I understand why you turned down Hermione's offer Harry, and I respect you for it. I believe I have a solution for the problem

---===oooOOOooo===---

Outside the hospital wing Hermione and Padma were watching the exchange.

"What is he doing?" Hermione asked.

"Relating at their level." Padma answered. "It's a Wizard thing."

---===oooOOOooo===---

"What would you two say if I offered to adopt you both?"

The two boys exchanged a look. "Seriously?" Harry asked.

"Seriously." Neville nodded.

"What about Mrs. Longbottom?" Tom asked.

"This is one of those things that infuriates Hermione so much about the magical world. I am the head of the house of Longbottom. Hermione doesn't get a vote."

Harry and Tom shared a look. Tom nodded.

"Thank you Mr. Longbottom." Harry said.

"Are you sure?" Tom asked.

Neville chuckled a bit. "I'm usually the hesitant one Tom. Yes, I'm sure." From his belt pouch Neville drew a silver knife, which both boys eyed suspiciously. "The adoption ritual requires the mixing of blood." He explained.

"Like being a 'blood brother'?" Tom asked.

"I'm not familiar with that term, but after the ritual, you and Harry will share blood and be brothers."

Neville carefully made light cuts into the palms of both boy's right hands, then a deeper cut into his own.

"I, Neville Franklyn of the house of Longbottom offer this blood, to you Harry James and to you Tom Marvolo. Two lost Souls." Neville dropped a few drops of blood from his palm into the cuts on each of the boy's hands. "I claim you both as my blood, as my heirs, as my sons. I say now that you need not forsake the blood that came before. You are added to the family roles as of this day, by my word and magic. Once made, this bond can never be broken, even by death, forever binding your magic, body and mind to this blood. All that came before will remain and be added to sum that is the house of Longbottom. Tom, do you accept the offer of the blood rites of the house of Longbottom?"

Tom looked into Neville's eyes unable to believe what has happening. "I... I do. I do."

Neville touched his wand to the boy's open hand, the tip of the wand pulsed with a silver light, and then Tom was looking at his clean uncut hand in amazement.

Harry, do you accept the offer of the blood rites of the house of Longbottom?"

Harry didn't need to think about it. "Yes, I do."

Neville touched his wand to Harry's hand, the tip of the wand pulsed with a silver light, and Harry was also healed. Neville then touched his wand to his own hand healing the cut.

"What do we call you?" Tom asked.

"You can call me Neville, or Uncle Neville, or dad if you like." The big man answered wondering how



Hermione was going to react to what he had done. "Just do me a favor, wait until I'm at least thirty before you start calling me 'the old man', ok?"

Neville paused, then reached out and shook Harry's hand, then Tom's. "I guess I should say 'Happy Birthday' to the pair of you. As far as the rest of the world is concerned, today is your birthday, and you two are twins."

Tom bumped Harry's shoulder. "Ha! I'm the oldest."

Harry blew a raspberry at his new brother. But Tom wasn't finished.

'Mr. Long... Dad... Was Miss Padma grown up Harry's girl friend?"

"Yes, yes she was. How did you know?"

"The way she kept looking at him like she wanted to cry. Did they kiss a lot?"

Neville smiled realizing what Tom was up to. "Quite a lot actually. It was sometimes quite embarrassing."

"Ew! I did not!"

---===oooOOOooo===---

In her office, Minerva McGonagall was starting at the Book, wondering how she was going to protect the two children who had once been two of the most famous and dangerous Wizards alive.

As she watched, the two newest entries in the Book changed. Tom Marvolo Riddle became Tom Marvolo Longbottom and Harry James Potter morphed to Harry James Longbottom.

## **Chapter 2**

Neville Longbottom sat in a leather chair in the sitting room of his grandmother's apartments within Longbottom Hall sipping at a cup of tea. Hermione and Padma had taken the boys shopping for necessities following a short meeting with their new great grandmother, leaving Neville to speak with Augusta.

The old woman peered at her grandson over the rim of her teacup. "You've had quite a few changes in your life this year Neville. The war, your marriage to the Granger girl, and now suddenly, the day after the war is over, you've adopted a pair of twins into our family."

"My wife's name is Hermione Gran. Not 'the Granger Girl'. The War is over, and yes, I've adopted my sons."

The old woman smiled. "I know her name Neville. Hermione has been good for you. Even after your adventures with Harry you would never have stood up to me." Her face took on an odd expression. "Who was the twin's mother?"

The question startled Neville. "What makes you ask that Gran? Why would I know?"

"Neville, please. Young Harry is obviously Harry Potter's son, and young Tom resembles him as well. Harry wouldn't be the first warrior to keep his family a secret until after the danger of war was past. The children would have been a prime target for You-Know-Who. I ask who their mother 'was' because the boys are with you rather than with her, she must have died in the war as well. Unless..." Augusta Longbottom sat up straight in her chair. "Neville, is Hermione their mother?"

"WHAT?"

"They would have been born after your fourth year, which was when there were all those rumors about Harry and Hermione." She saw the look on her grandson's face. "Neville, I'm not judging her, I've come to love Hermione like a daughter. I just..."

"Gran." Neville said trying very hard not to start laughing hysterically. "Hermione is not the birth mother of the twins. Hermione and Harry never had any relationship outside of being dear friends. Harry Potter is not the father of either of my sons. Not everyone with messy black hair and green eyes is a Potter."

"Neville, I'm..."

"Gran, just let it drop. Who their birth parents are doesn't matter, and I don't want the boys dwelling on what might have been."

---===oooOOOooo===---

"Tom? Are you awake?"

"Yeah Harry?" Tom looked to where he knew the bed on the other side of the room was, despite not being able to see it in the darkness.

"I just wanted you to know that I had a real good time today."

That comment perplexed Tom. "Why are you telling me? You sound like you don't expect to see me anymore."

"I don't Tom, not really. I think I've figured out what's going on. This is all just a dream. I've always wanted a family and today I got one. I've always wanted a brother who wasn't a big fat wally like Dudley, and I got you. We had so much fun today, there's only one answer that makes sense."

"And what answer makes sense?" Tom asked.

"This is all a dream and I'm going to wake up in my cupboard under the stairs." Harry answered with a shaky voice. "New clothes, magical glasses that let me actually see things, Mum and Dad, Gran, Aunt Padma, even this warm bed in a room I share with my brother? This can't be real. It just can't."

"Don't forget the Grandparents we're supposed to meet tomorrow." Tom said quietly. "I know what you mean. I've been lying here wondering how any of this could be true, wondering if I'm dreaming."

"What if it's all real?" Harry whispered.

"Then we're two lucky blokes." Tom concluded. "Good night Harry."

"Good night Tom."

---===oooOOOooo===---

In the Master Suite of Longbottom Hall, Neville was preparing for bed.

"The boys are asleep." Hermione said as she entered the bedchamber. "It took a while for them to settle down, but they're both asleep now."

"Good, they've had a hard day." Neville picked up his wand from the bedside table and cast a few diagnostic charms confirming that the suite's privacy wards were active and fully charged. "A new wrinkle to our adopting the boy's came up today while you and Padma were out shopping with them."

"Oh?" Hermione frowned, trying to think of what she might have missed.

"Yes. Gran noticed immediately that Harry looks like... well, Harry."

"We expected that."

"Yes we did, but we didn't think it through. Gran did a bit of mental arithmetic as to when the boys would have had to be born and made a most logical guess as to who their mother might be." Neville grinned.

"Who?"

"You."

"WHAT?"

"A pair of six year olds would have been born the summer following fourth year." Neville said quietly. "And there were only two young ladies associated with Harry that year. Pavarti and yourself."

"But..." Hermione sputtered.

"Of course everyone knows that Harry's date with Pavarti was just short of disastrous, mean while, you were almost constantly by his side through that year. Gran'squite proud of me really, seeing as I don't hold your shameful past against you."

"Neville." Hermione ground out through clenched teeth. "I am more than willing to become a widow. I do hope you disabused her of her notions."

"I informed her in no uncertain terms that you are not the twin's birth mother." Valuing his testicles, Neville wisely refrained from laughing. "We just need to be ready for it Hermione. Gran isn't the only one who can take the current date and subtract six years."

"But nothing happened between Harry and me." Hermione protested.

"You know that, and I know that. The busybodies and gossips will think and say what they want. I just wish we had thought of it first." Neville shook his head. "I was completely shocked by the suggestion, and by Gran's support of my 'protecting Harry's reputation.'"

"Harry's reputation? What about mine?"

Neville shrugged again, while moving behind his wife and wrapping her in a hug. "Scarlet woman I guess." He nibbled where her neck met her shoulder, one of her more sensitive spots. "Luckily, I'm a saint and make allowances for your youthful *indiscretions* ..."

"NEVILLE!" she squealed, ruing the day he discovered he could distract her so easily.

"You know," her husband said as his hands moved to her breasts. "I've never slept with a woman with twin six year olds before..."

"Neville! Stop it!" she said while leaning back into his embrace, her eyes closed, she offered her neck to his ministrations. "You're making me sound old."

"Older than me anyway." He murmured.

---===oooOOOooo===---

Padma moved from the bathroom to the bedroom of wrapped in Harry's bath robe. It had been the first thing she had bought for him after they moved in together. She pulled the lapels of the robe to her face and breathed in his scent.

The flat had always seemed so small before. She and Harry had always been bumping into each other, usually in enjoyable ways. Now, it seemed huge for just one person. Padma wasn't used to being alone. That was one thing about being a twin, there was pretty much always someone there, but Parvati and their mother had died in a Death Eater attack in Diagon Alley the year before, about a month after she and Harry had moved in with each other.

Harry had been there for her in her grief. Now who could she turn to?

There was a knock at the door. Padma stood stock still staring at the door. No one had ever come visiting before. She left the bedroom for the sitting room and looked through the peephole the way Harry had shown her.

Luna? Why would Luna be here?

"Padma?" the blond called. "Padma let me in." This was followed by more knocking.

Padma stared at the muggle locks on the door, trying to remember how Harry had said that they worked... First the death-bolt... no, dead-bolt. Then lock on the door knob, and then open the door.

"Luna? Is there something wrong?"

The blond woman entered the flat and closed the door behind her, expertly relocking the door.

"I was at home, wondering what I was going to do now that Daddy is gone, and it occurred to me that someone else was alone, so I came over."

Padma stared at her former housemate for a moment, and then pulled her into a hug.



"Oh" Luna exclaimed. "You smell of Harry. You must keep that around for inspiration!"

"Inspiration?" Padma asked incredulously wondering how Luna knew what Harry smelled like, "Inspiration for what?"

"Why for fixing Harry of course. We start our research tomorrow."

---==oooOOOooo===---

"Good morning Lady Longbottom, Miss Patil. I am Disof Wills and Estates. How may Gringotts serve you today?"

Despite having lived in close association with the magical world for more than a decade, Hermione still wasn't used to interacting with Goblins. That particular Goblin seemed to be more openly antagonistic than usual.

"Thank you for your time." She said as an opening, recalling how her parents always dealt with business associates. "We have come to discuss the will of Harry James Potter."

"What is it about the will of Lord Potter-Black that you wish to discuss? I've had two different representatives of your Ministry of Magic in here already."

Padma shook her head. "We were afraid of that. Is it safe to assume that the Ministry has reported Harry's death Master Goblin?"

"It is. Your Ministry's position is that since Lord Potter-Black died without issue, the Ministry is the rightful recipient of his fortune. Will I be disabusing you of the notion that you are Lord Potter-Black's heirs as well?"

"Not at all Master Goblin." Padma answered immediately.

"We wish to take advantage of Gringotts' fabled *discretion*." Hermione continued. "Harry Potter is not dead."

There was silence in the cavernous room for a moment

"We know." It appeared to Hermione that the goblin's expression softened a bit. "We at Gringotts have methods of monitoring the health of our major Vault Holders. We know that something happened to Vault Holder Potter two days ago, but he is most specifically still living."

"Does the Ministry know that Harry is still alive?" Padma asked.

"Not from Gringotts." Dis said. "We do not normally discuss our Vault Holders with anyone. It is only your status as Executors of Lord Potter-Black's will and your free admission that he is still alive that has allowed this conversation to go on as long as it has."

Hermione quickly digested what the Goblin had just told them. "As I'm sure you are aware, Harry faced down Lord Voldemort two days ago."

The goblin named Dis nodded, so Hermione continued. "Harry destroyed the Dark Lord, but in doing so was deaged to the age of six years. Not just physically, but mentally and magically as well. He has no memories of his life or magic."

The goblin seemed to be considering information Hermione had supplied him. "This would explain many things that our monitoring charms have been telling us."

Hermione passed over several sheets of parchment. "My Husband and I have adopted Harry into the House of Longbottom."

"So now you are his Guardian as well as one of the Executors of his Will."

"Yes. As his Guardians, my Husband and I would like you to place Harry's estate back into trust for him until he once again reaches his majority, the exception being the reestablishing of a trust vault for him to cover his education expenses starting in the 2006 school year."

The goblin made a few notes on his desktop. "Done. Was there anything else?"

"Yes." Hermione passed over some more parchment. "My Husband and I have adopted another boy, and we would like to open a trust vault for him from the Longbottom vaults, with the same status as Harry's."

Dis accepted the parchment and read it over before an expression of shock took over his face. "Tom Marvolo Riddle? Is this a joke?"

"I assure you Master Goblin," Padma said quietly. "It is not."

"Am I to assume from your expression that you know the name?" Hermione asked.

"Names are an important part of Goblin culture. We know names. You are raising them together?"

"We are." Hermione agreed. "The battle left them both six year old blank slates; neither of them holds any responsibility for the actions of their adult selves."

"While we adults were trying to come to terms with what had happened to them, the two boys bonded." Padma explained. "We have no explanation for what has happened to them, but it has and they must be protected."

"There is already a vault in the name of Tom Marvolo Riddle." Dissaid. "There is no trust protecting that vault, as his guardian..."

Hermione thought for a moment. "Please place that vault into trust status for Tom," She hesitated for a moment. "After you remove any cursed objects of course."

Dis nodded. "And the disposition of any such objects?"the goblin asked in a way that suggested that such objects did in fact exist.

"I would like an inventory of the objects with an estimate of value, then Gringotts may dispose of them as the bank sees fit."

Dis offered the two witches aGoblin's grin. This would turn out to be a quite profitable transaction.

---===oooOOOooo===---

"Mum?" Hermione called as she entered the Granger home via the back door.

"Over here dear." Deidre Granger called from her kitchen table. She filled the mug to her right with tea. "Your father is doing his'Granddad' world tour, showing off 'his boys' to his friends."

"Daddy certainly took to them quickly."

"Ken is just ecstatic that you are all right and that your war is over." Deidre smiled. "That by its self made suddenly becoming a grandfather surprisingly easy to take."

"Were did he take them?"

"There's a funfair over near High Street. I'm sure they'll come back full to the gills with greasy food and sugar." Deidre's smile faded. "Harry was their father wasn't he?"

"Mum..."

"Hermione, are... are they yours?"

"Mother! How can you ask me that? How can you think that I would keep something like that from you?"

"You mean like you told us about the Troll? Or being Petrified second year? Or about assisting a wanted criminal in his escape? You've kept things from us Hermione practically since you started at Hogwarts."

Hermione shook her head. "I never expected this from you Mum."

"Hermione..."

"Alright, I'll explain. Just let me get through it, alright?" Hermione sipped at her tea. "Little Harry isn't Harry Potter's son."

"Hermione, I'm not blind, anyone can see..."

"MUM! I asked you not to interrupt. My adopted son IS Harry Potter."

"What?"

"Something unexplained happened then Harry fought Voldemort two days ago, their magics interacted and both of the men reverted to their six year old selves."

"What? Are you telling me your father is out with Harry Potter and Voldemort?"

"No. Daddy is out with Harry and Tom Longbottom. They are six. Not just their bodies, their minds and memories as well. Believe me, I've checked and rechecked. Once we realized what had happened, Neville and I decided to protect Harry by adopting him. But while we were trying to figure out what was going on, Harry and Tom made friends. Harry wouldn't leave his friend, just like he jumped on the back of a troll to save me; he was going to save Tom."

"So you adopted them both?"

"Neville did, without asking me, because as far as he is concerned it's the right thing to do. We can afford it; we can afford to hire help if we need it. This will give them both a chance to grow up loved. To grow up in a family."

"Nurture over Nature?"

"In part, yes. But mostly it couldn't possibly hurt, could it?"

The two women sat in silence drinking their tea for a few moments.

"I'm proud of you Hermione." Deidre Granger said quietly. "I don't know if I could do what you are doing. I don't think many women could."

"I'm not doing anything special Mum."

"Yes you are. You've got to promise to bring them around often so we can spoil them rotten."

Hermione grinned. "Throw in free dental work and you've got a deal."

---===oooOOOooo===---

May 8, 2005:

The door of the Longbottom family study opened, attracting the attention of the two boys working on their arithmetic homework. A wide smile broke out on both of their faces at the sight of the tall red head who stuck his head in the door.

"Hey mates, your mum about?"

"She's having a lie down Uncle Ron." Tom answered.

"That's 'cause Frank and Alice are being pains." Harry added. "They're down for naps too."

"Oh, that's too bad." Ron Weasley said. "'cause I happened to bring a couple of brooms over that the Cannons were going to throw out... I just thought that a couple of Cannons fans like you two would like a couple of Honest to Merlin team brooms autographed by the entire squad, including the best Keeper in the world." Ron struck a heroic pose in the doorway.

"Cannon fans?" Harry sniffed. "Who's a Cannons fan? I support the Arrows!"

"But you come to all my games!" Ron protested.

"You get me free tickets." Harry explained.

Tom slapped his brother on the back of his head. "What Wonder-dummy here means is 'Thank you Uncle Ron, we'd love those brooms.'" The boy's dark eyes glinted as a smile crossed his lips, "Or you could take into account that he hates the Cannons and give them both to me..."

"You make a good point Tom. Are you done with your assignments?" The boys nodded, indicating that they were. "Well then, come on you two."

"Where are we going Uncle Ron?" Harry asked closing his notebook.

"To try out these brooms of course. What's the point of owning a broom and not going flying? What did you think you were going to do with them, clean the floor?"

"I thought you said that the team was throwing the brooms out?"

"They are Tom, because they aren't good enough for competition, but there's plenty of life in these old sticks, more than enough for a couple of knuckleheads like you two to learn to fly with them. Oh, don't tell yourMum that I asked if you were done with your school work before I took you out, I've got an image to maintain."

---===oooOOooo===---

Twenty minutes later Hermione Longbottom made her way from her bedroom to the family study to check on the boys. She reflected that having the first two at six years old really hadn't prepared her for her twins. At three Frank and Alice were bundles of manic energy that ran her ragged.

She opened the door to the study. At least almost ten year old Tom and Harry tried to be helpful, they were...



Gone.

Where could those two be? She checked their arithmetic assignments to find them completed, though as usual Harry's scrawl was untidy compared to Tom's precise handwriting. The house was quiet, which didn't make her feel better. Having been a mother for almost four years had taught her that quiet children were usually up to something.

That was when she spotted Ron Weasley through the window. What was he doing here? Hermione made her way out of the house to where Ron was... staring up into the sky?

Where she found her sons, whipping about at breakneck speeds. On Brooms. She watched as one of the boys (at this distance it was hard to tell which was which, but she suspected it was Harry from the insanity of his flying)corkscrewed around the other. Their laughter drifted down to where she stood.

"RONALD BILLIUS WEASLEY!"

Ron cringed at the sound of Hermione calling his name. She used 'Billius'. He was in trouble.

"Who told you you could put my children on those death sticks?" she shrieked.

"Calm down Hermione." Ron said quietly while he gestured to toward the boys in flight. "Look at them, Harry was born to fly, and Tom is having the time of his life."

"That doesn't mean that you can just..."

"I cleared this with Neville when I saw him yesterday Hermione. He agreed that it was time the boys were exposed to flying so that they weren't as frightened of it like you two were."

Hermione recalled Neville mentioning Ron intending to come over at dinner the previous night, but she hadn't made the association.

"I'm sorry Ron; I didn't mean to jump to conclusions like that." She looked back to the sky. "Are they safe?"

"They're limited to twenty miles per hour, the brooms won't dive past fifteen feet from the ground, they can't leave the wards and they've got sticking charms that they can't cancel until both feet are on the ground holding their butts to the sticks." Ron smiled at her for a moment before returning his eyes to the boys.

"It's good of you to do this Ron."

"Anything for Harry, you know that. As far as Tom goes, well you know I was against all this from the beginning, but he's a sweet kid. You've done a good job with him."

"Will you stay for dinner? I need to be getting Frank and Alice up, and they'll want to see their favorite Uncle."

"I was hoping for an invitation." He grinned. "I need to pick out a new favorite kid anyway."

"Why?"

"It turns out Harry is an Arrows supporter who hates the Cannons. I should have known when he wouldn't paint his room orange. Yep, gonna have to start forgetting birthdays and Christmas and things like that."

Hermione shook her head smiling. "I'd best see to the twins."

Fighting against all of her instincts Hermione returned to the house, and headed for the twin's rooms when she spotted Augusta staring out the window at the boy's antics. Hermione stopped at the older woman's side.

"I don't know why I thought that I could keep them from flying. It was always in Harry's blood."

Looking at them is like watching my Frank and his friends at that age." Augusta said wistfully. "I sheltered Neville so much after I lost Frank and Alice, I never let him do any of the things he wanted to do, and that stunted his development... At least until he became friends with Harry. Now I look at the man he's become and know that I had almost nothing to do with what a good man he is." She sighed. "Love your children Hermione, but let them be themselves. All this passes so very quickly."

---====oooOOOooo====---

### **September 1, 2006:**

Neville led his family through the barrier onto platform 9 ¾. The boys were both wide eyed looking at the huge train while trying to push their carts. Neville and his sons loaded their trunks onto the last car, and then the family gathered on the platform.

Hermione was doing her level best to not cry, recalling her own first trip to the platform fifteen years before. She knelt down so as to be eye level with her two oldest boys, straightening Harry's collar, brushing a bit of imaginary lint from Tom's shoulder.

"I expect a letter from each of you at least every other week." She said, trying and failing to sound stern. "Archimedes will be making the trip at least three times a week with letters from your Dad, the twins and me, so you can use him to return your letters, or use a school owl."

"And make sure you two hellions write Frank and Alice occasionally." Neville said gently. "As hard as it might be to believe, they're going to miss you both."

The call for boarding went out and the Longbottom boys scrambled into the carriage, immediately appearing in and hanging out the windows. As the Station Clock struck eleven, the big steam engine put a strain on its load and began to chug out of the station.

"Boys!" Neville called. Upon seeing he had their attention he continued. "Remember Rule One!"

Along with the rest of the parents they watched as the train pulled away from the platform.

"Dare I ask?" Hermione said with her head on her Husband's shoulder.

"About what? Rule one? That's pretty simple really, Rule One: No one messes with a Longbottom." I discovered that rule in my Dad's journals when Gran gave them to me when I turned eighteen." Neville looked around the platform as the crowd of parents was clearing out. "You know, I don't think I've ever been here without spending a little time looking for Trevor."

"Hmm." His wife murmured. "I think letting Tom and Harry visit Fred and George's shop yesterday may have been a mistake." Hermione grinned. "Oh well, Minerva's problem now."

"Yeah." Neville laughed. "Say, your folks have Frank and Alice, and no one is supposed to be over for dinner until six..."

"Neville." Hermione said in a no nonsense tone of voice.

“We’ve got that great big library...”

Hermione’s eyes went wide. “No, we couldn’t.”

“Gran is out at one of her ‘Daughters of the Goblin Wars’ meetings.” Neville said wagging his eyebrows. “I wonder what the fine might be if you were to have an overdue book and a strict Librarian?”

Hermione took hold of the lapels of Neville’s robes and the pair vanished from the platform.

---====oooOOOooo=====

Tom and Harry hung out the windows of their carriage until the train made a turn and the platform moved out of view. The pair settled down for the journey, Tom pulling a novel from his book bag and Harry started running through wand motion drills that their Mum had taught them a couple of years before.

The door to the compartment slid open. The pair looked up from their diversions to see a pair of children roughly their own age standing in the door frame. Based on their clothing the pair, a boy and a girl who were obviously related appeared to be Muggle Born.

“Mind if we sit in here?” The girl asked.

“Not at all.” Tom said noting the Scottish lilt to her voice.

“Yeah, Lots of room.” Harry added.

“Thanks.” The boy said pulling his trunk into the compartment while eyeing the Longbottom’s robes. “I’m Alec Armstrong, this is my sister Caleigh. We’re twins.”

“Harry Longbottom, that’s Tom. We’re brothers.”

“So.” The girl said settling into the seat across from Harry while balancing a cat basket on her lap. “You are from a Magical family?”

“Yeah.” Tom said. “And you’re Muggle Born? I could see that you weren’t used to seeing robes.”

“Yes...” She seemed to be slightly embarrassed by the admission. “I guess that will make us the oddballs at Hogwarts.”

“Maybe.” Harry shrugged. “Hard to tell really, Tom and I are adopted at six. Before that we were both raised in the Muggle world. Our Dad is a Pureblood whose line goes back to like when magic was invented, and our Mum is Muggle Born.”

“So your folks know about Hogwarts?” Caleigh asked.

“Our Dad thinks that having to go to London from Edinburgh to catch a train that goes to a school in Scotland is insane.” Alec Armstrong said.

“Can’t say I would disagree with that.” Tom noted. “There must be a good reason for the communal train ride, but I don’t know what it is.”

“I think it’s so everyone can get to know one another.” Caliegh offered. “Given what I’ve read in **Hogwarts: A History** that seems to be the most logical explanation.” She caught sight of her brother rolling his eyes. “What?”

“I think there have been maybe a dozen people in the whole world who have actually read that book.” Harry said grinning. “Unfortunately for us, our Mum is one of them.”

“Wait.” The girl suddenly seemed to have realized something. “You said your last name was Longbottom? Are you related to Neville Longbottom, one of the heroes of the Second War with Voldemort?”

“Forgive her.” Her brother said. “She’s been doing nothing but reading **The History of the Magical World** and **Hogwarts: A History** since we found out we were magical.”

“Well, actually Neville Longbottom is our dad.” Tom said.

“Really?” The girl seemed amazed. “Do you know any of the other heroes of that war? Ron Weasley?”

“Our Uncle Ron.” Harry offered. “He plays Keeper for the Cannons.”

“Then you know Ginny and Fred and George too?”

“Sure.”

“What about Hermione Granger? She’s Muggle Born like us.” The girl seemed about to hyperventilate. “She was Head Girl and got the highest N.E.W.T. scores in two hundred and fifty years, despite being in the middle of the war.”

“Uh, yeah.” Tom said embarrassedly. “She is also our Mum.”

Silence filled the compartment for a moment as the girl looked at the Longbottom boys with open mouth amazement. Then she collected herself and sat back in her seat.

“You should let her know, I’m going to break her record.”

Tom smiled. “Me too. Hope you don’t mind second place.”

Harry shared a look with Alec and rolled his eyes.

“Welcome to my world Alec.” He said. “Tom here thinks he’s the smartest guy around. What really sucks about it is he usually is.”

---===oooOOooo===---

Dinner was over, the table cleared and drinks distributed to their guests, Neville looked over to his

wife. "It's just about time."

"It is." Hermione agreed. "Everyone, Harry and Tom restart at Hogwarts today, the purpose for this get together is to celebrate that fact."

"You've still got your little ones spending the night with your parents Hermione..." Luna noted. "It's a bit early to be celebrating your children leaving the nest."

Hermione smiled. "You misunderstand Luna. Five years ago we all, with the others decided to hide what had happened to Harry and Voldemort from the world at large. Tonight we may get our first inkling of how much difference we've made."

"I don't understand Hermione." Dean Thomas said. "What are you talking about? This feels like one of your revision sessions back in the old Common Room. I never knew what you were talking about then either."

Hermione opened her mouth to respond, but Padma beat her to it.

"Hermione means that tonight Harry and Tom are sorted. If Tom is sorted into any house other than Slytherin, we can take that as an indication that we've made a real difference in his life."

"But even if he is a Slytherin, that doesn't mean he's going to be an evil git does it?" Ron asked.

Tracey Davis was sitting to Ron's left, and she reached over to pull the tall redhead into a hug. "There was a time when you wouldn't have asked that question Ron. Thank you."

"Yeah, well, Tom's a sweet kid... I just don't want to think of him as... I don't know... Evil."

"So, Hermione, are we waiting for an owl from Minerva to tell us what happens?" Ginny Macmillan asked.

"No Gin, we don't need to do that." Hermione spread out an old tatty sheet of parchment, and then tapped it with her wand. "I solemnly swear I am up to no good."

"The map." George breathed.

"I always wondered what happened to it." Fred agreed.

The map finished drawing its self while Susan Bones peered at the dots with the associated names moving about the enchanted parchment.

"This is how Harry managed to get away with everything he did?"

"The map, an invisibility cloak, good friends and a whole lot of luck." Hermione agreed. "Look, the student's are starting to arrive." She pointed to clusters of six dots and names coming up the drive to the entrance of the castle.

"And there are the firsties." Padma said pointing out clusters of four dots and names slowly moving across the lake.

---====oooOOOooo====---

“Firs’ years! Firs’ years over here!” The man speaking was huge. Harry noticed how his appearance had startled the Armstrongs.

“Hey Hagrid!” He called.

“Good ‘ter see ya Harry. How ye doin’ Tom?” The half giant called out.

“Just fine Hagrid.” Tom answered as the first years followed Hagrid to the docks.

“That’s Hagrid.” Harry explained to Alec. “He teaches Care of Magical Creatures. Nicest adult ever, that one.”

Hagrid quickly got the first years settled into the small boats that waited for them.

“No more’n four to a boat!” He called. Tom led Harry and the Armstrongs to one of the boats in the middle of the small fleet, while the other children clambered onto their own boats. Hagrid did something with his pink umbrella and all of the boats sailed away from the docks, shortly giving the first years their first view of the castle.

“Heads down!” the giant yelled as the first boats reached the cliff; they all ducked as the little boats carried them through a curtain of ivy that hid a wide opening in the cliff face. They went through a long dark tunnel, which went underneath the castle.

The boats pulled up alongside yet another dock and the students disembarked following Hagrid. The large man approached an ornate door and knocked three times.

The door swung open at once. A small, wizard in blue robes stood in the doorway. He had a most jovial face. “Good Evening Professor Hagrid.”

“The firs’ years, Professor Flitwick,” said the giant.

---====oooOOOooo====---

“Thank you, Professor Hagrid. I will take them from here.”

He led the students inside. The stone walls were lit with flaming torches, the ceiling towered high above them, and a glistening marble staircase facing them led to the upper floors.

Following Professor Flitwick, Tom could hear the drone of voices from a doorway. The upper forms must be waiting, but the first years were shown into a small alcove off the hall.

“Welcome to Hogwarts,” said Professor Flitwick. “The start-of-term feast will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your houses. The Sorting is a most momentous ceremony because, while you are here, your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts. You will have classes with the rest of your housemates in your year, sleep in your house dormitory, and spend free time in your house common room.

“The four houses are called Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Each house has its own noble history and each has produced exceptional witches and wizards. While you are at Hogwarts, your achievements will earn your house points, while any breaking of the rules will lose house points. At the end of the year, the house with the most points is awarded the house cup, a great honor. I hope each of you will be a credit to whichever house becomes yours.

“The Sorting Ceremony will take place in a few minutes in front of the rest of the school. I shall return when we are ready for you,” said Professor Flitwick. “Please wait quietly.”

“So, how does this sorting work?” A tall girl standing to Caliegh’s left asked.

“Some sort of test, I think. From the way my sister talks about it, it tests your mind and body.” A short boy said with an Irish accent.

Tom frowned. “All you do is put on a hat. Our Uncle Ron told us. The Hat looks into your mind and decides where you would best fit in.”

“If you’ve got a preference, you can ask for it.” Harry added. “The Hat doesn’t always listen to you, but it doesn’t hurt to ask.”

“Put on a hat? Is that all?”

The crowd of first years all seemed to calm down at that news, with the exception of some of the Muggle Borns who seemed disturbed by the idea that a hat could think

“Come along now,” The happy voice of the diminutive Professor came from behind them. “The Sorting Ceremony’s about to start. Form a line now,” Professor Flitwick told the assembled first years, “and follow me.”

---===oooOOOooo===---

It was odd really. As the first years trooped into the Great Hall, the adults assembled in the Longbottom dining room became silent, just as if they were once again seated at their house tables. The first dot sorted was labeled ‘Alec Armstrong’ who went to Hufflepuff; Alec was followed by Caliegh Armstrong (his sister?) who went to Ravenclaw. They watched as the dots worked their way through the alphabet, finally coming to ‘Abigale Lincoln’.

“Harry’s next.” Hermione said breaking the silence.

As if that had been its cue, the dot labeled ‘Harry Longbottom’ separated its self from the pack and moved to where they knew the stool and Sorting Hat sat.

---===oooOOOooo===---

Harry felt the hat come down over his head.

“My my my Mr. Longbottom. I’ve never sorted anyone twice, yet here you are again.”



“I don’t remember the first time Mr. Hat.”

“I see that as well. As I recall, you went to Gryffindor last time, is that still your preference?”

Harry thought for a second. “I don’t really care. I’d like to be with Tom if possible, but not if he needs to be somewhere else.”

“I see you are brave Mr. Longbottom, just as your birth parents were and your adopted parents are. I also see your need for friends, your loyalty and your work ethic. I also see that you’ve got a supply of recreational objects from the Weasley brothers... Hmm. You are still so very ambitious, but I don’t know if the world is ready for a Longbottom in Slytherin house... Tricky. You could easily fit in with any of the houses...” The Hat quit speaking in Harry’s mind and spoke aloud.

---===oooOOOooo===---

The assembled adults in the Longbottom watched as the dot labeled ‘Harry Longbottom’ made his way to a most unexpected table.

“HUFFLEPUFF?” Ron Weasley turned to Hermione. “What the hell did you do to Harry?”

“And what’s wrong with Hufflepuff Weasley?” Susan Bones asked dangerously.

“Nothing’s wrong with the ‘Puffs Sue, but this is Harry we’re talking about here. He’s the guy who invented rushing into places where angels fear to tread.”

“While making friends everywhere he went and showing an extreme level of loyalty to those friends.” Ernie MacMillan noted.

“That was the old Harry, Ronald.” Luna observed. “This Harry has had a loving home, family, and friends for the last five years. Of course he’ll be different.”

“Tom’s next.” Neville pointed out.

---===oooOOOooo===---

Tom sat rigidly on the three legged stool, dreading what was to come.

“There’s no reason to worry Mr. Longbottom, we’ve done this before after all.”

“The first time didn’t turn out all that well though did it Sorting Hat? I mean, I don’t remember ever doing this before, but you know who I am.”

“Who you were Mr. Longbottom. You humans are, after all, nothing more than the sum of your choices. The first time I was on your head you had made very different choices. If a history of the Dark Lord Voldemort had been available to the young man I sorted in 1938, he would have been thrilled by his achievements. The young man I’m sorting in 2006 has read of those exploits and is desperate to avoid becoming what he once was.”

Tom digested the Hat’s wisdom for a moment. “I don’t think I should be in Slytherin.”

“It has been noted, Mr. Longbottom, that Slytherin house would be the very last place a true Slytherin would ever want to be sorted. Let us see where you belong, shall we? You feel tremendous loyalty to your adopted family and friends, loyalty worthy of a Hufflepuff. There is no doubt that you are very intelligent truly a Ravenclaw, and the bravery you show in trying to avoid the pitfalls of your previous life more than qualifies you for Gryffindor. Your ambition speaks for itself...”

The ancient hat seemed to ponder for a moment. “Truly, even more than your brother, you would prosper in any of the houses... But Hufflepuff wouldn’t challenge you... You would do well in Gryffindor, but I’ve already done that joke.”

“Joke?” Tom asked.

“Yes, I mix things up to keep life interesting in the old castle. A few years ago, out of boredom I sorted a brave little genius into Gryffindor when Ravenclaw suited her better. She shattered the grade curve in Gryffindor House, then began tutoring and revising with the house at large, hauling the entire house up fifteen percentage points. It was amusing, but I don’t like repeating myself. I won’t do that again for a century or two.”

“Mum?”

“Of course Mr. Longbottom, who else? So, back to the task...” The Hat was suddenly speaking aloud...

---====oooOOOooo====---

Hermione and Neville looked at each other as the dot representing Tom moved from the location of the Sorting Hat and made his way to his new house table.

“Ravenclaw!” Neville breathed.

“We’ve done it.” Hermione agreed. “We’ve broken the cycle.”

Around the table, laughter spread and glasses were clinked together.

“Ok, we’ve got to get invitations to the Quidditch games.” Ron enthused. “They’re both natural born fliers, the ‘Puffs and ‘Claws would be crazy not to have them on the house teams.”

“I know I’m having words with Professor Sprout. It’s been too long since the ‘Puffs had a decent Seeker.” Susan Bones said.

Ginny pulled Hermione into a hug. “Thank you for helping them both. I was so wrong back then, thank you Hermione.”

“Gin... I wonder how Hogwarts will deal with my boys?” she asked changing the subject.

“Are you going to let them have the Map?” George asked.

“No. God knows what sort of mischief those two would get up to with the map.”

“I’m guessing you won’t be giving Harry his cloak either?” Fred asked. “Because after all, you know for certain what sort of mischief one can get into with one of those...”

“That was different!” Hermione protested. “Besides,” she smirked. “Now I can keep an eye on them, instead of the other way around.”

## Chapter 3

"Watch yourself Mudblood!"

Tom turned in time to see Caliegh Armstrong go sprawling on the flagstone floor while three third years in Slytherin robes started laughing.

He knelt next to the girl, her leg skinned from left knee to mid shin. The Ravenclaw tried to remember any of the healing charms that his Mum had needed and used so often on Harry and himself over the years to repair Caliegh's damaged leg when one of the laughing third years pushed him away from Caliegh.

"Did we say you could help the Mudblood?" she spat.

---===oooOOOooo===---

"That was great!" Tony Prewett said.

Harry smiled at his dorm mate, "Yeah. Levitation charms are cool." Harry started up the stairs. "This afternoon we get to fly!"

"My mum never let me try a broom," Tony said wistfully. "What if I can't do it?"

"You can do it. My Uncle Ron taught Tom and me last year. It was brilliant."

"I hope you're right. Your Uncle Ron? Ron Weasley?"

"Yeah, starting keeper for the Canons."

"Ok, that's just not fair. He's a third cousin and he's never as much as spoken to me, but he taught you to fly. You'll help me?"

"Mate, if it's allowed, I'll show you everything Uncle Ron taught me." The pair turned the corner into the hallway that led to the History of Magic classroom. "It's really cool when..."

Tony looked to his friend when Harry stopped speaking in the middle of his sentence, then he followed Harry's eye to where a trio of older kids were beating on Harry's brother Tom. There was a 'clunk' as Harry's book bag hit the floor, and Tony watched in amazement as Harry launched himself at his brother's attackers.

Tony continued to watch in open mouthed amazement while the thought 'But Hufflepuffs don't fight.' ran through his mind.

---===oooOOOooo===---

"I'd forgotten just how much one has to lug around for a child," Deidra Granger said as she slid a cup of

tea in front of her daughter. "Of course the bulk of my load out consisted of books and writing materials."

"You missed your calling mum." Hermione said after she had taken a sip of her mother's patented calming elixir. "You should have gone into comedy instead of dentistry."

Deidra's laughter brought a smile to Hermione's lips.

"How badly do you miss them?"

"Only every second of every day," Hermione shook her head. "I even miss the mischief they got up to. But mostly I miss the way they would keep Alice and Frank occupied."

"I think it was worse for your father and me. Once you left for Hogwarts, we only had each other. For a while it was like we were newlyweds again, but we missed our little girl so much."

"Oh, Neville and I have that as well, there are certain advantages to having Augusta living on the estate after all," Hermione smirked naughtily. "But I do have one advantage that you never had." The young woman reached into her bag and withdrew a sheaf of parchment. Using her wand to activate the Marauder's Map she waited as Deidra marveled at the map drawing itself. "With this I can see what they are doing pretty much anytime."

"That is just amazing. Where are they?"

"Let's see now. If I recall their schedules, Harry should be in History of Magic, and Tom should be in Transfiguration... That's odd. They aren't in their classrooms."

"Maybe you're misremembering their schedules."

"Maybe," Hermione said doubtfully. "Oh no!" Her finger jabbed at the map. "They're both in the Headmistress' office, with the Headmistress and three of the four heads of house."

---===oooOOOooo===---

"Fighting in the Halls?" Minerva McGonagall's lips were compressed to a very thin line. "The six of you were fighting in the Halls?"

"Only five of us were fighting Headmistress." Tom Longbottom said refusing to acknowledge the pain from his blackening eye. "Caliegh was a victim, and not involved in the fighting in anyway."

"In deed Mr. Longbottom? A victim of what and what was the fight about?" Minerva asked.

"It was just a disagreement Professor." Tom said stubbornly.

Minerva recognized that Tom was firmly in the midst of a standard adolescent male 'I'm not a rat' mode. She turned to Harry. "And you Mr. Longbottom, I understand that you came late to the fight. Why were you fighting?"

"Cause Tom was fightin,'" the bespectacled boy said simply holding a handkerchief to his still bleeding

nose.

"And that is reason enough to get into a fight?" The Headmistress asked incredulously.

"He'th my bruda." Harry said simply. "Hith fighth are my fighth becauth ob Rule One."

"Rule One?" Filius Flitwick asked.

"Nobody messes with a Longbottom." Tom said quietly.

The room was silent for a moment.

"Detentions I think, a week for each of you, with your head of house. You are all dismissed. Your heads will escort you back to your dorms. Miss Armstrong, you evidently were not at fault in this sorry episode and will not be punished. I would however like to speak with you, please remain behind."

---===oooOOOooo===---

The Slytherin Head of House waited for her counterparts from Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff to leave before she escorted her charges from the Headmistress' office. "The three of you, go to my office and wait for me," She said once they had passed the gargoyle. "You don't speak to each other or anyone else. You go directly to my office and wait for me."

"But it's lunch time!" the tallest protested.

The Professor pushed the boy against the wall and came nose to nose with him. "If you ever want to eat another meal in this castle, you will get yourself to my office and wait for me."

She paused for a moment to watch the three third years scamper off, and then returned to the Headmistress' office.

"Miss Armstrong?"

The girl had been staring at the floor waiting for the Headmistress to finish her paperwork on the incident. She looked up surprised to find the Slytherin Head of House had returned.

"Yes Professor?"

"Miss Armstrong, on behalf of Slytherin house, I would like to apologize for the actions of my students. I will be taking steps to attempt to prevent such things from happening in the future."

"Thank you Professor."

"Yes, thank you Professor." Minerva said giving the young woman an approving nod. "This shouldn't take long; will I be seeing you at lunch today?"

"Yes Headmistress. What I need to discuss with my students shouldn't take too much time."

---===oooOOOooo===---

"Thorry for the trouble Profethor Thprout." Harry said as he accompanied Pomona Sprout to the Hufflepuff dorms still dabbing at his nose.

"And you should be Mr. Longbottom. Your altercation caused me to miss most of my NEWT class for this week," the woman said. "There is no excuse for fighting in the halls. No excuse at all. I will of course be owling your parents about your inexcusable behavior."

The boy hung his head. "Yeth Profethor."

"Fighting in the halls," the woman continued. "No excuse, no excuse at all. Wading in to a fight against odds like that, for no other reason than loyalty to your brother."

Harry's head came up. Was that... approval? They had come to the door to the Hufflepuff common room. Professor Sprout spoke the password and the pair entered.

"Let me fix your nose for you Longbottom." Sprout said gruffly. She slid her wand along the bridge of Harry's nose murmuring an incantation. Suddenly Harry's nose no longer hurt and he could breathe again.

"Thank you Professor."

"Go get yourself cleaned up for lunch Mr. Longbottom. Your detention will be served with me in Greenhouse Number One for one hour after dinner all week."

"Yes Professor."

"An essay I think. Eighteen inches on the preparation of plant based potions ingredients. Yes that should be an appropriate detention."

"But Professor, that's this week's Herbology assignment."

"Is it?" Pomona Sprout put on an expression of surprise. "What an odd coincidence."

---===oooOOOooo===---

"I've had two weeks of classes with you Mr. Longbottom, I've seen what you can do with your wand, what made you decide to use your fists?"

The Ravenclaw and his Head of House were in Professor Flitwick's office where all the furnishings were scaled to the diminutive wizard. As a consequence, even while sitting on the too small chair, Tom towered over the Professor.

"You know who I am sir. I don't want to take the chance of hurting someone with my magic."

"Who you might have been Tom, who you might have been." The seriousness washed from the man's face to be replaced by his normal expression of delight. "I taught Tom Riddle you know, you are nothing like him. No, Tom Longbottom is his own man, and a good one I think. Tom Riddle would never have come to the aid of a classmate unless she could have done something for him."

"Caliegh's a friend." Tom shrugged. "I hope she's not in trouble."

"She isn't. The Headmistress is just making sure she's not too upset. Miss Armstrong has the promise to become a major force in the world. It is always exciting when pairs of minds such as yours and Miss Armstrong's are in class together. Each of you pushes the other to higher achievement."

Once he saw that the boy seemed to be relieved at that news, Filius' smile became wider. "Policy requires that I inform your parents of this incident, but knowing them as I do I suspect that they will be rather proud of your actions today."

"I hope you're right." Tom said quietly.

"Still, there is the matter of your detention..."

"Whatever you need done sir."

"I've been thinking of trying to start up a dueling club this year. It's been decades since there was a proper one, though there was a rather misguided attempt at starting one your parent's second year... Perhaps you could assist me in making the preparations for announcing said club over the next week."

"Yes sir. Thank you."

"We'll see how much you thank me when you see the amount of scrollwork you'll be doing to get this off the ground. I suggest you go wash your face and change your robes Mr. Longbottom, and then get yourself to lunch. I understand your first flying lesson is this afternoon, and I have reports from certain former students that you are quite talented on a broom... Shallow of me, I know, but I would really like to have the Quidditch cup decorate my office next year."

---===oooOOOooo===---

The Slytherin Head of House looked up from her desk to the three third years standing before her.

"I'm trying to decide if you three are suicidal or just stupid."

None of the three answered, the amount of trouble they were in had finally sunk in.

"Barely five years after a war that Blood Supremacists lost, you three idiots are standing in the hall screaming 'mudblood'," she paused as if expecting one of her students to say something. When they didn't she continued. "And then you get in a fist fight with the Longbottom boys. The Longbottom boys. Are you insane?"

Mira Umbridge had had about enough. "They're the children of a squib and a mudblood. They're nothing."

"A squib?"

"My aunt told me all about the Longbottom and the mudblood who tricked him into marriage."



"Delores Umbridge is an unmitigated idiot." The Professor said. "She was an idiot who stupidly got herself sentenced to three years in Azkaban for attempting to kiss up to that even bigger idiot Cornelius Fudge. Did she mention that the Squib and Mudblood along with four other school children held their own against twelve of the Death Eater Elite?"

"What?"

"Left that out did she? Did Auntie Delores mention that Longbottom the Squib destroyed Bellatrix LeStrange in a one on one duel? Did she mention that the Mudblood found the curse that destroyed the Dark Lord and taught it to Potter? How long do you suppose any member of your pure blood families would last against either of them in a duel? Did Delores mention that the Longbottoms are a major force in the Wizengamot and control a major voting block? That they have the power and the money to destroy your families utterly?"

The Witch took a deep breath and tried to calm herself. "If you three want to be stupidly self destructive, then do it on your own time. Your actions reflect on Slytherin House, and more importantly, they reflect on me and you have managed to make both the House and me look bad. This is unacceptable. I have arranged with Professor Hagrid that you will assist in the cleaning out of the School's stables /without magic/. The Headmistress assigned you a week's detention for fighting. I am assigning you a month for stupidity. Make my House look bad through your actions again and I will have you expelled." The Umbridge girl opened her mouth to protest. "Oh by all means tell your parents. I will enjoy asking them just how they managed to produce morons from a supposedly pure family. You three are dismissed. There will be a house meeting immediately following the evening meal. Don't be late; you are the guests of honor."

---====oooOOOooo====---

Pomona Sprout sat watching as the basic flight lesson started the free flight portion of the class. The School brooms had been replaced the year before by a consortium of former students who were in the professional Quidditch leagues, so now she could really see what the first years could do.

"Afternoon Pomona." Filius Flitwick said as he climbed onto the bench beside her.

"Scouting for your team Filius?"

"As are you Pomona." The pair watched Tom Longbottom on a speed run, while his laughing brother Harry corkscrewed around him in flight.

"Harry's as good as he ever was," the Witch said. "That trophy will look quite nice in my office next year."

"I suppose that I might loan it out to you so that you can test your hypothesis." The small man said with a grin. "Do you still agree with the unofficial ban on first years on the House teams?"

Pomona watched wistfully as Harry pulled out of a dive to end up hovering next to Rolanda Hooch, evidently to ask for some advice.

"I suppose," she sighed. "Harry did well enough the first time around, but he had Miss Granger pushing him to study then."

"You don't think she's pushing him now?"

"No, not really, or at least not as directly. Oh, don't get me wrong, I talked Minerva into letting me pull his records from the 90's, he's doing much better this time. I credit that somewhat to the tutoring that Hermione gave the both of them before this year, but most of what drives my Mr. Longbottom is a deep desire to keep up with your Mr. Longbottom."

"I've noticed that as well. If I didn't know better I might be suspecting that the Longbottom family tolerates a bit of underage magic in their household. I've also pulled some older records. Young Tom is exceeding expectations as well. The competition for Headboy is going to be interesting in a few years."

Pomona nodded. "Quite."

"That boy was born to fly," a familiar voice spoke from behind them. "I knew from the moment he made that suicidal dive to catch a Remembrall."

"I thought you might be out here Minerva." Filius said.

"Don't let her fool you Filius, she's scouting the same as us." Pomona said with a smile. "She's here to figure out which team to bet on."

---===oooOOOooo===---

Neville Longbottom looked up from the paperwork on his desk when his assistant entered his office.

"Personal letter for you Mr. Longbottom," She said with a smile. "The owl wore bands from Hogwarts." She bent over his desk just a little too far, ensuring Neville got a clear view down the front of her blouse revealing her admittedly impressive cleavage as she passed the envelope to him.

"Thank you Charity." Neville said simply in way of dismissal. This girl had to go. She had been making veiled 'offers' the last few weeks, suggestions that she wouldn't be opposed to working late, offering company over lunch, mentioning that having a drink after work might be a good idea. Yes, a transfer for young Miss Wright was probably in order. Perhaps to the offices of one of the female members of the Wizengamot. Certainly the attention of the woman barely two years out of Hogwarts was flattering, but Neville was a happily married man, with a wife who could be really quite frightening.

Of course he didn't really have to worry about what Hermione would do. His dear wife would only make him long for death. It was his Gran who would kill him dead for even entertaining the idea of an affair.

Neville picked up the antique letter opener that Hermione had gotten him for his office when he had taken his seat on the hereditary Council of British Wizards and slit open the envelope, then with practiced ease shook out the folded page.

*Neville:*

*I've long been looking for an excuse to write my favorite former student, I'm just sorry it took my needing to convey bad news for me to have one.*

*So with that out of the way, you now know I'm writing as Harry's Head of House. Today Harry was involved in a fistfight in the halls, a fight that involved his brother Tom (I have no doubt that Filius will be sending his own letter on the topic), a Muggle born Ravenclaw girl in Tom's cohort, and three third year Slytherins.*

*All of the students involved have been somewhat less than forthcoming as to what started the fight, but it is clear to me that Tom attempted to defend his classmate against bullies, and Harry waded in to help his brother, saying something about 'Rule One'.*

*All of the students involved (excepting the young Ravenclaw girl who appears to have been an innocent victim in the incident) have been assigned a week's detention with their Heads of House, so as a consequence young Harry will be spending a little extra time with me in the Greenhouses. I promise to make his time more educational than punitive, so that may soften the blow for Hermione.*

*Well that's my duty done, informing you of the misadventures of your children, and the punishment that awaits the one in my charge.*

*I know you're busy, but a note or a visit to your old teacher would be appreciated greatly, plus if you visited, think of how embarrassed your boys would be.*

*You've raised good boys Neville; they are both joys to have in class. I don't really think that I can say that enough... Besides Harry is going to win me the Quidditch Cup next year...*

*Yours:*

*Pomona*

Neville folded the letter and placed it back in the envelope. A fight. He smiled wryly to himself. Well, Harry lasted longer this time. At least no one had been hurt.

He glanced at the clock. There was a vote scheduled in ten minutes, hopefully the idiots in the majority wouldn't wax too lyrically this time, something told him that today would be a bad day to be late for dinner.

---====oooOOOooo====---

"Padma?" Luna entered the room in what she still thought of as her father's house that the pair had been using for their research. "Padma, what's wrong."

The Asian witch looked up from the sum of their five years of research with tears of frustration in her eyes. "It's over Luna, its over. We can't get Harry back."

The blond woman knelt next to her friend and pulled her into a hug. "I know. We can age him through at least four different potions, but we can't get his memories back."

"I actually thought we could do it." Padma sobbed. "Between you and me with help from Hermione and Cho and Sue, I never dreamed there was anything we couldn't do, but we can't get Harry back."

"I know," Luna repeated. "Maybe you should just wait a few more years. The fifteen years between you isn't all that much, really, I mean when you're fifty, he'll be thirty five." Luna stood and pulled her friend to her feet "Besides," she said with a grin, "I hear that there is much to be said for the stamina and the recuperative abilities of a younger man."

Despite her pain, Padma smiled. "You're terrible."

"And you love it," the blond said simply as she led her friend to the kitchen table where she had tea waiting. "We can always look at the other options... If Merlin won't go to the castle, we could try to bring the castle to Merlin..."

Padma blinked. "Luna, even after all these years you can surprise me. You are so weird."

"Its part of my charm," the blond admitted, seating herself and pouring a mug of tea for each of them. "I should be thanking you. With Daddy gone after the war, I needed a project to pour myself into; else I might have gone sane."

Padma picked up her mug and sipped, refusing to take the bait. Luna might have gone sane indeed. As if that was ever a possibility.

---====oooOOOooo====---

Hermione focused all of her attention on her younger children and her day with her mother, trying to not think about what might be going on with her older boys. In spite of herself she wondered just what it was that Harry had done, and how he had managed to drag Tom along with him into trouble.

That's the way it had always been at home. Harry was the adventurer who managed to pull the more studious Tom along in his wake. She smiled to herself as she settled Alice down on the bed in her old room for the young girl's afternoon nap. The twins were at an age that if Hermione wanted them to nap, she had to have them in separate room. Diedre was settling Frank down in the guest room across the hall. Hermione looked around the room, her old room, her posters and decorations still in place along with her books. So many memories.

Whatever had happened, Minerva would be informing her soon. As if that was its cue, an owl wearing bands identifying it as coming from Hogwarts flew through the open window and landed on the back of the chair at Hermione's old desk. The young woman stroked the bird. "Hello."

The owl bobbed its head in greeting and offered its leg. Hermione deftly removed the letter and found an owl treat in her pocket.

"If you're thirsty there's water down outside at the bird bath." She said as the bird took the offered treat from her hand. "The water's fresh, just added within the hour."

Again the owl bobbed, then took flight out the window. Hermione frowned, slightly dreading what the letter might hold. She shook her head and opened the envelope.

***Mrs. Longbottom...***

***Hermione:***

*As is often required of an old teacher, I once again find it necessary to write to a former student concerning their children. I wish it were not so, but it is.*

*As you many have guessed by my introduction, I am writing as Tom's Head of House. In between his first period Potions class and his second period Transfiguration class young Tom was involved in a fist fight in the halls. In the way of boys of his age, Tom has been somewhat reticent in explaining what caused the dispute, but I believe that he happened upon a trio of older students abusing a classmate, and stepped in to defend her. When young Harry happened upon the scene, he joined in the melee intending to assist his brother.*

*The altercation was purely physical; no magic was used, which is reassuring in some ways and disturbing in others. Both Tom and Harry were rather roughed up in the exchange, but the old duelist in me almost requires me to point out that they each got their licks in.*

*All of the students involved (excepting the young Ravenclaw girl who appears to have been an innocent victim in the incident) have been assigned a week's detention with their Heads of House, I am unaware of what Pomona might assign Harry, but Tom will be doing the paperwork necessary for a new Dueling Club that I am attempting to start. I'm not sure how happy young Tom is going to be once he sees what he's going to end up doing, but that is the nature of punishment is it not?*

*Other than this unfortunate incident, Tom and Harry's time here at Hogwarts has been exemplary. They are joys in class, obedient, respectful and helpful to their peers. The first time I heard Tom correcting a classmate in her pronunciation of Wingardium Leviosa I had to check to make sure a certain young lady hadn't snuck back into my classroom. I'm sure that this incident of fighting is a one time thing, and not something either is likely to repeat.*

*As always, if you have any questions, I am never too busy to speak with one of my favorite students. You can always owl, flu or even come by the castle. It would be marvelous to see you again.*

*Respectfully:*

*Filius Flitwick.*

Hermione breathed a sigh of relief. Her boys had gotten into a fight, but Tom had been defending his classmate, and Harry helping his brother. Hermione abhorred fighting, but she knew that sometimes there was a good reason.

She quietly exited the room to discuss the letter with Diedre. Would Mum be proud or appalled by the boys' actions?

---====oooOOOooo=====

The crowded Slytherin Common room became deathly quiet when their Head of House swept into the room. While she didn't exhibit the robe billowing élan of some of her predecessors, the woman had an undeniable presence.

She stood before the hearth with the house crest over her head. She seemed to gaze up at it for a moment before turning to face the assembled students.

“It had come to my attention that there are some of you who are very slow learners, so I feel the need to explain the facts of life to all of you, slowly and using small words. The Bloodline wars ended over five years ago, and the purists lost. Is this news to anyone here?”

She paused, waiting for any comments that might come, when none did she continued.

“Slytherin house is the house of cunning and guile, of ambition and achievement. Not of stupidity and cowardice. Does anyone disagree?”

Again her question was met with silence.

“Then could anyone explain to me just how it is that three of our third years,” she gestured to the trio standing alone by the hearth, “decided that it would be a good idea to bully a Muggle born first year in the halls all the while bellowing ‘Mudblood’ at the top of their lungs?” She looked about the room. “Where is the cunning or guile in that? What was achieved? What ambition was fulfilled? Why are there idiots in my house?”

“The Mudbloods need to be shown their place.” The male seventh year prefect said defiantly.

His head of house whirled to face him. “Do they? Mr. Yaxley, you were here at Hogwarts when the Dark Lord fell, tell me what you remember of those days.”

“People died.”

“Yes they did. What people?”

“Mostly Purebloods. Purebloods on both sides.”

“Correct. Entire bloodlines were lost forever to that moronic dream of a pure society.” She returned her attention to the rest of her house. “And you people want to show the Mudbloods their place? Pathetic. You, Knott, who won the Bloodlines war?”

Kelsey Knott, a particularly surly fifth year rose to his feet. “The Blood traitors won. They rallied around the half blood Potter and exterminated the old families.”

“Did they?” The Head of Slytherin House asked. “You seem to be here Mr. Knott, I know your cousin Theodore wore the Dark Mark, the idiot made sure we all knew by displaying it openly in the common room. If the old families were exterminated, how is it you’re still here?”

That question was met with silence.

“That’s what I thought. Alright let us discuss what our trio of notable third years told me today. They weren’t worried about getting into a fight with the Longbottom boys because they were the sons of a Squib and a Mudblood. Davis. After the Dark Lord, who was the most feared of the Death Eaters.”

Alexander Davis, the younger brother of Tracey Davis stood. “Bellatrix LeStrange.”

“And what happened to her?”

“She was killed by Neville Longbottom in a one on one duel.”

“And what does Longbottom do these days Davis?”

“He’s assumed his family’s seat on the Wizengamot.” The young man hesitated. “He’s the leader of a block of 17 votes, the second largest active block. He’s also in control of the Longbottom trust, which controls the Potter and Black trusts as well.”

“Very good Davis. Sit down.” She looked around the room. “Longbottom killed Bellatrix LeStrange in a duel, which seems to me to be quite an accomplishment for a Squib. When you add in the political and financial power he controls, he is a force to be reckoned with. And what about the Longbottom boy’s mother? McKinnon, as I understand it your ambition is to achieve the all time high score on your NEWTs. Who currently holds that record?”

Beatrice McKinnon stood. “Granger the Gryffindor.”

The Astronomy Professor nodded. “And how are you doing?”

“I’ll be ready for the exams.” The girl hesitated. “I don’t know how she did it, to manage the scores she did and fight in the war at the same time...”

“Hermione Granger is the most frighteningly intelligent person I’ve ever beaten up.” She smiled at the shocked looks she got from the assembled students. “Oh yes, we tussled a few times while we were both here at Hogwarts. I slapped her around during an abortive first meeting of a dueling club our second year, and again fifth year. I even bloodied Potter’s nose once, but Granger was truly a witch that belonged in Slytherin.”

She paused at the gasps from the assembled students. “The house of ambition and achievement remember? Granger’s ambition was to best all the purebloods who told her she wasn’t good enough to be here, and she did. Her achievement speaks for itself; she stood there and made it known to everyone what she was doing, as if daring any of the Purebloods to best her. No one did. No one even came close.”

“So.” The woman looked about the room. “Let us sum up the situation. The Longbottoms are smart, powerful, rich, and politically connected. Enough so that they could easily destroy any of your families, and these idiots,” she gestured to the three third years standing alone, “were publicly brawling with them.”

“When a Slytherin gets into a fight, it reflects poorly on me. When a Slytherin cheats, be it on homework, an exam or on the Quidditch pitch, it reflects poorly on me. If any of you annoys any member of the staff, it reflects poorly on me. Let me explain what is going to happen from here on out. All of you will be the most anal retentive group of rule followers this school has ever seen. You will be polite to everyone at this school, be they staff, student or visitor, Pureblood, Halfblood, Muggleborn, or a bloody Muggle who somehow wanders into the castle. All of you will be courteous, kind and forgiving. Anyone who fails to follow these simple rules will find themselves going home because I will personally expel you.”

A wave of grumbles spread through the assembled students. “Snape wouldn’t have...” came from the

group.

“Severus Snape is dead. You no longer have to worry about him. You only have to worry about me.”

---===oooOOOooo===---

The Professor stood on the parapet of her Astronomy Tower, looking up at the stars that she had made her life. After a few moments her attention drifted to the lights of Hogsmeade. The little town was growing, if they weren't careful she would soon be dealing with the light pollution that her Muggle colleagues were always complaining about.

Part of her was still slightly amused by the thought of how closely she depended upon and studied the work of Muggles given the beliefs she held during her school years. All it had taken to prove to her how wrong she had been had been a glimpse of a few photos from the Hubble Space Telescope. Amazing.

Then the Master she had apprenticed herself to had accepted a temporary research position at the James Clerk Maxwell Telescope at the Mauna Kea Observatories. She went along as an 'Associate' and learned to pass as a Muggle. On top of Radio Astronomy and the other amazing things she had learned at the JCMT, she had found time to form a relationship with an Muggle American Astronomer from the California Institute of Technology's Submillimeter telescope who had introduced her to the local Hawaiian culture, Mai Tais and sex, though not necessarily in that order. She had been amazed to find that she so enjoyed the company of academics as she did.

Upon completing her Mastery in Astronomy in only seven years, her former Master had recommended that she get experience teaching before attempting to return to a major observatory, so she had applied to Hogwarts to get that experience. It was during the interview with Minerva McGonagall that she found herself being convinced to take the position as head of house as well.

Until today she had been a hands off head of house, she was at Hogwarts to teach, 'punching the ticket' was the phrase her Muggle lover had used, so that she could obtain the research fellowship she so coveted... until she saw those two little boys in the hallways fighting against the larger Slytherin bullies.

She knew without a shadow of a doubt that if Voldemort had won, she never would have been allowed her apprenticeship, that she would never had discovered what the Muggles knew of Astronomy, that she would never have learned to dream.

And she kept seeing the faces of those boys. Harry and Tom. She recalled when she had seen Harry's face before, so very long ago, waiting to enter the Great Hall for the first time. It must be a family thing. Everyone said that Harry Potter looked like his father James. This Harry Longbottom was the very image of Harry Potter at the age of eleven.

Millicent Bulstrode reached into her robes and withdrew a flask. She took a pull and raised the flask in a toast to the heavens.

“Thank you Harry.” She said to no one. “Thank you for my dreams. The least I can do is look out for your sons.”



---===oooOOOooo===---

“Waiting for the Express?”

Kirstie Armstrong looked up from the bench from where she had been watching the wall between platforms 9 and 10 to see the smiling face of a young woman.

“Express?” she asked. She had been warned that they must never mention the magical world to anyone.

“The Hogwarts Express.” The woman said settling down next to Kirstie with a smile. “Don’t worry, no one can hear us. You had the look of a parent waiting for their child and paid just a little too much attention to the barrier. I recognize the look from when my own parents had it.”

“Then you’re... a witch.”

“Yes I am.” The young woman extended her hand. “Hermione Longbottom.”

“Kirstie Armstrong.” Kirstie took the other woman’s hand in her own. “So... I hope you don’t mind, but you seem awfully young to have children old enough for Hogwarts. Professor Sprout explained about the extended lifespan of magical people at the orientation...”

“Thank you, but I’m only twenty eight. My husband and I adopted our two oldest when they were six years old. My natural children will be four in January, so I’m still seven years away from being the ‘right age’ for having children at Hogwarts.”

“Wait...” Kirstie’s brow furrowed in concentration. “Your name, you said ‘Longbottom’? Your boys are Tom and Harry?”

“Yes. Oh, my.” Hermione blushed. “Armstrong. I missed that entirely. Your daughter is Caleigh?”

“And my son is Alec. I’ve heard stories about your boys. Caleigh tells me that they are heroes, especially Tom, something about a fight.”

“From what I’ve been told about it, a trio of bullies was picking on Caleigh and Tom stepped in to stop it. The bullies then moved on to Tom, and Harry waded in.” She grinned. “My husband it to blame for that. He taught the boys what he calls ‘rule number one’, that being ‘No one messes with a Longbottom.’ My boys don’t usually go looking for trouble.”

“My husband has the same rule, only for the Armstrongs. If Alec had wandered by he would have done the same thing. Were they hurt?”

“Roughed up a bit, their egos took a bit of a hit from detentions.” Hermione sighed.

“Alec on the other hand believes your Harry to be... how did he put it? ‘A good friend, but utterly insane when flying on a broom.’ Is that real? Do you really fly on brooms?”

Hermione sighed. “I don’t. Oh I had to learn and pass basic broom handling first year, and I flew more than I care to remember during the war, but...” She caught the horrified look on the other woman’s face. “I’m sorry Kirstie, I tend to ramble. Yes, Wizards and Witches fly on brooms. Not just any

brooms, but special brooms. There are entire sports built around flying for that matter. And yes, the way Harry flies can appear to be more than a little insane to the casual observer. To him flight just comes as naturally as breathing.”

“You said you were in a war?”

“That’s long over Kirstie. There was a madman who made a grab for power, he had followers, and it became a full fledged war.” Hermione hesitated, and then continued. “Young men and women fought that war, like most wars. I was part of it, so were my husband and all our friends for that matter. The other side was coming for us, it was either fight or run, and the Dark Wizards had an annoying tendency of following you.”

“But it’s over?”

“Yes.”

The two women sat in silence for a moment, until Hermione spoke again. “So, are you heading home this evening?”

“That was my intention, but the soonest we can catch the train will be tomorrow morning, so I suppose I’ll be finding a hotel after I collect Alec and Caleigh.”

“Hotels in the city are horribly expensive... Why don’t you spend the night with us? We’ve plenty of room.”

“Oh, we couldn’t impose.”

Hermione laughed. “You wouldn’t be imposing in the slightest. My Mum is sitting with my youngest and it wouldn’t take much to talk her into staying as well so she could give you a firsthand account of what it’s like to raise a first generation magic user.”

“Well...” Kirstie hesitated. “It would be nice to speak with people dealing with the same things... Alright Hermione, thank you. I think it would be nice to get to know your family, as long as you promise to visit us so that we can return the favor.”

The bushy haired woman grinned. “I hear Edinburgh in your voice, is that where you live?”

Kirstie nodded.

“I love that city. Deal.”

---====oooOOOooo====---

“Kirstie, this is Luna and Padma. Ladies, Kirstie Armstrong. Kirstie is the mum of a pair of the boy’s classmates, and we’ve invited them to spend the night.”

“We didn’t mean to interrupt your time with your guest Hermione.” Padma said apologetically taking a seat at the table. “We just came by to tell you that we were leaving.”

“Leaving?” Hermione appeared stricken for a moment.

“We’re going to Padma’s family estates in Rajasthan. We’re going to be doing some botanical research.” Luna explained.

“You’re going too Luna? What about the Quibbler?”

“The Quibbler was Daddy’s dream Hermione, not mine. I’m still looking for what I will make my life’s work. Mr. Dunworthy was Daddy’s pressman and friend for twenty years and has been the editor for the last four.” Luna sighed. “True, without Daddy, the Quibbler has lost much of the hard hitting investigative reporting that it was famous for, but it is still the Quibbler.”

Kirstie made a note to herself to find a copy of this publication.

“Did you want to speak to the boys?” Hermione asked gently.

“No!” Padma answered sharply, and then her tone softened. “I’m sorry Hermione. Please, just tell them that I… We’ll write.”

“And send souvenirs.” Luna added helpfully.

“They’ll miss their crazy aunts.” Hermione teased.

“It’s not forever.” Padma said. “We just need to work a few things out, and the project we’re doing for my Uncle will just allow us a place away from the distractions here.”