

Thrilling tale of the downright Unusual

by

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Harry Potter and the Clockwork Leap

"After hearing Hermione Granger theorizing that one could time travel within his own lifetime, Harry Potter stepped into the Department of Mysteries' Time Turner Acceleration Chamber and vanished. He woke to find himself trapped in the past, facing mirror images that were not his own and driven by an unknown force to change history for the better. His only guide on this journey is Luna, an observer from his own time, who appears in the form of an Astral Projection that only Harry can see and hear. And so Harry Potter finds himself leaping from life to life, striving to put right what once went wrong, and hoping each time that his next leap will be the one that allows him to kill Voldemort."

CHAPTER ONE

Harry woke slowly. What had just happened? One moment he had been in the Department of Mysteries, and now he was lying on his back in a bed. Brutal experience with the Dursley's had taught him to continue to appear to be asleep until such time as he was sure he wanted to let the world know he was awake.

Evaluate the situation. He was laying in a comfortable bed. That meant he was not at the Dursleys. Good. A few subtle movements told him he was not restrained, magically or otherwise. Good. Listening carefully told him... nothing. He carefully opened his eyes. Sunlight streaming in the windows lit the room brightly, but beyond that Harry couldn't see anything. Had his eyes gotten worse?

Groping to his right he found a bed side table, and by touch identified a pair of glasses. This was wrong. The glasses were completely the wrong shape. What was going on? He took the glasses and carefully put them on, figuring that they couldn't make his vision any worse. The room sprang into precise focus. He looked around; the room looked like Percy's room in the Burrow, but somehow... different. Harry sat up in the bed and looked around again. He caught sight of the person sitting up in the bed in the mirror on the door of the wardrobe. That wasn't his face. He raised his hand and wiggled his fingers; the mirror image did the same.

For all the world he looked like a much younger Percy Weasley. What the hell had happened?

There was a knock at the door, then with only the briefest of pauses, long before Harry could invite the knocker in, the door opened and a very young Molly Weasley looked in. "Good morning Percy dear. Happy Birthday. Come on down to breakfast, Bill and Charlie are here to wish you a happy day."

"I'll be right down."

The Weasley Matriarch nodded and closed the door behind her.

Harry looked back at the image in the mirror. "Oh Boy."

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

Harry carefully made his way down stairs to the Weasley kitchen. Sitting around the table was the entire Weasley clan. Ginny looked to be six or seven, Ron was so young, maybe nine, the twins seemed... odd they looked like shorter stockier versions of the Ron he remembered from first year, but

somehow... groomed. Charlie was his normal brawny self, though younger, maybe 16 and Bill he was so young, his hair not yet long enough for his trademark pony tail, and no sign of his signature fang earring.

Harry stood for a moment afraid to move, what the hell is going on? Should he tell them who he was? Oh that made sense "I know I look like Percy, but I'm really Harry Potter, who you evidently haven't met yet."

Ginny looked up from her breakfast, and smiled widely. Harry could see that she had lost her two upper front teeth. "PERTHY!" she yelled.

Greetings from the rest of the Weasley clan came out. Play along Harry told himself. Play along until you figure out what has happened. Did Percy already have the stick up his butt at this age?

"Good Morning Family." Harry stopped at the chair Percy had always used. "Mother, Father."

"Sit down son." Arthur boomed out looking younger and happier than Harry could ever remember him.

"It's your day after all, a Weasley only turns twelve once you know."

"Thank you Father." Twelve. Percy's birthday was sometime in late August, which meant that this was just before Percy's second year at Hogwarts, which made the twins ten or so and Ron eight. That meant that in Surrey there was a just turned 8 year old Harry Potter. Poor bugger. A collection of gifts began to appear before Harry. From Arthur and Molly Percy received a Journal and a very fancy quill.

"Thank you Father, Mother, this is an extravagant gift." Harry said hopping he sounded like Percy at twelve.

"Not extravagant at all Percy" Molly said. "A young man needs things like that."

Bill and Charlie went in together to by their eldest younger brother a Gryffindor Tie made of the finest Acromantula silk. "Charles, William, thank you."

"I don't care if it is your birthday squirt," Charlie growled. "Call me 'Charles' again and I'll thump you."

The family laughed when Bill slapped the back of Charlie's head. If anyone else had done that it would be all out war. Charlie had learned the hard way that Bill would always be the 'big' brother. "Thump him tomorrow, this is Percy's day."

A collection of drawings and interesting stones were the gifts from Ron and Ginny. Harry ruffled Ron's hair and pulled Ginny onto his lap for a hug. "Thank you Ronald, and you too Ginevra. These are truly treasures beyond measure." No one said anything; evidently he was channeling his inner Percy quite effectively. That left only the twins. That thought gave Harry pause. Gifts from the twins were dangerous, especially so for Percy, always the Twin's favorite target. One of the pair shyly slid a tissue wrapped something in front of him. Percy would open it without question, so Harry did so, cringing internally. Inside the tissue was a galleon. They had given him a galleon?

"Thank you Fredrick, George. A most thoughtful gift."

"We thought it would be useful to you"

“Since you insist on buying your own school supplies this year”

“A Weasley pays his way you always say.”

“Indeed. Again thank you.” He kept waiting for the punch line. It never came.

“Percy,” Bill said. “I’m going to Gringotts after lunch for an interview for an apprenticeship, if you would like to come along to do your shopping...”

“A capital idea Bill. It would be good for Percy to have a little independence.” Arthur said.

“Yes, William, thank you. I believe I would like to accompany you.”

Ginny jumped off his lap. “Luna is coming over to play. I have to get ready.” She ran up the stairs.

“Straighten up your room dear!” Molly called after her.

“We’ll take your presents to your Room Percy.”

“So you can get out to take your walk.”

“And maybe tonight you can tell us more about Hogwarts.”

Harry watched in amazement as the twins headed upstairs in quiet dignity.

“Will you play chess with me tonight Percy?”

“Of course I will Ronald.”

“Betcha I’ll win this time.”

“I wouldn’t be surprised Ronald.”

“Go on Percy, Charlie and I have got your chores this morning. Go take your walk. Enjoy yourself, but be back by one, I won’t be able to wait for you.”

“Thank you William.”

Harry rose from the table and made for the door deeply confused. So much was happening here that he did not understand. Why was he wearing Percy’s face? How did he get nine years into the past? What the hell was going on?

Outside the fresh air didn’t do anything to answer his questions, but it certainly felt good. His feet seemed to know where he was going, so he left them to it so that he could think. He was so deep in thought he almost missed you young blonde girl skipping down the path.

Seven year old Luna Lovegood skipped right up in front of him and came to a dead stop. “Good morning Harry Potter.” She said. “I certainly hope your day improves.” She then resumed her skipping path to the Burrow, while Harry stared after her with his mouth hanging open. How did she know...?

“Harry James Potter. If you don’t stop ogling my younger self, I will be forced to hex you into a small greasy puddle. If you want to ogle someone, I’m standing right here.”

Harry spun to face the voice and found himself staring into the silver-gray eyes of a 16 year old Luna Lovegood.

“Luna? What the hell is going on?”

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

Harry moved to hug the Ravenclaw and his arms passed right through her. His eyes went wide.

“Oh, I’m not there Harry, I’m here.” She giggled. “What you’re seeing is my Astral Projection. You’re displaced in time you know.”

“Luna, what’s going on?”

“Oh, Hermione worried that this might happen to you with the time displacement. She said that the act of moving through time like that might gorgonzola your memories.”

“Gorgonzola?”

The blonde frowned. “It was some kind of cheese... brie? Muenster? Cheddar?” In her hand was an oddly decorated hand mirror. It made some odd sounds and she smacked it a few times seemingly to make it quiet.

“Ah, Swiss Cheese” she said looking up from the mirror. “Hermione says that it might Swiss cheese your memory. I think she’s referring to the holes, not the smell.”

Harry stood back and looked at the girl. “Luna, why are you dressed like an admiral in the American Navy?”

She shrugged. “It seemed appropriate.” From a pocket in the Summer Dress jacket she produced a cigar, and held it between her teeth. “Does this give you any ideas Harry?” she waggled her eyebrows at him.

Almost immediately the hand mirror began squawking. Luna looked at it inquisitively, and then looked up. “Hermione Granger, you’ve got a dirty mind.” She directed her attention back to Harry. “She thought I was alluding to fellatio.”

“You weren’t?”

“Of course I was Harry. I think it’s good that Hermione’s mind is sufficiently dirty to understand what I was alluding to, she is sometimes a little slow.”

Harry felt the beginnings of a headache behind his eyes. “Can Hermione see and hear us? I don’t understand when your mirror talks to you.”

“Oh, Hermione has charmed the Room of Requirements to be able to observe you. I’m the only one of us capable of doing an astral projection to be able to speak with you. No one here can see or hear me,

but you. And Me.”

“Ok, slowly, how did I get here, and why am I here.”

"We broke into the Department of Mysteries looking for a rumored weapon to use against Voldemort. What we found was a massive time turner chamber. After going through the records on the chamber Hermione theorized that someone could time travel within their own lifetime, and during those travels use the knowledge we have of the past to make changes that would neuter Voldemort. Upon hearing that, you stepped into the Chamber and vanished." She shook her head sadly. "That was very foolish Harry. Hermione freaked totally out, Neville wanted to follow you, Susan was worried about Neville and actively trying to talk him out of it, and Ron became a complete nozzle."

Harry perked up. That was a strange term. "Nozzle?"

Luna shrugged again. "It seems appropriate. Anyway, Hermione stole all the documentation on the chamber and we returned to Hogwarts, where she started working on a charm in the Room of Requirements that allows us to see you. Your personality and Monterey Jacked memory are interposed into the bodies of people who are here. People that are at vital cusps of history. You wear their faces. As best Hermione has been able to determine you are here to make sure those cusps of history happen correctly. You will jump from life to life putting right what once went wrong, helping people, making love to any Luna Lovegood you encounter and hoping that each jump you take is the one that prevents Voldemort from returning."

Harry nodded, then had the feeling he had missed something. The mirror started squawking. Luna looked up

"Oh hush Hermione. When you can astral project THEN you can decide who makes passes at whom."

"Wait. What was that last part?"

"When Hermione can astral project?" Asked the blonde.

"No before that."

"You'll be jumping from life to life putting right what went wrong?"

"After that."

"Preventing Voldemort from returning?"

"Never mind. You said I leap into people at a cusp of history. What possible cusp could twelve year old Percy Weasley be at?"

The mirror squawked some more. Luna looked amused. "The Nozzle says we should continue on your walk."

"Why?"

"It seems that all this summer you, that is to say, Percy has been having what he believes to be a secret morning rendezvous with Penny Clearwater. Of course with the Weasleys, everyone knew this

supposed secret. You need to make sure you meet with her, which ensures the marriage.”

“Percy gets married?”

“Got married, last year.”

“Luna, are you telling me that I’m here to make sure Percy makes his date?”

“No silly. You have to turn the twins into jokers.”

“What?”

“Not now Harry, there’s Penny. Remember to call her ‘Miss Clearwater’, I’ll be around, but don’t try to talk to me, you’ll look like a loon... Percy wouldn’t like that.”

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

The ‘date’ with Penny Clearwater was formal, odd, and extremely awkward, which was evidently precisely the way the Percy/Penny relationship was and the way they both liked it. At the end of the ‘date’ the pair shook hands (!) and went their separate ways. Harry began his walk back to the Burrow, and he was joined by Luna’s specter again.

“What did you mean that I have to turn the twins into jokers?”

“According to Ron, up until this week the Twins were, well, mini-Percys. They adored their favorite older brother and emulated him in everything he did. That changed when, the week after his twelfth birthday Percy gave them a joke book from Zonkos and pranked them until they retaliated. That joke book became their inspiration for life.”

“How could that possibly be a cusp of history?” Harry was confused.

“That doesn’t make any sense.”

“Imagine for a moment Harry, three Percy’s in the Gryffindor dorms.”

“Oh.”

“Exactly.”

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

The trip to Diagon Alley with Bill went off without a hitch. Harry had gotten Percy’s shopping done and found time to get to Zonkos for the joke book. That had turned out to be the hardest part of the trip. Zonko’s carried a multitude of joke books. Harry had to pull each one off the shelf until (on the forty third try) Ron recognized the ‘proper’ book and relayed that information via mirror to Luna. Harry also picked up some sweets from Honeydukes for Ron and Ginny so that the ‘gift’ to the twins would not seem too odd.

Bill treated Harry to an ice cream to celebrate his getting the apprenticeship he had applied for at

Gringotts, and then they returned to the Burrow via Floo.

The Joke Book was accepted graciously, and the sweets went down a treat. The ground work was laid. Now for the pranks.

Unfortunately, Harry's non-magical repertory of pranks was limited.

That night the twins found their beds short sheeted. They were somewhat confused when Percy appeared at their door laughing.

The next morning Fred found that the toilet had been sealed with plastic wrap. He discovered this when the back splash drenched the front of his pajamas. At the same time George attempted to leave their room and found that the door knob had been coated with a thick film of petroleum jelly. The twin's anger at the actions of their favorite older brother grew by the hour.

The straw that broke the threstral's back was the second night of 'Percy's Prank War' the twins woke up with their hands in warm water, and another warm puddle elsewhere.

The next morning when Harry was returning from his rendezvous with Penny Clearwater, he heard conversation coming from his room's slightly open door. He pushed the door open and a large bucket of molasses emptied on to him, followed seconds later by a box of feathers. Harry wiped the muck from his glasses to find his four younger siblings rolling on the floor shrieking with laughter. He opened his mouth to speak and suddenly wasn't there any more. Luna's astral projection was standing next to him, laughing herself. She noticed a spectral aura flare around Harry as he was replaced by a sputtering Percy.

She looked to the heavens.

"Hermione it worked, Harry's gone. Get your temporal scrying spell going. We need to find him."

The mirror squawked. "Forget it Granger. He's mine."

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

Harry suddenly found himself sitting at a dressing table. What the? He looked into the mirror and found Bill Weasley looking back at him. Oh hell, now what? He looked around the room. This wasn't the Burrow, nor was it Bill's flat in London. Ok, isolate the time frame. Bill had his pony tail, and his earring. Also the facial scars from his encounter with Greyback. After 6th year then

"Bill?"

Harry turned to face the speaker and found a very naked Fleur Delacour.

"I was going to wear the frilly things that your sister Ginny and her friend Hermione gave me at our 'hen party' but I've waited so long for this night I've decided to come to you in my skin."

Harry swallowed. His mouth was suddenly very dry. "You have very nice skin." It was then her allure hit him fully in the face. Bill was an unspeakably lucky bastard. Right then, so was Harry.

“Thank you my Husband.” Husband? After the wedding then. After July 1997. The tiny part of Harry’s mind that was still working whispered.

“You are so beautiful Fleur.”

“As are you my husband.” She had pulled Harry to his feet and was working at the buttons of his shirt. “You have now seen me unclothed, I wish to see my husband in only his skin.” She pushed the now unbuttoned shirt off his shoulders and rose on her toes to kiss him. Harry was beyond startled when her tongue found access to his mouth. He wrapped his arms around her, and she ground her breasts into his chest, her hands busy with his belt. His trousers fell to his ankles and he stepped out of them.

Fleur broke the kiss. “Indulge me in a wedding night fantasy my Husband?”

WEDDING NIGHT? “Of course.”

She slid down his body, kissing his body as she went. Harry shuddered when he felt himself enveloped in a warm wet suction.

“Oh boy.”

Editors Notes:

As fitting this first anniversary of the final fall of Voldemort, the Quibbler takes great pride in presenting a series of articles by those who were there. So many were lost in the battle the prefaced the final confrontation between Voldemort and Harry Potter, it seems fitting to give those who did survive the chance to tell their stories while it is still fresh in their minds.

Only one person remains who knows what actually happened at that final confrontation, until that person tells his story we can learn how others view those pivotal years and situations.

With this issue the Quibbler goes to a weekly publication schedule, for the next year survivors of the rise, fall, return and final fall of Voldemort will tell their stories, starting with the father of one of our heroes, Mr. Philip Granger. Mr. Granger is a Muggle and has some very strong opinions about what happened. The article that follows and it’s six follow on articles are the opinions of Philip Granger and not necessarily those of the Quibbler, it’s publisher nor its editorial staff, though if they were honest with themselves they would all agree with him.

Philip Granger and the Rage of a Father

Let me preface this by saying I hate you.

Yes, I am talking to you, British Wizarding Society. I hate you all. You are smug condescending ignorant bigoted bastards, all of you. You create monsters, and then hide behind children to save you from your own creations.

One of those children you hid behind was my Daughter. You called her a Mudblood, but her name was Hermione Granger. Not one of you was fit to clean her shoes, but she left her family for you. She bled

for you. She hurt for you.

PGRF—PGRF—PGRF—PGRF

September 19th 1979 I was present when the second most perfect woman on the planet was born. It was simultaneously the single most frightening thing and the single most enrapturing thing I have ever seen. They took this tiny red bundle of life, still covered in what ever that horrible mess that covers a new born, wrapped her (!) in a towel and handed her to me.

It had taken me five months to fall in love with my wife. It took my daughter wrapping her tiny hand around my finger for me to fall in love with her. Call it a second and a half. At this point the Nurse decided that was enough father/daughter bonding time and stole her away to be cleaned, weighed, measured, and what ever other indignities hospitals subject newborn goddesses to.

I returned to the side of the first love of my life. For some reason she had chosen to have the “Natural Childbirth Experience”. Her six hours of labor had been gut wrenching for me, and I was just a spectator. Women are braver than men. There is no way in hell a man would volunteer for that level of pain.

I was holding my wife, Beth’s hand, wiping the sweat from her lovely face, and assuring her that our daughter was in fact perfect, and from the way she had looked at me, obviously a genius, when the doctor said “oh my”. What followed was my being rushed from the room and told nothing for four hours. When they finally decided to talk to me, I was told that Beth was alright, our daughter was perfectly healthy, but there had been problems following the delivery and Beth could not have anymore children.

As soon as I was allowed on the ward, I sat holding my wife while she cried. Beth had always dreamed of a large family. Personally I was deliriously happy. My wife was ok, my daughter was healthy, and all was right in the world.

PGRF—PGRF—PGRF—PGRF

Hermione grew and prospered as perfect children do, visits from my parents and Beth’s allowed me to introduce them to the most important little girl in the universe (Andy Wilson finally acknowledged me as a human being and not just the ‘bastard who raped my little girl’ (an exact quote from our wedding).)

It’s funny what becoming a grand father will do to a man.

A spare examination room at our Dental surgery was made into first a nursery and later a play room, and Hermione accompanied Beth and my self to work, much to the delight of our staff, at least one of whom was always in that room with my princess. Hermione grew, as children do, much too quickly. As she got older we discovered something most unusual about our daughter. She wanted to do things her self. Her first sentence?

“Hermione DO!”

She fell in love with books early. She loved her picture books and her stories at bed time. She was reading them herself by the time she was four, she discovered ‘sounding out’ words without prompting.

She cared deeply about things a child her age shouldn't be thinking of. She would sit on my lap while I watched the Evening news. I recall not long after her 4th birthday, the news was full of the negotiations between Britain and China over Hong Kong. My princess spent the rest of the night asking me questions about that far away city, and why everyone in the world wasn't British. I couldn't help but beam with pride.

My little girl wanted to understand the world. Was there ever a luckier father?

Then she broke my heart.

She went to school.

She was so excited that it was hard to believe. There weren't any children her age in our neighborhood; I was worried about how she would fit in. She took to her lessons like a champion. But she never learned to socialize. My wonderful daughter had a flaw, it turned out that others didn't see her as I did. She did well in school, but never really made friends. She preferred her books and the company of adults to that of other children.

It was about this time odd things started happening around Hermione.

Things would change color.

Something she wanted on a high shelf would fly to her hand. Electronic devices would suddenly stop working for no reason. We couldn't understand it. We told no one, not wanting Hermione to be treated as an oddity.

PGRF—PGRF—PGRF—PGRF

The answer to what was happening with Hermione arrived at our front door at 7pm on the 20th of September 1990 in the form of Minerva McGonagall, the Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts School for Wizardry and Witchcraft.

It was my turn to do the dishes after dinner, so my wife answered the door. A few words from the Scot had my wife pulling me into the sitting room to hear her stories. She told us of a world where magic not only exists but is used for the most mundane of chores. She told us that the odd things that were happening to our Hermione were due to her being a Witch.

Hermione of course was intrigued by the idea of magic and her using it. The more the woman spoke of this 'Hogwarts' the more Hermione wanted to attend. Which was of course the plan.

Minerva told of the wonders of your world, but she didn't tell us of the horrors. Your endless wars between the Light and the Dark. Your Dark Lords. Your hopelessly corrupt Government. She made no mention of your Pure bloods and their general disdain for Mudbloods and utter hatred of we 'filthy Muggles'. She certainly never told us of her colleagues at Hogwarts who would hate our Hermione simply because of who her parents were. Not once did she mention that our daughter would end up in danger of losing her life ever damned year she attended your 'Finest School in Europe'.

I don't blame Minerva McGonagall really. She was doing her job. The fact that doing her job required lying by omission isn't really her fault, it's yours. She needed to fill the seats with Mudbloods so that

the so called purebloods could afford to send their children to school. At the end of her second year Hermione calculated that without the Muggle Born and Muggle Raised at your precious school, the tuition would triple.

A week later we met Minerva at Diagon Alley for a 'tour'. Hermione was hooked. We opened an account at your "Wizarding Bank" with fee rates that border on the criminal, and we paid her tuition, now all Hermione had to do was wait a year for the school year to start. We bought her books, so very many books, poorly written books. The vast majority of your books have no logical structure, no indexes, not even a table of contents. She absorbed your culture through your books, and still not one of those books honestly addressed what craven cowardly bigots you are. In that summer she learned far more about you than most of you learn about her culture in your entire lives. It was from those books she learned the name of the Wizard I would learn to hate.

Harry Potter.

PGRF—PGRF—PGRF—PGRF

It was five minutes after she first read the fairy tale that made Potter famous (I mean seriously, the boy was the only survivor of the encounter between his parents, himself and your creation Voldemort, where does the absurd story that a toddler defeated a Dark Lord come from?) that my Hermione calculated that he would be in her year at Hogwarts. That excited her, a chance to know the hero, the savior of the Wizarding world. She prepared herself for her first year, determined to impress Harry Potter.

She was studied so intensively the year flew by as all three of us were amazed at all she would be learning. She practiced her 'wand movements' with sticks from the local park, she practiced her pronunciation of the incantations until we were sick to death of hearing them. And she talked about Harry Potter.

Harry Potter.

Then came the day we took her to Kings Cross station, with her little trunk, and her ticket to a train that was at a platform I had never seen despite having been to the station countless times before.

Minerva McGonagall had told her how to get onto the platform, but we had never thought to ask if her mother and I could manage to make it through the hidden gateway, so we said our goodbyes on the outside of the platform. We watched our little girl vanish into a brick wall. I made it to our car before I started to cry.

PGRF—PGRF—PGRF—PGRF

Her first letter came home tied to the claw of an owl two days later. Beth had some bacon set aside for the bird and hurriedly tied a letter she had ready for Hermione for the return trip. Hermione's letter told of the trip on the train, a search for a wayward frog, and of meeting her hero. Young Mr. Potter was evidently something of a disappointment, defensive and not welcoming of young girls. In short a relatively normal eleven year old boy. Hermione spoke of the rags he was dressed in, his hair, and the fact that it seemed he knew nothing of being a wizard. Her letter included a vivid description of her arrival at the castle and the Sorting Ceremony that put her in the house she had wanted.

My little girl was a Gryffindor. Evidently an ancient hat decided she was brave. How a hat would know that, I don't know, but Hermione was well pleased with her placement. How much of her pleasure was owed to the fact that HE was also sorted in to Gryffindor?

Harry Potter.

Evidently they had classes together as well. She described Harry Potter as being quiet, soft spoken, and apparently completely unaware of the legend built around his parent's death. She described the classes she took, the meals served, the magic she was learning, and the girls who shared her dormitory. And Harry Potter.

Harry Potter.

It was amazing how much I was learning to hate that boy. The fact that I have never met Harry Potter didn't bother me in the slightest.

It was after Halloween we got the first letter that actually sounded like Hermione. She told the story of being hurt by the cruel words of a class mate, then finding herself attacked by a Troll. A pair of class mates, Ron Weasley and Harry Potter fought with the troll until they knocked it out. From that day on, every letter mentioned Harry Potter. Somehow a 4 meter tall troll got inside the school, this purported 'safest place in Britain'. My daughter might have been killed. Did her mother and I get notified of this encounter? Of course not, we are only her parents. Why should the great and powerful staff of Hogwarts bother to inform a pair of simple 'Muggles' of the danger our only daughter found her self in? From Hermione the constant barrage of Harry Potter news continued until Hermione came home for Christmas."

PGRF—PGRF—PGRF—PGRF

The family reunion at the train station was emotional and loving.

Our girl was home and all was right with the world. That evening we had a long discussion about confronting trolls. She got out one of her books to show us a moving illustration of a troll, complete with sound and smell. Three children faced one of those monsters? I brought up the idea of perhaps not returning to such a dangerous environment. She informed me that she simply must return, because if she didn't Harry and Ron would fail due to never doing their homework.

My little girl had friends. For the first time, she had friends.

Something about this Harry Potter and this Ron Weasley had broken through the barriers my princess had erected around herself. She talked me into taking her to Diagon Alley to do a little Christmas shopping for her new friends. She puzzled for most of an hour in the Wizarding Bookstore trying to find just the right books for her friends.

Finally she gave up and turned to her ancient father for advice on gift buying for young boys.

Thinking back to my own childhood, I suggested that perhaps most young boys didn't love books quite as much as Hermione did. As I recalled candy was a favorite at that age.

My Hermione nodded wisely, and led me to another store, where she invested her savings in three boxes of some type of Wizarding Chocolates called 'Chocolate Frogs'. We then made our way to the Wizarding Post office and mailed off two of the boxes. I asked her about the third box, and mentally

prepared my parental/dentist riff. She dimpled and told me they were for someone special.

PGRF—PGRF—PGRF—PGRF

Christmas morning Beth and I set out to spoil our princess to within an inch of her life. And we succeeded until she opened a small package that had come by owl two days before she returned from Scotland. Inside was a book, an ancient leather bound tome, that Hermione opened, gasped, and started to cry. She excused herself to wash her face.

Beth picked up the book and gasped herself. “Philip, this is a first edition Emily Bronte. Wuthering Heights.”

“Who sent her that?”

“Harry Potter. There’s a note with it.”

I took the book and opened it to find a note on a slip of paper.

“Hermione: Thank you for everything this year. Without you I’d be lost.”

Damn him.

Harry Potter.

PGRF—PGRF—PGRF—PGRF

Hermione returned to school with the new year. Her letters continued to speak of Harry Potter and the classes they shared. She told of the magic she had learned and the things she could do. January became February which became March. Her letters began to speak of the prejudices of your world.

The hatred you taught your children came to the fore in the form of one Draco Malfoy. Your society taught an eleven year old to hate others based upon who their parents were.

If a mere ‘mudblood’ were to surpass you in school, then she must be a cheat. This attitude was perpetuated by at least one of your teachers, one Severus Snape, an abusive ass who delighted in the abuse of children. This man, entrusted with my child and yours, was a convicted Death Eater, complete with the Mark of your Dark Lord. From what I understand from your media in order to ‘earn’ that mark, the man had to commit murder in cold blood, yet he was a teacher. I await for a reasonable explanation for that.

Reading those letters, finding my little girl’s pain was even harder than reading of her adventures with Harry Potter.

It turns out that there was something ‘hidden’ at the school that year. Precisely why something that would bring a murdering Dark Lord to try to steal it would be hidden in a school is beyond me, but that’s just my Muggle ignorance talking. But the defenses around it were something to behold.

A gigantic vicious three headed dog, who could be easily put to sleep with music, something that his keeper told anyone who asked.

Deadly vines that the defense against was routinely taught to first year students

Flying keys, only one of which would fit the lock, and brooms to reach said keys readily available.

A chess game that played a rather bad game.

A troll

A logic problem easily solved by a child.

Defenses so impenetrable that it took a trio of untrained first years most of an hour to defeat.

The ease that they defeated these defenses leaves only two possibilities. Either Albus Dumbledore was an idiot, -or- He intended Harry Potter to encounter the returned Voldemort from the beginning.

Hermione's letters told us that somehow Harry Potter managed to defeat not only Voldemort but also the fully trained Adult wizard tasked with the teaching of Defense Against the Dark Arts, being badly injured in doing so.

Hermione spent every waking moment at his side in the hospital. He recovered and the term ended.

That summer I heard more than I cared to about Harry Potter.

Little did I know the next year would be worse.

Hermione and The Loon

They're Hermione and the Loon
Yes, Hermione and the Loon
One is a genius, the other bends spoons
They're both researching fools
Finding Dark Lord killing tools
They're kinky
They're Hermione and the Loon, 'oon, 'oon, 'oon,
'oon, 'oon, 'oon, 'oon, 'oon

Before each night is done
Their plan will be quite scary
By the dawning of the sun
They'll have had their way with Harry

They're Hermione and the Loon
Yes, Hermione and the Loon
Their twilight campaign
Is easy to explain
To prove their witchy worth
They'll de-Dark Lord the Earth
They're kinky.
They're Hermione and the Loon, 'oon, 'oon, 'oon,
'oon, 'oon, 'oon, 'oon, NARGLES!

In a dark corner of the Library two witches were bent over ancient tomes

“Are you pondering what I’m pondering Luna?” asked the Bushy haired brunette

“I sure am Hermione,” answered the slight blonde “but it seems to me that if the Gryffindor boys call Harry ‘Tripod’ for the reason we hope they do, wouldn’t he pass out if he got an erection?”

“Well, yes Luna, but that can wait. I was referring to our plans for tonight.”

“Oh poo.” Said Luna, obviously not agreeing that discussions of Harry’s erection could wait. “Then what do you want to do tonight Hermione?”

“The same thing we do every night Luna,” Hermione said, her voice rising in a dramatic baritone. “Try to take over the school!”

Amelia Bones and The Man with the Umbrella

Chapter One

Fifty years old today. Amelia Susan Bones looked up from the base of the cliff. Half a century. One third of her expected lifespan. For some reason she found this depressing. The fact that she could and did pass for a muggle 24 year old didn't help at all. Still...

Her gift to herself was going to be this climb. She had learned rock climbing three years out of Hogwarts to please a boyfriend back in '36, just before everything went to shit with Grindelwald and Hitler. Recalling Jackie brought back her depression. He had died in '44 assaulting Grindelwald's Redoubt with Dumbledore's team. The joy of aching muscles and a good sweat was a lesson Jackie had taught her all that time ago, one she had never forgotten.

The air cracked and shimmered in the heat and the cloudless sky has been bleached to a pale blue by the mid-day sun. The only sound is the chaotic squawks of the gulls, hanging motionlessly on the sea breezes. The cliff was black basalt, leaning out over the blue green sea below as it rose. Amelia chalked her hands and reached up for her first grips. Her body flowed with an easy power in three minutes she was 50 feet up the face. She paused for a moment.

She and Jackie had joined the Aurors together. The sexist bastards hadn't allowed her to go on the dangerous ops with Jackie and the others, despite the acknowledged fact that she was as hard as any of them. Moody had apologized to her when he had handed her the assignment that kept her out of the fight, a personal guard for the Muggle Prime Minister. Passing for a Muggle secretary, she actually had used her wand to protect Churchill from Axis assassins three times. This won her the appreciation and admiration of both the head of the PMs Protective detail and the intelligence services.

After the War, she returned to Auror force, she swallowed her grief and did her job. Moving up the ranks, she found herself faced with being forced into administration after only fifteen years.

The young fifty year old woman pressed against the face of the cliff, her weight precariously supported by her fingers and her left foot. The right foot searched for purchase almost level with her hip, finding a fold in the rock. Her face is a picture of trance-like concentration as she focuses attention on the outcrop above. She releases the grip of one hand to brush damp hair back from her eyes, a bead of sweat runs down her temple.

The right leg flexes, boosting her body up and out, both hands reach up for the ledge. For a few seconds she dangles above the ocean held only by her fingertips before her feet find a grip again and the upward journey is resumed. She wears no harness, has no safety ropes, Amelia doesn't play it safe, not now, not ever.

Faced with the choice of stagnation or the hell that is Administration, Alastor Moody once again came through to save her.

"Lass," he had said "We need a liaison to the Muggle Intelligence Services. This is a field assignment, something new all the time. It's a ten year assignment, you're my only candidate. The rest of these children are far too soft for this job."

“Alastor ...”

“Amelia, you made friends during the War, one of them is asking for you specifically.” The old bastard smiled sardonically. “Of course he’s expecting a woman who looks her age.”

She was 20 feet from the ledge now. Purchase was becoming harder to find. It was soon after her conversation with Moody, she met his Muggle counter part. A chubby mousy little man who insisted on being called ‘Mother’. Mother was indeed surprised by her youthful appearance, but quickly modified her legend to cover for it. Amelia received her new name and personal history, which she quickly memorized, before meeting her new partner, who was something of a legend himself.

The man’s eyes widened appreciatively when he met her, his eyes sweeping up and down her body. His ardor somewhat dampened when she was introduced as a ‘Mrs.’. Her partner was unaware of her ‘special’ abilities, and Amelia took great pains to ensure he remained ignorant. They made a good team and dealt with many threats to the Empire both Muggle and Magical.

Amelia Bones finally hauled herself up and over onto the wide ledge just below the top of the cliff. Her muscles and lungs were burning and she was about to collapse onto her back when a colorful flickering caught her eye. She froze incredulously; it was a table cloth – blue and yellow checked table cloth - fluttering gaily in the breeze atop a table for one, complete with a chair and an umbrella for shade. The umbrella vivid blue and yellow, carrying the motif a knight on his mount. Next to the table was an ice bucket complete with an open bottle of Champagne.

Amelia struggled to her feet, and cautiously approached the table. Leaning against the umbrella shaft was a small business card. Amelia poured herself a glass of the Champaign, sipped, and picked up the card.

Mrs. Peel:

We are needed.

-S.

Her brow knitted into a frown which couldn’t quite hide the laughter in her eyes.

“Steed.” She said, not so much a call than a statement.

How did he keep doing this to her? It was then she spotted him, approaching from the road where his Bentley was parked, his familiar Bowler on his head and ever present Umbrella under his arm.

She sighed.

Oh well, it would be a chance to wear that new Dragon Hide leather catsuit she had purchased on her last trip to Diagon Alley. She raised her glass to the approaching agent in a salute. It would be nice to get back to work.

A/N3: Amelia Kicks High! Sigh. Damn you Red.

Harry Potter and the Read Through

Hermione Granger arrived at the studio twenty minutes early, as was her habit. Entering through the Talent entrance, she made her way down the hall to the Read Through room, her heels clacking on the slate tiles. She paused a moment to check how well her outfit had survived the trip from her home. Perfect, the black sheath fit her like it was spray painted on and showed just enough cleavage to send the message 'treat momma nice, and momma will be nice to you'. Her hair had survived the trip over in her convertible in perfect condition; magic truly was a wonderful thing.

Entering the Read Through room, Hermione made a quick stop at the Craft Services table for a cup of tea and a small bowl of grapes, then made her way to the table. She took in the sight of the man already sitting at the table, broad shoulders, deep tan, a mop of curly blond hair; it couldn't be anyone but Severus Snape.

"Morning Sev."

The blond man looked up and presented her with a dazzling smile. "Hermione!" He rose to his feet and kissed her on the cheek. "Let me get a look at you girl. I certainly hope that isn't the dress you wore last night!"

"Why?" The Brunette asked.

"Because your hair is still perfect, and that would mean you didn't get any last night."

"Severus Snape!" Hermione laughed, taking her customary seat at the table. "You are just terrible. No, I didn't wear this last night; I have a date after today's session. If we work tomorrow, THEN my hair will be all frizzy..."

"Good for you. Have you heard anything about this one?"

"No, I haven't gotten an advance script since "Sunset Over Britain". I think they quit sending them out because Ron would count his lines, then bitch and moan for money.

"I heard that!" Ron Weasley said as he approached the table with a pint of beer in his hand. "We contracted for seven books, and then this stupid Fan Fiction crap started. Now we work pretty much every day, and the money hasn't changed."

"It's 'Fan Fiction' Ronald." Severus said shaking his blond curls, "there IS no money."

"Yeah, right, I keep forgetting all those losers out there are typing away for the love of it. How sad is that?" He took a long pull on his beer. "So what loser in particular is responsible for today's pile of ass spackle?"

The other two shook their heads. The door opened and Susan Bones entered, followed quickly by Molly and Ginny Weasley. Both the Weasley women were speaking theatrically into their cell phones and stayed by the door to finish their conversations. Susan slid into the chair across from Hermione,

"I am NEVER sharing a ride with those two again."

"Who are they talking to? Their agents?"

"Nah, the Producer. They want approval on the script, and specific changes made."

Severus looked surprised. "Approval on the script? Have they seen it yet, because we haven't?"

Susan shook her head. "No, they found out who the Writer is."

"Really?" Hermione was suddenly very alert and even Ron put down his beer. "Who is it?" the Muggle born witch asked. "Oh tell me it's another Bobbin story, I always come off so good in his stories."

"Good lord, I hope not!" Dumbledore said, entering with a large trunk.

"I don't see why you don't just lock up your beard in the prop room," Hermione said to the clean shaven character.

"It's my lucky beard. It was at the cleaners when we did "Sunset" and you know what a rotten part I had in that."

"Well," Severus started.

"Don't. Even. Think. About. Saying. It." Hermione said looking daggers at Snape.

"Wouldn't dream of it," he said, returning to his crossword. "I'm hoping for Nonjon myself. I adore a good comedy."

"Or Kinsfire" Ron said, looking truly interested for the first time all morning. "He always..."

"No, it's that 65619 clown." Susan interrupted.

"Oh."

"Crap."

"Oh well, short days for me, he hates my character, so Harry will give me my comeuppance nice and early and I won't be seen again until my death scene." Severus said philosophically.

"And long days for me." Albus mused. "I'll plot some, and have many confrontations with young Harry, the vast majority I will lose to his moral superiority. All that and I won't even have any slash to look forward to."

There was a collective shudder around the room as they all recalled the fic they had performed the previous week involving the Headmaster and a gerbil animagus...

"He's what got Ron's Mum and sister all stirred up." Susan interjected desperate to change the subject. "Molly says she's tired of being a psychotic bitch in his fics" The redhead leaned across the table to Hermione and Severus "Type casting if you ask me." She smiled at Ron's glare and continued, "Ginny

says that if she's going to be a slutty skank again, then she want pre-approval on the guy she's slutty with, to make sure what he's packing is worth her time."

Even Ron laughed at that. That was pure Ginny.

"She always has been a size queen, ever since that damned Basilisk gave her some unreasonable expectations." Severus observed shaking his head.

"Well," Ron said. "At least he usually gets me laid... More often than not with you Herms..." he waggled his eyebrows at her. "Silver lining I guess eh?"

"Call me 'Herms' again Ronald, and you'll be wearing your testicles like a bow tie." Hermione smiled sweetly. "I've called my agent and had a 'No Gingers' clause added to my contract."

"I don't know if I should be hurt or not." Susan said pouting prettily.

"Exceptions can be made, for the right script of course."

"Ah, this guy always pairs me with Neville, or on occasion as having a pathetic unrequited crush on Harry."

The door opened again allowing Draco Malfoy and Dobby Elf into the Read Through room.

"Greetings Fellow Thespians!" Dobby called in a deep cultured baritone that would make James Earl Jones green with envy. "I do hope everyone is ready for today's foray into the theater of the mind."

Molly and Ginny joined them all sitting around the table. Behind Dobby and Draco came several interns carrying copies of the day's script and started placing them at each place around the table, along with pens and highlighters.

One of the interns stopped in front of Dobby. "Mr. Elf, sir, I've been a fan of the series since the beginning, you've always been my favorite character."

"Well thank you..." Dobby eyed the intern's nametag, "Stephen, I am but a humble player among this great ensemble cast, playing my part as best I can."

"Oh, you're the best sir... but I was wondering, you don't look anything like your character."

"Ah, I see, you expected an emaciated two foot tall golem with huge eyes did you?"

"Yes sir Mr. Elf, I never would have recognized you. How do you do it?"

"How else Stephen?" Dobby struck a dramatic pose "By ACTING!"

Stephen the Intern blinked, standing before him was the Dobby from the books and movies, two foot tall, huge eyes, clad in a threadbare pillowcase, he blinked again and Mr. Elf was back, six foot four clad in a Thousand Pound Saville Road suit, the picture of the Shakespearian actor. "That's amazing Mr. Elf, I had no idea someone could 'act' short."

“Only after years of training young Stephen. Fetch me a cup of tea and half a bagel with cream cheese would you? Good Lad.”

The intern scampered off and Dobby took his seat at the table. Draco looked up from the script in front of him. “You insufferable ham.”

“Give the fans what they want Draco, that’s the secret of continuing to work.” Dobby picked up his script, and pulled a pair of reading glasses from his jacket pocket. “Has anyone seen our titular Hero this wonderful morning?”

Around the tables heads were shaken negatively. Draco finally spoke up. “The bastard ditched me at a club last night.”

“Draco, you’ve got to quit doing that to yourself.” Ginny Weasley purred. “Instead of chasing after Harry, you could stay in with me...”

Ron and Molly shot Draco death glares while the rest of the table fought the laughter that threatened to erupt. Those fighting laughter were saved then the door opened again and Luna Lovegood entered dragging a disheveled Harry Potter behind her. Following Potter was a pair of young blonde women, twins, that no one at the table recognized.

“Let’s go Harry, we don’t have time for this crap. Say goodbye to your bimbos, we’ve got work to do.” said the grey eyed blonde.

Harry pulled his arm free from Luna’s grasp and took the hands of both of the giggling twins. “Ah, ladies, this is where we must go out separate ways”

“But you said you’d introduce us.” Said one of the matched set.

“Ah, of course I did. Everyone? This is Toni and Tawni, Ladies, this is everyone.” Harry kissed each of the girls and pushed them out the door.

“That’s why you ditched me at that club? That’s why? You bastard.”

“Twins mate. Very affectionate twins.” Harry pointed out.

“Oh.” Draco considered for a moment. “That’s all right then.”

“Besides,” Harry continued, “I made sure you wouldn’t be bored. I entered you in that contest didn’t I?”

“What contest?” Hermione asked.

“This ass entered me in a Tom Felton look-alike contest.”

“Felton? The guy who played you in the movie?” Ron took a pull on his beer and signaled one of the interns for another.

“Yeah. It seems he’s a local hero around the club we were at.”

“How did you do?” Severus asked.

Draco mumbled something.

“I didn’t make that out Draco, what did you say?”

“I came in third. Alright? I came in bloody third.”

“Third?” Ron was barely holding in the laughter, “How is that even possible?” the girls around the table starting to giggle.

“Look, he was hired because he looked like me, not because I looked like him!”

“As much fun as picking on Draco is, we ought to get to work.” Harry picked up his copy of the script. “Acts of Betrayal? I get stuck in Azkaban AGAIN?” Harry shook his head. “What is it with you guys always betraying me and stuff?”

“No prison this time.” Hermione looked up from her own script. “I save you from love potions. We grab my parents and light out for Boston, then we get married, you marry Daphne”

“All right. I never get enough time with Daphne... She’s a lucky girl.”

“Yeah, after the second marriage we return to Hogwarts and confront the evil headmaster.”

“The misunderstood Headmaster.” Albus corrected. “Never Evil, misunderstood.”

“Yes, well, much angst, a few hexes, Ron and Ginny end up in the loony bin, and Ron dies after killing a half dozen Des, and you vanquish Tom.”

“Ah a basic #23 then. Returning to a certain death trap with no real plan. Gotcha. Let’s do this thing!”

Luna Lovegood and the Night of the Minilop

Chapter One – The Horror

When school had let out following my fourth year, I found myself drawn back to the Ministry, the building not the people. I knew I needed to return after that horrible night, but I didn't know why. I deeply wished that Harry would be with me, but I knew that wasn't possible. Daddy was visiting seeking an interview and wanting to secure some documents needed for our summer hunt. I found myself poking around the building looking for... something. I still don't know what, but I certainly did look. I discovered long ago that the Ministry building somehow affected the minds of the people who worked inside its walls. Normal, thoughtful people became mindless drones who don't notice anything or anyone unless a disruption occurs. As long as I did not cause problems there were few places within the Ministry building I could not go.

However it did not take long for me to explore all of the areas in the Ministry that my entering would not call attention to me. So I left a note for Daddy in our usual place and left the building to explore some more.

The Muggle world is a wondrous place. So many people, so many machines. I had to wonder what was behind all their activity. I knew by reading the Quibbler (my daddies newspaper, easily the best source for information on the planet) that the Muggles were all completely aware of the existence of the Wizarding world, but they all pretended not to so as to lull us into a false sense of security. The Quibbler was running a three month series on the Great Muggle Conspiracy. I couldn't wait for the next chapter so that I would learn the secret of the Muggle mind control device known as the 'Slinky'. The device was insidious, walking down stairs, alone or in pairs, making a slinkity sound. Insidious. Daddy would expose them for what they were. He was good like that.

I turned the corner to investigate the alleyway behind the Ministry of Magic building, when suddenly a tranquilizer dart whizzed by my head and shattered against the wall of the Ministry building. I knew of only one organization that was both after me for exposing them in the Quibbler and who used that type of tranq dart.

I turned to face my attackers "Hello Squishydodo." I said to the elf struggling to reload his weapon standing in the center of the group of three, all wearing black jumpsuits with white boots and gloves, and mirrored full face helmets. I think it shocked him that I could identify him despite his helmet. From my pocket I pulled the only weapon that would frighten a Black Op Elf, my notepad and quill, and I prepared to take notes. "What brings Santa's Black Op Elves this far south during the off season?"

"We don't work for the Fatman anymore Lovegood, not since the Hostile Takeover."

"And how does that make you feel Squishydodo?"

"Well change is always hard..." Squishydodo said until the female elf next to him slapped him on the back of his helmet"

"Will you just shut up? HE wants her and will be upset at us if we take too long."

Squishydodo and the other male elf both shuddered at her comment. What could inspire fear in these

dealers of death and destruction? The lead elf raised his weapon. “Tinkipopo’s right. Let’s go Lovegood, HE wants to see you.”

I thought for a second, this ‘hostile takeover’ the Elf spoke of had the possibility of ripping the world wide Santa Conspiracy wide open. I would get this story; the Quibbler would scoop the world yet again! I casually leaned against the wall of the Ministry building and made a series of marks on the wall. Someone familiar with the Lovegood family codes would recognize that I was telling Daddy that I was on the trail of a big story, that he should clear the front page for the scoop, and that he should pickup milk for breakfast.

“All right Squishydodo, let’s go meet whoever holds your leash.”

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

A rope ladder was lowered into the alley. I put my quill and notepad into a pocket, tucked my wand behind my ear, and climbed up to a bit of Elf technology that looks amazingly similar to a Muggle Helicopter. Santa’s elves are a subspecies of elf that have pushed all their magic into the act of toy making. As such they no longer were capable of apparition, cleaning magic or any of the other things that elves such as House elves and Forest elves do.

The Black Op Elves were (or at least used to be) Santa’s enforcement arm. They were the ones who made sure that anyone aligned against the Fatman met with ‘accidents’. To do this they needed a technological edge, so an entire wing of Santa’s Sweatshop was dedicated to building the tools they used to do their jobs. Armed with cutting edge ‘Toy Tech’™, the Black Op Elves cut a swath of terror throughout both the magical and non magical worlds. Few outside Quibbler subscribers even knew they existed.

I was surprised that the trip ended so quickly, when the machine landed on top of the building across the street from the Ministry. Squishydodo gestured that I dismount from the flying machine. As soon as the four of us were on the rooftop, the machine lifted off again and faded to invisibility as its stealth mode was engaged.

“That seemed strangely unnecessary.” I observed. “Climbing up a nine story rope ladder to cross the street.”

“I hate elevators.” Squishydodo explained. “They make me feel all closed in.”

I refrained from pointing out that he had grown up in the ice warrens under Santa’s Sweatshops, and that a modern Muggle elevator would be spacious in comparison. I was lead to the roof top stairwell and we descended to the next floor, which turned out to be an executive penthouse suite.

The suite was richly appointed, much as I imagined my cousins the Malfoys having, it was dominated by a large device somehow displaying images, like a giant penseive, without the necessity of putting your head into it. It dawned on me that this must be one of those TeeVees that Daddy so often wrote about. I examined it closely and became confused. I could see no breasts, but why was it called a ‘boob tube’? The mysteries of the Muggles knew no bounds. My escorts had taken positions behind a large sofa facing the Muggle device. It was then I noticed a tiny rabbit sitting on the sofa. It was mostly white with brown mottling, it was such a cute little bunny. Part of me wanted to rush forward and scoop it up. But the part of me attuned to auras began screaming that this being was one of pure evil.

“Good Afternoon Miss Lovegood” it said in an unexpectedly baritone voice. “Something was taken from me during your little adventure at the Ministry of Magic on the Morning of the fifth of June.” A tiny paw scratched at his left ear. “You are going to help me collect payment for my loss.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

Oddament Lovegood had finished his business at the Ministry, receiving a denial of the existence of a Ministry publication known as the Rebbiuq, which of course was all the evidence any thinking person needed to prove that the rag was in fact being published and was poisoning the minds of magical Britian. Following his spate of investigative reporting, Odd had purchased the international Portkey that he and Luna would be using for their annual Snorkack hunt. He then set out to find his lovely daughter.

Her note telling him that she had taken her investigation outside was in its usual place, which led him to believe that it was a plant by the vast conspiracy to lead him astray. Then he found her second note in an unusual place telling him that her first note was in fact real and not part of any conspiracy unless they had tricked her as well. That set the senior Lovegood’s mind to rest... Unless of course that was all part of Luna’s plan... What if SHE was out to get him? Odd swallowed that thought after shuddering in fear of what a Lovegood might do to him. (being a Lovegood made this possibility even more frightening that it might have been to a layperson) He exited the Ministry building in search of his ever inquisitive daughter.

In the alley, he found the remains of an expended tranquilizer dart of a type he didn’t recognize... It certainly wasn’t one of his he confirmed by checking the design against one of the half dozen secreted about his person. It was then he found Luna’s message in the family codes. He quickly copied the message down into his reporter’s notepad and set about decoding it. Odd Lovegood shook his head. He was going to have to speak to Luna about her grammar and sentence structure. What were they teaching in that over priced mausoleum these days anyway? He once again read the message she had left. “Pineapple, apricots, broccoli kidnapping boyfriend, need milk. That scamp. She knew it was her turn to do the shopping. Just like a teenager, sloughing off her chores in order to kidnap herself a boyfriend.

He smiled in spite of himself while adding pineapples, apricots, broccoli and milk to the shopping list. In so many ways Luna was just like her mother. He vividly recalled the summer spent in the dungeons of the Malfoy estate after Selene had taken an interest in him. Odd found himself hoping she didn’t hurt the young man too much. Hurting just enough was plenty. What would it cost to add a dungeon to his home? He wasn’t sure he liked the idea of his only daughter having to rent out space in some seedy dive...

-----oooOOOooo-----

“And here we have you losing consciousness, leaving only known Nice Neville Longbottom and this unknown Nice active against five known Naughties” Tinkipopo Elf was diagramming the battle at the Ministry of Magic using the display of the Naughty & Nice detection device that the Black Op Elves had kept when their organization split off from Santa Claus. I had discovered that I was still counted as ‘Nice’ despite the thoughts I had been having about a certain boy. I was so sure that thinking those kinds of thoughts would be classified as ‘naughty’. I resolved to try harder. Perhaps actually doing the things I was thinking about...

“Then a group of adult Nices and Adult Neutrals appeared on the scene,” Tinkipopo Elf continued, interrupting my inner debate. “and the unknown Nice chased an adult Naughty from this area of the Ministry to the Atrium, where it was confronted by both the Adult Naughty it was chasing and one of the few Permanent No Redemption Possible Naughties still living, one Tom Riddle. It was then that Adult Minor Naughty Dumbledore appeared, much magic was exchanged, then this happened.”

I watched as the symbol designated Unknown (Nice) and the symbol designated Riddle (NRP Naughty) merged on the display. I realized that the Unknown entity must be Harry Potter, and the merging of the symbols must be when Riddle possessed Harry. As I watched, the Symbol for Riddle became brighter (indicating that he was becoming stronger), while Harry’s symbol became dimmer. Then Harry’s symbol flared washing out all the rest of the displays.

“That,” Said the Unspeakable Horror spoken of as Bun Bun, “is when the magic flared beyond the capability of the Ministry of Magic’s buildings to shield the outside world. I came to the UK specifically to see a forty eight hour Baywatch Marathon in the crystal clear PAL video format.” I had no idea what this ‘Baywatch Marathon’ might be, but the tiny rabbit was certainly worked up. “Yasmine Bleeth was in mid slow motion stride when the television blew up. That flare of magic fried every television in a four mile radius. By the time a replacement large screen could be obtained I had missed nine hours of the only reason I allow everyone else on this planet to live.” The bunny took a sip from his Alfalfa grass Martini before continuing. “You were there Miss Lovegood. You know who the Unknown Nice is. My elves are searching out Riddle for me, and you’re going to identify this Unknown for me, then I’m going to have a little discussion with them.

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

I steeled myself for the torture that was sure to come. There is no way I would give Harry to this monster. Riddle I would happily hand over, but never Harry, never.

“Mr. Bun Bun Sir?”

“What is it Squishydodo? You know how I hate my time being wasted.”

“That’s just it sir, rather than torturing the information out of her, I noticed she’s carrying a copy of her Newspaper in her pocket, she would have written about it.”

Tinkipopo snatched my copy of the latest Quibbler from my pocket. Damn my pride. That issue had irrefutable evidence of the secret codes embedded in Muggle traffic lights, and an expose on Minister Fudge’s unnatural cravings for Geoduck clams... There also might be something about the night at the Ministry of Magic....

The elves split the pages between themselves and began to scan the articles. After three minutes the Bunny spat “Find anything?”

“I can’t believe he eats those things!” Squishydodo said shuddering

The other elf, a Bald male with an eyepatch and extensive facial scarring had rushed to the window to observe the Muggle traffic lights. “My god! They’re right! The signals ARE trying to tell us something.”

“Shut up Squintyhoho” Tinkipopo said. “I’ve found it here, in the Society pages for some reason. The Lovegood girl, two Weasleys, the Granger girl and” she looked up smiling. “Harry Potter.”

“Cross reference every one of Santa’s lists. I want this kid found.” Bun Bun ordered. The Elves dashed to their equipment and after several seconds Squishydodo stood between the Horror and myself with a print out in his hands. The last record we have of a ‘Harry Potter’ was his first Christmas in 1980 in a place called Godric’s Hollow Wales. Then he disappeared and no record of him at all until he showed up as an unknown Nice at the Ministry of Magic, and then it looks like the only reason he was detected was from his proximity to the detector.”

“So this kid has been completely off Santa’s radar for most of 15 years? I’ve got to talk to him before I kill him to find out how he did that.” He returned his malevolent attention to me. “Miss Lovegood, it’s time for you to take me to Tom Riddle and Harry Potter.”

“I’ll take you to Riddle.” I said, “But not Harry, you’ll never make me betray Harry!” The tiny rabbit leapt from the sofa to my arms, I instinctively caught him. As I hugged him to my chest, I heard the unmistakable ‘snict!’ of a Muggle switch blade locking its blade into place.

All my life I had accompanied my father on hunts for strange and dangerous creatures, but nothing prepared me for this. I knew instantly that I had never truly been frightened before, not by the bullies of my house, not by the Death Eaters in the Department of Mysteries, not even when Mum died. All of those paled when compared to the Horror. I swallowed and felt the steel of the blade against my neck.

“I want to meet these two Wizards, Miss Lovegood. They stole something from me, and I want to meet them now. The elves tell me you can take me to them, so you will, or unfortunate things will happen.”

“But Harry would never...”

The blade at my throat bit slightly at my skin, I could feel a drop of liquid sliding down my neck. My blood? Fear clawed at my heart.

“We can save Potter for last. Take me to Riddle.”

The horror leaped from me to the arms of his head elf, I saw his eyes glow blood red. “Now Miss Lovegood, lead on.”

I had no choice. Merlin help me, I had no choice.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Once again the elves supplied the transportation, in what appeared to be a white Muggle delivery van. The trip to the Malfoy estate took the better part of the afternoon. We arrived at the gate of my mother’s families ancestral home just as the sun was setting.

The gate was locked and warded. The Elves examined the defenses for a few seconds, made a few derisive comments about the quality of the defenses, and planted a small amount of some clay like material on the hinges and the lock. The gate dissolved into dust, a fitting reminder as to just why Santa was feared world wide.

We four (the three Black Op elves and I) trudged up the path to the mansion on the hill. I was tasked with carrying their master, and the evil bunny maintained a running commentary on the general idiocy of Wizards and their defenses. I could feel each and every ward as we passed through them without triggering any. The power of these elves was awesome to observe. What an article this would make! My reputation as a journalist was assured, as long as I survived the coming encounter.

It was at the door we encountered the first human defenses. Gregory Goyle and Vincent Crabbe were outside the door, evidently avoiding Cousin Draco. Family obligations had them protecting my cousin while at school, but in all actuality the pair hated Draco with a passion.

“Trespassers!” Gregory noted with alarm as we approached.

“Indeed old chum.” Vincent agreed. “It appears to be a trio of Elves of a subspecie unfamiliar to me, accompanied by Luna Lovegood.”

“Luna Lovegood of the Ottery St. Catchpole Lovegoods?” Gregory asked. “Oh good family indeed, though sadly a bit on the light side.” He peered closer. “I say, she appears to be carrying a *Oryctologus cuniculus*, or Mini Lop Rabbit.”

“Indeed.” Vincent agreed. “I am unfamiliar with any magical rabbit breeds, so that is probably unimportant. It is the Elves that concern me, they seem to be rather aggressive in their attitude and logic would indicate that those devices in their hands to be some sort of weapon beyond my experience.”

“I agree, though the concept of an aggressive elf is well outside my personal experience, their actions speak louder than words.” Gregory noted. By this time, the pair was surrounded by the trio of death dealing Elves.

“Miss Lovegood?” Vincent asked politely.

“Yes Vincent? And please, call me Luna.” I said.

“Thank you fair lady. Gregory and I were just wondering if your companions were as aggressive as they appear.”

“Sadly, yes they are.” I sighed.

“Ah, I see.” Vincent said.

“Do you suppose that they might be intimidated by Vincent and I flexing our biceps and cracking our knuckles Miss Lovegood?” Gregory asked politely.

“All three are highly trained and highly experienced combat specialists Gregory.” I replied. “So, no. They would not be intimidated in the slightest.”

“Ah. Thank you for your candor Luna.” Vincent said before turning to Gregory. “Only one thing for it then.”

“I agree old chum.” Then the pair drew their wands and stunned each other.

The elves exchanged confused looks. I shrugged. "A pair of extremely intelligent young men forced into servitude to the Malfoy clan by family obligations. They spend much of their time pretending to be quite dim, as a protective behavior. They recognized that they were in an untenable position and took steps to remove themselves from the conflict with a minimum of violence."

"That's nice." The horror in my arms said. "Neither of these two are the ones I want to talk to. Lets go."

We entered the Mansion that I dimly recalled from visits in my early childhood, while mummy still thought that Uncle Lucius was salvageable. The elves found and disabled Uncle Lucius and his wife Aunt Cissy, my dear cousin (whom I somehow managed to accidentally kick four or five times), and assorted Death Eaters of various ranks including Bellatrix Lestrange.

I am ashamed to admit it, but seeing Bellatrix laying there with a tranq dart in her neck, all I could think of was how damaged my good friend Neville was because of this woman. My Journalistic instincts told me to stay detached, to report the story, and not be the story. My human instincts on the other hand told me to do other things.

Pulling my wand I cast a few charms, transfiguring her black Death Eater robes to a yellow dress and her mask to a large yellow hair bow. I then layered multiple compulsions into her mind. From here on whenever she got dressed, she would transfigure her clothing to this outfit and her wand would forever have a large multicolored candy disk affixed to the end that she would lick endlessly, her little girl voice was now all she would ever use, and when ever she attempted to cast a crucio or the killing curse, she would burst into song, singing "The Good Ship Lollipop".

A fitting curse for an evil woman.

Sitting in a throne in an ornate room we found You-Know-Who. The elves moved to barricade the doors, while I approached directly before the most evil Wizard of the last four hundred years.

"What is this? Are children now delivering themselves to me? Are you this ready to die so young girl?"

"This was not my idea Mr. Who." I said.

The Dark Lord blinked. "Mr. Who?"

"Well, I hardly know you well enough to call you 'You-Know'"

Tom Riddle shook his head. "You must be Lovegood, the Ravenclaw. I have heard much of you. Some of my contacts think that I should recruit you for your mind, and others among them believe I should kill you for the same reason."

"I started this as nothing more than a courageous reporter on the trail of a story, when I found myself in the clutches of someone far more evil than you."

"More evil than me?" That idea seemed to shock him. "You have no idea of what you are talking about little girl. I am Voldemort!"

"Oh large deal." Said the horror in my arms. There was a metallic sound when I noticed that the evil

Bun Bun had drawn his switch blade from... somewhere. Note to self, determine just where a tiny bunny could possibly store a Muggle switchblade knife. "You stole from me, you mincing drama queen. I'm going to carve my restitution out of your hide."

You-Know-Who just stared, his blood red eyes wide with confusion. "Do you actually believe you could attack me with a rabbit girl?"

"No idiot." Bun Bun launched himself from my arms, and plunged his blade into You-Know-Who's chest. "The Rabbit is attacking you with a knife." He twisted the blade, causing the Dark Lord to scream. "Do pay attention or you'll miss the important parts."

I'm not going to describe what the Horror did to You-Know-Who. It was vile beyond all belief.

Which is not to say that You-Know-Who didn't get his licks in. He actually hit the Horror with a crucio... Which actually made Bun Bun laugh. He told You-Know-Who that after fighting a midlevel demon from the Dimension of Pain, the pain curse was a gentle tickle.

Still, no matter what Bun Bun did to You-Know-Who, the Dark Lord just wouldn't die. He was weakened and in horrible pain, but would not die.

Bun Bun called his elves to him and gathered me. "That was fun." The Horror said. "Now for Potter.

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

The door at #4 Privett Drive opened at my knock. An obese man with a horrible mustache opened the door and said, "Yes?"

"Good Evening Mr. Dursley." I said, nervously stroking the unspeakable horror in my arms. "Might we have a word with Harry?"

"Do you know what time it is? The Boy doesn't get visitors at this time of night." It was then he caught sight of my wand behind my left ear. "You're one of THEM aren't you? There will be no FREAKS in my house!" he screamed.

I made a mental note to find out if it was normal for an adult Muggle to actually change the color of his face like that. I noted that he managed to cycle through 7 different purple hues.

"Move it fatboy." Squishydodo said pushing past Harry's uncle into the house. I followed the elfin trio into the house where they put a tranq dart into the necks of the woman and obese boy in the sitting room; I assumed them to be Harry's aunt and cousin. Harry's uncle followed behind us bellowing at the top of his lungs, he lunged at me, both of his pudgy hands reaching for my throat.

There was a loud crack, must like an over powered apparition. Harry's uncle grabbed at his leg screaming. I smelled sulfur and cordite, heard something metallic ping off the hardwood floor and looked down. The horror was holding a Muggle pistol. Where did he keep those things? What else did he have?

Harry came pelting down the stairs with his wand in his hand. He spotted me. "Luna? What the hell?"

“Good evening Mr. Potter we have something to discuss.” The horror said.

The elfin trio started moving toward him. Harry looked at them in surprise.

“Please stand back; I have no desire to hurt you.”

Tinkipopo laughed. “We do want to hurt you!”

“Dobby?”

There was a soft pop and Dobby Elf appeared next to Harry.

“The great Harry Potter Sir called Dobby?”

The trio of Black Op Elves stepped back as one.

“Thank you for coming Dobby.”

“Harry Potter Sir thanks Dobby? Oh Harry Potter Sir truly be the greatest of Wizards!”

Harry knelt down next to the excitable house elf. “Dobby, those three elves say they want to hurt me. I didn’t want to hurt them, so I thought I’d ask you what I should do.”

The house elf spun on the trio of Black Ops Elves, who were busily attempting to back away from Harry and his friend. “Harry Potter sir should ask Dobby to deal with bad elves.”

Harry nodded. “Dobby?”

The Elf nodded without moving his eyes from his cousins.

“Sic ‘em.”

The house elf leapt into the fray, the four elfin cousins became a blur of activity, moving far too quickly for the human eye to track. There was a loud pop and both the male elves in Bun Bun’s employ fell to the ground bound hand and foot, while Dobby had Tinkipopo backed into a corner.

“You is pretty.” The house elf said. “Come with Dobby to Elf Pub, we make beautiful music together... Winky is Dobby’s mate, she not understand him.” Dobby and the female warrior elf disappeared with a pop.

“Luna, are you alright?”

“Harry!” I said, “Be careful, this Bunny is dangerous.”

“You and your magic took something from me boy.” The horror said quietly. “I’m here to collect what you owe me.”

“And what did I take from you Rabbit?”

“Your magical pulse disrupted the Baywatch Marathon!”

Harry blinked. “You shot my uncle over missing a marathon of a crappy television show?” Harry looked conflicted. “Actually, I’m ok with that. You frightened Luna over a crappy television show?”

“Yes I did.” The horror spat. “What are you going to do about it boy?”

“Well, let’s think about what I could do Rabbit.” Harry leaned down until he was nose to nose with the horror. “How about I push all of my magic into a single magnetic pulse that would fry every video take in the world? What would that do to your Baywatch fixation?”

“You wouldn’t!” The horror sounded... horrified.

“Try me. I’ll fix it so your next Baywatch fix will be when you find Hasselhoff in a dinner theater production.” The pair maintained eye contact for a full ten count.

“Fine.” The horror said finally. “Pax Potter. I’ll leave you and yours alone.”

“Just a minute.” Harry ran up the stairs and came down carrying a dozen small black boxes. “Here you go. The complete forty eight hours. Dudley recorded the stupid thing and I’ve been treated to the idiotic theme song over and over for the last week. Take them with my complements.”

The horror jumped from my arms to his bound elves and cut them free with his switchblade. “We’re leaving. Get those tapes.”

Harry put his arm around me protectively. “Can you fix my Uncle? The gunshot wound will be hard to explain.”

Squintydodo moved the writhing Vernon Dursley and shot him with a tranq dart. He then placed some article of toy tech on his shattered knee. The device hummed for a second and the fat man’s leg was repaired.

“They’ll sleep for about three days.”

“I’ll stay with Harry.” I said.

“Fine.” The horror said. “Let’s go!” he said to his elves.

“What about Tinkipopo?” Squintyhoho asked.

“She’ll work it out with her new boyfriend and call for a pickup, or she won’t.” The horror shrugged.

And they were gone.

It suddenly dawned on me that I was alone with Harry. Well, sort of alone if you didn’t count his unconscious relatives, which I didn’t. I threw myself into his arms and began to sob, convincingly I hoped.

“Oh Harry, I was so frightened.” I sobbed wondering if he was buying this.

“Oh Luna.” He said. He WAS buying it. Yay!

“It’s better now that I’m with you!” I sniffed. “I don’t know if I’ll be able to sleep though, without you holding me, I’ll just be terrified.”

“Well, why don’t we send Hedwig to your dad with a letter telling him you’re spending the night. I’ll hold you as long as you need me.”

That Harry, he’s such a nice guy.

Yay!.

I spent six hours that night moving our relationship to the point where I might have earned my way off the Nice list and onto the Naughty list. It was during the afterglow of our first time I posed my next question.

“Harry?”

“Hmm?”

“Have you ever been in a dungeon?”

Harry Potter and Big Bowl of Sauerkraut

Way back when I was just a little bitty boy living in a cupboard under the stairs outside the kitchen of the average house at #4 Privet Drive half a block down the street and around the corner from Mrs. Figgs House.

You know the place

Well anyway, back then life was going swell and everything was just peachy

Except, of course, for the undeniable fact that every single morning
My Uncle would beat me half to death, my cousin would carve his initials into my leg and my Aunt would make me a big bowl of sauerkraut for breakfast

Awww - Big bowl of sauerkraut
Every single mornin
It was driving me crazy

I said to my Aunt
I said "Hey, Auntie, what's with all the sauerkraut?"
And my dear, sweet Aunt, sister to my mother
She just looked at me like a cow looks at an oncoming train
And she leaned right down next to me
And she said "IT'S GOOD FOR YOU"
And then she tied me to the wall and stuck a funnel in my mouth
And force fed me nothing but sauerkraut until I was ten years, eleven months, and 27 days old

That's when I swore that someday
Someday I would get outta that cupboard and travel to a magical, faraway place
Where the sun is always shining and the air smells like warm Butterbeer
And the towels are oh so fluffy
Where the trolls and the centaurs play their ukuleles all day long
And anyone on the street will gladly shave your back for a knut!

Well, let me tell you, people, it wasn't long at all before my dream came true
Because the very next day, finest school for witchcraft and wizardry in Britain had this contest
To see who could correctly guess the number of molecules in Nicholas Flamel's butt
I was off by three, but I still won the grand prize
That's right, a first class one-way ticket to

Hogwarts!

Oh yeah
You know, I'd never been on a real choo choo train before
And I gotta tell ya, it was really great
Except that I had to sit between ginger simpleton with excruciatingly severe body odor
And this little Brunette with frizzy hair who would NOT shut up about magic the whole time

The cart lady never heard of Dr. Pepper or salted peanuts
And the in-trip movie was Bio-Dome with Pauly Shore
And, oh yeah, the train's engine exploded
And we jumped the tracks, went off a bridge and crashed into the sea
And the train exploded in a giant fireball and everybody died!

Except for me

You know why?

'Cause I'm lucky like that
Ah ha ha ha
Ah ha ha
Ahhhh

So I crawled from the twisted, burnin' wreckage
I crawled on my hands and knees for three full days
Draggin' along my big leather trunk and my pointy hat
And my potions kit with collapsible brass scales and my twelve-pound homemade bludger.
And my lucky, lucky autographed glow-in-the-dark copy of Hogwarts: A History
But finally I arrived at the world famous Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry
Where the towels are oh so fluffy
And you can eat your soup right out of the suits of armor if you wanna
It's OK, they're clean

Well, I checked into my dorm and I turned down the bed
And I turned on the Wizarding Wireless
And I'm just about to eat that little chocolate mint on my pillow That I love so very, very much when
suddenly, there's a knock on the door

Well now, who could that be?
I say "Who is it?"
No answer
"Who is it?"
There's no answer
"WHO IS IT?"
They're not sayin' anything

So, finally I go over and I open the door and just as I suspected
It's some big nosed potions master with a greasy Flock-Of-Seagulls haircut and only one eyebrow!

Oh man, I hate it when I'm right.

So anyway, he bursts into my room and he grabs my lucky autographed glow-in-the-dark copy of
Hogwarts: A History
And I'm like "Hey, you can't have that! That book's been just like a book to me"

And he's like "Tough"

And I'm like "Give it"

And he's like "Make me"

And I'm like ""Kay"

So I grabbed his leg and he grabbed my esophagus
And I bit off his ear and he chewed off my eyebrows
And I took out his appendix and he gave me a colonic irrigation
Yes indeed, you better believe it
And somehow in the middle of it all, the potions master got knocked out the window
And twenty seconds later, I heard his familiar voice
And you know what he said?
I'll tell you what he said

he said
"AHHH! I'M FALLING!"
And that's the way it goes

In Hogwarts

Well, to cut a long story short, he got away with my autographed glow-in-the-dark copy of Hogwarts: A History

But I made a solemn vow right then and there that I would not rest
I would not sleep for an instant until the big nosed potions master with a greasy Flock-Of-Seagulls haircut and only one eyebrow was brought to justice
But first, I decided to buy some candy

So I hopped into the fireplace and fluued over to Honeydukes
And I walked on up to the guy behind the counter
And he says "Yeah, what do ya want?"
I said "You got any chocolate?"
He said "No, we're outta chocolate"
I said "Well, you got any Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans?"
He said "No, we're outta Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans "
I said "You got any Liquorish Wands??"
He said "No, we're outta Liquorish Wands "
I said "You got any Sugar Quills?"
He said "No, we're outta Sugar Quills."
I said "You got any Drooble's Best Blowing Gum?"
He said "No, we're outta Drooble's Best Blowing Gum"
I said "You got any Chocolate Frogs?"
He said "Wait a minute, I'll go check"
"No, we're outta Chocolate Frogs."

I said "Well, in that case - in that case, what do you have?"
He says "All I got right now is this box of one dozen starving, crazed nargles"
I said "OK, I'll take that"

So he hands me the box and I open up the lid and the nargles jump out
And they immediately latch onto my face and start bitin' me all over
Oh man, they were just going nuts
They were tearin' me apart
You know, I think it was just about that time that a little ditty started goin' through my head"
I believe it went a little something like this . . .

Doh
Get 'em off me
Get 'em off me
Oh
No, get 'em off, get 'em off
Oh, oh God, oh God
Oh, get 'em off me
Oh, oh God
Ah!

I ran out into the street with these flesh-eating nargles all over my face
Wavin' my arms all around and just runnin', runnin', runnin'
Like a constipated weiner dog

And as luck would have it, that's exactly when I ran into the girl of my dreams
Her name was Luna
She was a rune enthusiast with a slight overbite and hair the color of strained peaches
I'll never forget the first thing she said to me.
She said "Hey, you've got nargles on your face"

That's when I knew it was true love
We were inseparable after that
Aw, we ate together, we bathed together
We even shared the same piece of mint-flavored dental floss
The world was our treacle tart
So we got married and we bought us a house
And had two beautiful children – Albus Severus and Pussbucket
Oh, we were so very very very happy, aw yeah

But then one fateful night, Luna said to me
She said "Sweetie pumpkin? Do you wanna join the Columbia Record Club?"
I said "Woah, hold on now, baby"
"I'm just not ready for that kinda commitment"
So we broke up and I never saw her again
But that's just the way things go

In Hogwarts

Anyway, things really started lookin' up for me
Because about a week later, I finally achieved my lifelong dream
That's right, I got me a part-time job as a janitor at Gringotts

I even made employee of the month after I put that dragon fire out with my face
Aw yeah, everybody was pretty jealous of me after that
I was gettin' a lot of attitude

OK, like one time, I was out in the lobby
Tryin' to remove my excess earwax with flame hexes
When I see this guy Draco tryin' to carry a dozen big ol' bags of money into the bank all by himself

So I, I say to him, I say "Hey, you want me to help you with that?"
And Draco, he just rolls his eyes and goes
"No, I want you to cut off my arms and legs with your wand"

So I did

And then he gets all indignant on me
He's like "Hey man, I was just being sarcastic"
Well, that's just great
How was I supposed to know that?
I'm not a legimancer for cryin' out loud
Besides, now he's got a really cute nickname - Torso-Boy
So what's he complaining about?

Say, that reminds me of another amusing anecdote
This guy comes up to me on the street and says he hasn't had a bite in three days
Well, I knew what he meant
But just to be funny, I took a big bite out of his jugular vein
And he's yellin' and screamin' and bleeding all over
And I'm like "Hey, come on, don't cha get it?"
But he just keeps rolling around on the sidewalk, bleeding, and screaming
You know, just completely missing the irony of the whole situation
Man, some people just can't take a joke, you know?

Anyway, um, um, where was I?
Kinda lost my train of thought

Uh, well, uh, OK
Anyway I, I know it's kinda been a roundabout way of saying it
But I guess the whole point I'm tryin' to make here is

I hate sauerkraut

That's all I'm really tryin' to say
And, by the way, if one day you happen to wake up
And find yourself in an existential quandary
Full of loathing and self-doubt
And wracked with the pain and isolation of your pitiful meaningless existence
At least you can take a small bit of comfort in knowing that
Somewhere out there in this crazy mixed-up universe of ours
There's still a little place called

Hogwarts

I said "H"

"O"

"G"

"W"

"ARTS"

Hogwarts

(belch)

Harry Potter and His Slytherin Girlfriend

She's a real bitch
And she's over-compensates
She put out
By second dates
She doesn't like the Muggle Born so it's no surprise
I can be her lover long as I criticize

She's My Slytherin girlfriend
Got a tiny little heart so full of passion
She's My Slytherin girlfriend
Every Friday we go Mudblood bashin'

She got the last twelve dark lords
Tattooed where her lower cheeks part
Beside an autographed portrait of Gilderoy Lockhart
And from the day I checked her out from front to back
I knew her private dungeon could take up the slack

She's My Slytherin girlfriend
Got a tiny little heart so full of passion
She's My Slytherin girlfriend
Every Sunday we go Blood-Traitor slashin'

(spoken)
Oh, baby, I close my eyes and I can see you ordering breakfast.
You're having the black pudding...
Pureblood only.
Come on, baby,
Kick my house elf, claim the imperius, make me feel like a Malfoy...

(sung)
She only deals in quality potions and wands
She's got Girl Guide Biscuits made from real Girl Guides

She's My Slytherin girlfriend
Got a tiny little heart so full of passion
She's My Slytherin girlfriend
Her white Death Eaters Mask and her red stiletto heels are clashin'

She's My Slytherin girlfriend
Think she's lookin' for a good tongue lashin'
She's My Slytherin girlfriend
Every summer we behave in a pureblood fashion

Ferret Stomping Day

“Enervate!”

Draco Malfoy suddenly found himself staring up into the faces of classmates he hated beyond all others, even Potter.

“Wakey Wakey Malfoy.” Hermione Granger said with a wide smile.

“What do you want Mudblood?” Draco found that he couldn’t move. “What have you done to me?”

“Why nothing Draco.” Said one of the other Mudbloods, the duffer, Finch-something. “Yet.”

“When my father hears of this indignity...”

“Draco, Draco, Draco” Granger said, patting his face lightly with each word. “You’ve got to learn to stand on your own two feet, and quit hiding behind your daddy. You’re a sixth year now, it’s gotten so that it’s embarrassing to even know you, you know?” She placed a winged Battle Helm on her head.

What the hell? Looking about Draco could see that the entire crowd around him was made up of Mudbloods that they were all dressed in chain mail and that most were wearing Norse Battle Helmets.

“We need your help Draco.” Finch-Fletchly said.

“Yeah Malfoy, you’re help will be invaluable!’ said the younger of the two annoying Gryffindor Mudblood brothers who were always flashing lights in everyone’s eyes... Creevy?

“There’s an old Muggle tradition for the end of May.” Granger explained. “We need you to help us celebrate a most important day.”

“A Great Day!” a female Ravenclaw Mudblood said.

Draco took immediate stock of his situation. He was outside the castle, the sun was shining, and he estimated the time to be late afternoon. He was partially petrified laying on the ground in some horrible greasy white paste that smelled of... eggs?

“What do you need me for?” He asked.

“Oh, you’re the guest of honor.” Granger waved her wand and Draco’s perspective changed as all the Mudbloods seemingly grew huge and formed a circle around him. “There’s even a special song to celebrate your contribution Draco.”

Granger waved her wand again and he was no longer petrified. Then the circle of Mudbloods began to sing, and Draco Malfoy’s blood ran cold.

Faces filled with joy and cheer
What a magical time of year

Howdy Ho! It's Ferret Stomping Day

Put your Viking helmet on
Spread that mayonnaise on the lawn
Don't you know it's Ferret Stomping Day

All the little girls and boys
Love that wonderful crunching noise
You'll know what this day's about
When you stomp a Ferret's guts right out

So, come along and have a laugh
Snap their Ferrety spines in half
Grab your boots and stomp your cares away
Hip hip hooray, it's Ferret Stomping Day

People love them down the street
Crushing Ferrets beneath their feet
Why we do it, who can say?
But it's such a festive holiday

So let the stomping fun begin
Bash their Ferrety skulls right in
It's tradition, that makes it okay

Hey everyone, it's Ferret Stomping
We'll have some fun on Ferret Stomping
Put down your wand, it's Ferret Stomping Day
Hip Hip Hooray, it's Ferret Stomping Day

Ferret Stomping Day
Hey!

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

Over at the Quidditch pitch Ron Weasley noticed the small crowd singing and laughing in a circle as he sat on his broom hovering forty feet off the ground.

“What do you suppose that’s all about Harry?”

Potter looked over and shivered. “Ron, trust me on this, you don’t want to know. Don’t look, don’t think about it, and never, ever ask them what they were doing. It’s just too fucked up, we’re better out of it.”

Ron gave the crowd one last glance. Anything that bugged Harry that much he didn’t want anything to do with. “Race you to the far side of the lake?”

Harry heeled his broom over to face the right direction. “You’re on.”

The Night Harry Went Crazy

Down in the kitchens all the elves were makin' fancy foods
For the good Pure Blood babes and the good Pure Blood doods
When the chosen one busted in, nearly scared 'em half to death
Had a rifle in his hands and cheap fire whiskey on his breath
From his head to his boots he was covered with ammo
Like a scrawny little drunken disgruntled Magical Rambo
And he smiled as he said with a twinkle in his eye
"Hello Everyone - now you're all gonna die!"

The night Harry went crazy
The night Harry Potter went insane
Realized he'd been gettin' a raw deal
Something finally must have snapped in his brain

Well, Hogwarts is gone now, he decided to bomb it
Everywhere you'll find pieces of Hagrid and puddles of vomit
And he tied up his housemates and he held the elves hostage
And he ground up poor Ron into Weasley sausage
He got Umbridge and Snape with an old German Luger
And he slashed up Albus just like Freddy Krueger
And he picked up a flamethrower and he barbequed Draco
And he took a big bite and said "It tastes just like a taco!"

The night Harry went crazy
The night the boy who lived went nuts
Now you can't hardly walk around the Quidditch pitch
Without steppin' in Slytherin guts

There's the Aurors and Hit Wizards.
There's a man from the Quibbler too
And brooms circlin' 'round in the sky
And the spells are flyin', the body count's risin'
And everyone's dyin' to know, oh Harry, why
My my my my my my
You used to be such a shy guy

Yes, Children, now Harry is dead
Some guy from the hit team blew a hole through his head
Yes, little friend, now that's his brains on the floor
Guess you won't have the scar head to kick around anymore
Well now there's no more Hogwarts for the children's enjoyment
And the house elves gotta stand in line to file for unemployment
And they say Hermione Granger, she's on the phone every night
With her lawyer negotiating the movie rights

They're talkin' bout the night Harry went crazy
The night Mr. Potter flipped
Risky his life for some ungrateful bastards
Sounds to me like he was tired of gettin' gypped

Woah, the night Harry went crazy
The night Harry Potter went insane
Realized he's gettin' a raw deal
Something finally must have snapped in his brain
Woah, something finally must have snapped in his brain
Tell ya, something finally must have snapped in his brain

Harry Potter and the Lothario

CHAPTER ONE

“If you ask 100 women...”

The door into the Three Broomsticks slammed open. Druella Rosmerta looked up from her bar to see the very last Wizard she ever expected to see this night storm into her pub.

Harry Potter. Druella didn't need her decade of bar ownership to see that the young man was enraged beyond all rational thought. She picked up a bottle of butterbeer and took a step toward the table Potter was standing over, and then reconsidered. She put the butterbeer back and took a bottle of Ogden's and two glasses. She signaled one of her waitresses to take over the bar.

Potter was leaning over the rearmost table. As Druella approached, The-Man-Who-Won raised both of his arms over his head. His magic flared in his rage, and when he slammed his fists down on the table top screaming “FUCK!”

The table shattered. Every eye in the pub was suddenly on the Man Who Won. The Wizard looked down ashamed of his actions. Druella pulled her wand from her sleeve and repaired the table.

“Have a seat Harry.” She said as she took her own chair.

The Seventh Year looked embarrassed. “I'm sorry Madam Rosmerta. That won't happen again.”

“Harry,” The voluptuous Pub owner said, “If you want to destroy the entire pub, that's fine. We all owe you so much.” She smiled at the look on his face. “Besides, you can afford it.”

Druella continued to smile as the young man sat down. She poured a shot for herself, then one for Harry and slid it in front of him. “What did she do?”

The boy blinked. “What?”

“When a man your age is this upset, especially the day after he defeats the most evil Dark Lord ever, it has to be over a girl.”

“I found her with another guy.”

“Forget her.” The buxom barmaid said.

“What?”

“You are the savior of us all Harry. You could have any girl you want.” She smiled at the look on his face. “Even this old sack of bones.” Her smile grew larger at seeing his reaction.

Harry had been taking a sip of his drink when she said that, and promptly started choking because he

had inhaled the fire whiskey instead of swallowing. Such an offer, even jokingly made, was the primary fantasy of the vast majority of Hogwarts male student body.

“Thank you for the compliment Harry.” She said thumping him on his back to help him with clearing his airway. “But I’m serious. If the stupid little girl was willing to cheat on you, forget her. There are probably a dozen girls in this pub alone more than willing to help you get her off your mind.” She stood and leaned down to kiss Harry on the cheek. “I’ve got to get back to work. There’s a room upstairs for you if you want it. Forget her.” She laid the key for the room on the table in front of him, and then returned to her bar.

Harry thought for a moment about what she had said. He then decided on the only logical path. He was going to drink until he couldn’t feel feelings anymore.

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

Ninety minutes and three bottles of Ogden’s later Harry made the most horrifying discovery.

He wasn’t drunk.

He was mildly buzzed, as if he had had several butterbeers in a short period of time, but he wasn’t drunk. Something had to be going on. It would have been just like that asshole Tom to have zapped him with an alcohol doesn’t effect you hex as a petty act of revenge. He looked into himself and found no hex. What was happening was his own magic was neutralizing the effects of the alcohol faster than it could affect him.

Damn it all to hell. What the fuck good was magic if it kept you from getting blind fucking numb to the universe drunk when you needed to? Feeling his anger rise again, he totally missed Draco Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson coming up to his table.

“You killed my father Scar-head; don’t think I’m going to forget that.”

“He was sort of trying to kill me at the time Malfoy, if it helps, he cried like a little girl when I took him down. Offered me you and your mother if I’d let him live.”

Draco moved for his wand. He stopped when he found himself staring into the swirling maelstrom of magic arcing over Harry’s palm.

“Wandless, yeah. Tommy destroyed my wand, so this is all I’ve got until I get a replacement.” Potter smiled at Draco’s expression of terror and lowered his hand. “I’m not sure you should really be all that angry with me Draco.”

“What are you talking about?” the blond sputtered.

“Your father was what? 40? That would mean he had another 80 years or so of expected lifespan, and he was emptying the Malfoy fortune into Tommy’s stupid little war. Now, you’re Lord Malfoy, and insanely rich, all at the age of 17, instead of having to wait until your 90’s.”

Malfoy’s mouth hung open for most of a five count. Draco hadn’t thought of that, Harry thought. How could he possibly be considered ambitious if he didn’t routinely think things through?

“Potter!” Pansy growled. “I don’t know what…”

“Say Pansy?” Harry interrupted, “Do you know the difference between conversation and sex?”

The Slytherin girl blinked. “No.”

“Wanna go upstairs and talk?” Harry asked wagging his eyebrows at her.

The Slytherin girl sputtered in her rage.

“Pansy, are those fuck-me eyes, or go-fuck-yourself eyes? Honestly, you're absolutely perfect! Don't speak now, you'll spoil it”

Pansy turned on her heel and stomped off.

“I guess a blowjob is out of the question?” He called after her. She almost ran from the pub. “Well that was fun.” Harry returned his attention to Draco. “Now, as I see it Draco, it will be far more profitable for both of us to work together rather than the childish sniping at each other we’ve been doing for the last seven years.”

Harry could almost hear the gears grinding in the blonde’s head. This guy was so easily led, the Malfoy fortune wouldn’t last him ten years.

“I will consider what you’ve said Potter.”

Watching Malfoy stride away, Harry realized how much fun he had had using cheesy pickup lines to annoy Pansy... He idly wondered how effective that technique would be on any other witch that bothered him.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Harry was on his 5th bottle of Ogden’s, having abandoned the glass in his attempt to drink faster than his magic could neutralize the alcohol. Still nothing more than a light buzz. Oh, and three trips to the toilet. He was considering asking Madam Rosemerta if she had anything stronger.

It was then he heard a woman clear her throat. He looked up to find that his table suddenly had a Ravenclaw witch infestation. Sitting across from him was Mandy Brocklehurst, to his left was Morag McDougal, and to his right Lisa Turpin.

“Ladies? Please go away. I want to be left alone.”

“We came over to tell you how sorry we are about your break up.” Morag said, her eyes glinting in a way that suggested that she wasn’t really all that sorry.

“You were so brave at the station.” Lisa added, “putting yourself between You-Know-Who and all of us. We didn’t want you to be alone after that.”

“Giant Polar Bear.” Harry said.

All three girls looked confused. “What?” asked Mandy.

“Just breaking the ice.” Harry grinned and glanced at his watch. “So, Mandy, My magic watch says that you aren’t wearing any underwear.”

The girl blushed. “I most certainly am.”

Harry frowned and tapped the crystal of the watch, then held it up to his ear. “Damn it! This stupid thing must be 15 minutes fast.”

“Harry, are you drunk?” Lisa Turpin asked.

“No, damn it. Not for the lack of trying either.” He reached into his pouch and pulled out a galleon. “Lisa, I’ll bet you a galleon that I can kiss you on the lips without touching you.”

The blond girl was aghast at the suggestion. “Don’t be ridiculous, that’s just not possible, or proper.”

Harry pulled the protesting girl from her chair onto his lap, and kissed her; she froze for a moment, and then started returning the kiss. He lifted her off his lap and returned the startled Ms. Turpin to her chair.

“Hmm. I was wrong. Here’s your galleon.” He slid the coin in front of the girl.

“wow.” Lisa said in a small voice.

“Smooth, Harry.” Mandy commented.

“Don’t even think about trying that crap with me Potter.” Morag said warily. “I like girls.”

“Really? So do I.” The Gryffindor smiled widely. “We have so much in common. Wanna help me with Mandy’s underwear problem?”

Morag and Mandy stood, Mandy pulling the dazed Lisa to her feet. “If you wanted to be left alone, all you had to do was say so.” Morag shook her head at him.

“I’m pretty sure I did.”

The trio left in various states of outrage. Harry watched them leave. Who knew that the techniques outlined in the ‘how to pick up girls’ book Dudley had abandoned in Harry’s bedroom because there were too many hard words would provide so many excellent ways of driving witches away?

-----oooOOOooo-----

After the Ravenclaw trio left, Harry had given up on Fire Whiskey and cajoled the waitress into bringing him a bottle of whatever Muggle beverage the pub had. She had produced a rather dusty bottle of a Muggle brand of Tequila. Harry had never tried this particular beverage, but he recalled Dudley’s friends calling it ‘TeKillya’.

Now that was more like it. Evidently it was the magical component of the Fire Whiskey that his magic

was reacting to and countering. After his fourth shot of this wonderful sauce, Harry's buzz was far and away better than it had been. Then of course, the universe noticed that Harry Potter was approaching happiness (though chemically induced) so it stepped in to put a stop to that foolishness.

"Hello Harry."

He didn't even look up. "Hello Hermione. You can't fix this, please don't try."

"She's not here to fix it Harry." A familiar voice with an Irish burr said. "I think she's here to keep you from killing me."

Harry looked up to see Seamus and HER sitting nervously across the table from him. "I've got no problem with you Seamus. You already told me you didn't know."

"And what about me?" asked the girl sitting next to Seamus.

"What about you?" Harry responded. "You told me we were together, and I found you on your knees for Seamus. Seamus tells me he didn't know you were playing games, and I believe him. I'm not angry with Seamus. You, I never want to see again. Have a nice life. Go away."

The couple stood. "Harry, mate..."

"Seamus, seriously, we're good. But really mate, you could do better."

-----oooOOOooo-----

"That was unnecessary Harry." Hermione said after the couple had left.

"Really? I thought I was quite restrained." He took a long pull on the bottle. "I didn't hex anyone or anything."

"Harry, it's not healthy to do this to yourself."

"Really? And what would you do if you found Ron on his knees in front of Lavender?"

Her eyes flashed at the thought. "I'd kill the..." "Evidently Hermione wasn't as over Ron's dalliance the previous year as she would lead people to believe."

"Exactly. Now, I can't go getting into fights anymore. So I'm dealing with it by trying to get pissed out of my mind, and you are spoiling my buzz with your calm logical presence." He took another pull. "I've been insulting girls for the last three hours to get them to leave me alone, but I can't do that to you Hermione. Please, leave me alone. You can resume your lifetime project of turning me into a decent human being tomorrow."

The brunette sighed. Damn that ignorant little girl anyway. "Alright Harry. If you promise me you won't do anything stupid, I'll leave you alone."

"I can't promise not to do anything stupid. Doing stupid things is what defines me 'Mione."

“Can you at least try to not do anything stupid?”

Harry smiled. “I’ll try.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

Leaving the toilet Harry was mildly amused for the thousandth time that Wizarding methods of drying your hands in a public washroom didn’t work any better than the Muggle methods. There must be something karmic about that.

Passing a booth on the way to his table he heard “Nice ass Potter.”

He stopped, and slowly turned to face Tracey Davis and Daphne Greengrass. He hesitated for a moment, and then slid into the booth alongside Daphne.

“Ladies.” The pair of Slytherin’s stared at him wide eyed, his sitting down with them was obviously not the reaction they expected. Harry noticed a pair of glasses empty except for some melting ice cubes. They had evidently finished their drinks. He scooped a cube from one of the glasses and smashed it on the table top.

“What the Hell Potter?” Tracey sputtered.

“Just breaking the ice Tracey...” He signaled the waitress to bring another round of drinks to the table. “So, tell me more about my ass...”

“Bloody Gryffindor. I thought you Gryffs were supposed to be able to take a joke.” Tracey said, desperately looking for a way out of this conversation. It didn’t help that Daphne was close to laughing at her.

“I like jokes Tracey. You hear the one about the Gryffindor Seeker who hit on the two Slytherin Witches in a Pub?”

“They never found his body.” Daphne purred dangerously.

“Ah, you heard it already?”

The waitress arrived with the girl’s drinks as well as Harry’s tequila. Harry picked up the half full bottle and tipped it back, swallowing half of what was left. Damn it. The magic was working on the non magical booze now.

Tracey stared open mouthed at him. “Potter if you keep drinking like that, you’re going to die.”

“Yeah?” He leaned on the table with both elbows, leaning his chin on his fists. “When?”

“Potter, we wanted to thank you.” Daphne said. “Thank you for yesterday at the station. They were going to kill us all.”

“You stopped them when you could have, should have run.” Tracey blushed a bit. “Thank you, not just for me, but for my sister who started this year and for all the little ones. Don’t let that stupid bint ruin

you.”

Harry smiled and held up his right hand with his index and middle finger extended. “Tracey, do you know why you should always masturbate with these two fingers?”

“No, why?”

“Because they’re mine, and that would make me so happy.”

“Potter...”

“Daphne, do you believe in love at first sight? Or should I walk by again?”

“That’s quite the defense mechanism you’ve got there Potter.” Tracey observed. “People can be concerned about you without you having to shove them away.”

“Maybe not, but it’s working so far. I’ll bet you’re magically delicious”

“I assure you that she is.” Daphne smiled at his expression. “And what would you do if we took you upstairs and used you as a sex toy?” Tracey asked.

“Before or after I annoyed all the neighbors by screaming ‘Yippee?’”

“I think you would find that difficult to do that around a ball gag.” Daphne noted.

“Ooh, kinky. Let’s go.”

“I said ‘if’ Potter. Unfortunately you have the one thing we normally reject in a sex toy.”

“And what’s that Tracey?”

“A penis.”

“Ouch. Sorry, I’m kind of attached to it.”

Tracey took his hand and stroked his fore arm. “It’s ok, not really your fault. The world needs breeders, no matter how disgusting they might be.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

The Slytherin pair left not long after that. Harry reflected on how they had turned his cheesy pickup lines back on him. It was then he noticed that he was thinking clearly again.

Damn it. His magic had started working on the tequila. His buzz had faded to almost nothing, and he had been having so much fun with Tracey and Daphne he hadn’t noticed. When the waitress came around again he bowed to the inevitable and ordered a butterbeer. The woman was a bit shocked at his shift in drinking strategy, but soon returned with a cold bottle.

“So this is where the world famous Harry Potter is hiding.”

Harry looked up from his bottle. "Hello Hannah. Hello Susan."

Hannah slid into the booth across from Harry. Sue Bones on the other hand pushed on Harry's shoulder. "Shove over."

Harry slid over to allow her into the booth. Susan slid right up next to him and put her hand on his thigh.

"Buy a couple of girls a drink?" She asked fluttering her eyes.

Harry laughed at her antics, "Butterbeers?" getting their agreement Harry signaling the waitress to bring two more.

"Morag said you were using, what did she call them Hannah? "Cheesy Pickup Lines to chase girls off."

"I've had a really bad day Susan." Harry said leaning his head on her shoulder. "And it always makes me feel better to see a pretty girl smile. So, would you smile for me?"

She smiled broadly at him.

"Good lord that worked? It always makes me feel better to see a pretty girl naked. So, would you get naked for me?"

"That was pretty pathetic Harry. Don't you have one for me?" Hannah pouted.

"Sure Hannah," He said. "Will you help me find my lost puppy? I think he went into my room upstairs."

"Nice one Harry." Hannah said while Sue laughed. "I remember reading that one in a Muggle book my brother had about picking up women."

"That's where I got it. I cousin bought the book and I read it the summer before last. Those lines are great for chasing witches off."

"And you need to quit chasing them off Harry." Susan said. "You're hurt, but you can't let a stupid girl ruin your life. Too many people care about you to let that happen."

"I don't know if you heard about all the Death Eater attacks this summer, but a surprising number of them were stopped." Hannah added.

"I'd heard that, but the Prophet was never clear on what happened."

"The DA happened." Susan said. "The kids you trained fought the Death Eaters to a standstill until help could arrive. It happened with us when I was visiting Hannah back in July. She and I held off five Death Eaters for twenty minutes until the Aurors got there. What you taught us saved our lives Harry."

"I didn't do anything, anyone could have..."

“Maybe anyone could have, but only you did Harry.” Hannah interrupted. “So thank you.” She glanced at her watch. “I’ve got to get back to the party. Ernie will be looking for me. Have fun you two.”

Hannah rose from the booth and headed for the door. Susan remained where she was.

“You’re not going to the party Sue?”

“No, I’ve got a more important party to go to.” She licked her finger, and touched his shoulder. Then Susan licked her finger again and ran her finger down her blouse between her breasts.

“Oh my.” She said. “We really should get out of these wet clothes.”

Harry looked into her heavily lidded eyes. “My, that was a cheesy line. At least as bad as any of mine.” Harry leaned forward and kissed her lightly on the lips. “I think you’re right though, we should get out of these wet clothes before we catch our deaths. Fortunately, I’ve got a room upstairs where we can do that.”

“How convenient. We should go now, I’m feeling a bit chill.”

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

Druella Rosmerta smiled as she saw the Bone’s girl lead Harry Potter up the stairs.

I Remember The Twins

Say, do you remember those twins Gred and Forge
Well, they were always were the school yard fools
Like the time they stole my pants and took those color pictures
And posted copies all over school
Or the time that they dumped toxic potions on my bed
Or all those wacky pranks from midnight 'till dawn
What crazy guys they were, always foolin' around

Boy, what jokers
What a funny, funny guys
I'll never forget those twins
No matter how I try

Say, do you remember when I lost all my hair
'Cause Fred gave me that depilatory shampoo
And hey, how 'bout the day George put Shrinking paste inside my jockstrap
And filled my toothpaste tube with You-No-Poo
All those wedgies they gave, all those shoestrings they tied
All those butterbeers they made with the Love Potions inside
Oh guys, I swear, it was a laugh a minute with you

Boy, what jokers
What a funny, funny guys
I'll never forget those twins
No matter how I try

You know I couldn't help but laugh
Even though they treated me like slime
Remember when they cut my broom in half?
Well, they really got me good that time!

Say, do you remember when I broke in the Twin's flat
Late at night and tied their mouths with rags
Then I dragged them by their ankles to the middle of the forest
And stuffed them in big plastic bags
If the Aurors ever find them, who knows what they'd say
But I'm sure if the Twins were still with us today
They would have to agree with me it was a pretty good gag

Boy, what jokers
What a funny, funny guys
I'll never forget those twins
No matter how I try
Boy, what jokers
What a funny, funny guys

Harry and Hobbes

Chapter One - Introductions

The whole hall burst into applause as the hat finished its song. The ancient bit of haberdashery bowed to each of the four tables and then became quite still again.

“So we’ve just got to try on the hat!” The tall red head whispered to no one in particular. “I’ll kill Fred, he was going on about wrestling a troll.”

Harry smiled widely. Yes, trying on the hat was a lot better than having to try to make his stick... sorry wand do something. If only they could have done this ‘sorting’ privately without everyone and his brother watching.

“Pfft. Trying on a hat?” Hobbes was standing beside Harry buffing his claws on his chest. ***“What kind of challenge is that? Now bringing down a Water Buffalo, THAT sorts the Tigers from the cubs!”***

Harry frowned. “When did you ever bring down a Water Buffalo?”

The red headed boy with the brother named Fred looked at Harry oddly. “I never said anything about water buffalos.” He subtly moved further away from the raven haired boy carrying the scruffy stuffed tiger.

“Weirdo!” Hobbes sniffed. ***“I personally haven’t brought down a Water Buffalo, but it’s a given that Tigers can do those things.”***

Professor McGonagall now stepped forward holding a long roll of parchment.

“When I call your name, you will put on the hat and sit on the stool to be sorted,” she said.

“Abbott, Hannah!”

A pink-faced girl with blonde pigtails stumbled out of line, put on the hat, which fell right down over her eyes, and sat down. A momentary pause and...

“HUFFLEPUFF!” shouted the hat.

The table on the right cheered and clapped as Hannah went to sit down at the Hufflepuff table. Harry and Hobbes watched silently as the ghost of a fat medieval monk waving merrily at the girl.

“Excitable aren’t they?” Hobbes noted.

“Bones, Susan!”

“HUFFLEPUFF!” shouted the hat again, and Susan scuttled off to sit next to Hannah.

“Ohh, that’s one’s kind of cute... sorta red fur like a tiger! I wonder if she likes to make with the

smooches?” Hobbes asked.

“Would you shut up you perverted flea condo? Do I have to remind you of the bylaws of G.R.O.S.S.?”

“*Hmph!*” groused the tiger

“Boot, Terry!”

“RAVENCLAW!”

The table second from the left clapped this time; several Ravenclaws stood up to shake hands Terry’s as he joined them.

“Brocklehurst, Mandy” went to Ravenclaw too, but “Brown, Lavender” became the first new Gryffindor, and the table on the far left exploded with cheers.

“Bulstrode, Millicent” then became a Slytherin. Perhaps it was Harry’s imagination, but he thought they looked like an unpleasant bunch. Lots of unibrows and sloping foreheads... As a whole the denizens of Slytherin house appeared to be the type that spontaneously generated when old sweat socks stay in gym lockers too long.

“*Ooh, I hope you end up on that Team!*” Hobbes said giving the Slytherins his patented predatory stare.

“Why?” Harry asked, dreading the answer.

“*Easy pickings of course.*”

“Hobbes, we talked about this. No attacking students!”

Harry was starting to feel definitely nervous now. He remembered being picked for teams during gym at his old school. He had always been last to be chosen, mostly because he was no good, but also because he didn’t share in the absurd illusion that winning was more important than having fun.

“Finch-Fletchley, Justin!”

“HUFFLEPUFF!”

Sometimes, Harry noticed, the hat shouted out the house at once, but at others it took a little while to decide. “Finnigan, Seamus,” the sandy-haired boy closest to Harry in the line, sat on the stool for almost a whole minute before the hat declared him a Gryffindor.

“Granger, Hermione!”

The bushy haired girl who had been nice to him on the train almost ran to the stool and jammed the hat eagerly on her head.

“GRYFFINDOR!” shouted the hat. The Red Headed boy groaned.

A horrible thought struck Harry. What if he wasn't chosen at all? What if he just sat there with the hat over his eyes for ages, until Professor McGonagall pulled the hat off his head and said there had obviously been a mistake and he'd better get back on the train? What if Hobbes told him knock-knock jokes and made him laugh while the Hat was sorting him?

When Neville Longbottom, the boy who kept losing his toad, was called, he fell over on his way to the stool. The hat took a long time to decide with Neville. When it finally shouted, "GRYFFINDOR," Neville ran off still wearing it, and had to jog back amid gales of laughter to give it to "MacDougal, Morag."

Malfoy swaggered forward when his name was called and got his wish at once: the hat had barely touched his head when it screamed, "SLYTHERIN!"

"Oh, yeah." Hobbes purred. **"Gonna get me a taste of that."**

Malfoy went to join his friends Crabbe and Goyle, looking pleased with himself. There weren't many people left now. "Moon"... , "Nott"... , "Parkinson"... , then a pair of twins, "Patil" and "Patil"... , then "Perks, Sally-Anne"... , and then, at last...

"Potter, Harry!"

As Harry stepped forward with Hobbes under his arm, whispering suddenly broke out all over the hall.

"Did she say Potter?"

"The Harry Potter?"

"Why is he carrying a doll?"

The last thing Harry saw before the hat dropped over his eyes was the hall full of people staring at him open mouthed. He was tempted to yell "Take a Picture, It Will Last Longer" at them, but bit the comment back. The next thing he knew he was looking at the black felt inside of the hat. He waited.

"Hmm," said a small voice in his ear. "Oh my. How very... Odd. I see the courage to go your own way and ignore what others think. Not a bad mind either, when you chose to apply yourself. There's talent, A my goodness, yes — and a nice thirst to achieve, now that's interesting... So where shall I put you?"

Harry gripped the edges of the stool and thought, Not Slytherin, not Slytherin.

"Not Slytherin, eh?" said the small voice. "Why not? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that"

"Yeah! Slytherin!" Hobbes voice was suddenly in his head. **"Slytherin would be great. Lots of fresh meat in Slytherin!"**

"Shut up fleabag!" Harry thought. "I told you, no attacking other students!"

"... Oh. My. Is there someone else in here?" The hat asked in a shocked tone of... thought.

“That’s just Hobbes. He’s my tiger.” Harry explained. “For some reason he’s decided that Slytherins would be good to eat. Please don’t put us in Slytherin, I don’t want to be responsible for any of them getting savaged by a blood thirsty beast.”

“I... see.” The hat’s voice said in his ear.

“***Oh come on!***” Hobbes whined. “***I’ll only eat the small ones.***”

“Well Mr. Potter, perhaps you should be in the house with the majority of the nature lovers...” the hat shifted from direct mind to mind communication to speaking aloud. “Better be HUFFLEPUFF!”

Harry Potter and the Pampered Feline

CHAPTER One

Kitty.

“What the bloody hell was that?”

“It was either a very fat cat or a quite small furry pig,” said Harry.

“The bloody thing almost trampled me. Where’s Hermione?”

“Probably getting her owl.”

They made their way out to the crowded street in front of the Magical Menagerie. They waited only a few moments, then Hermione came out, but she wasn’t carrying an owl. Her arms were clamped tightly around a very flabby orange cat.

“You bought that monster?” said Ron, his mouth hanging open.

“He’s gorgeous, isn’t he?” said Hermione, glowing.

That was a matter of opinion, thought Harry. The cat’s orange fur was thick and fluffy and had black stripes, but it was definitely a bit bowlegged and its face looked grumpy and oddly expressive, as though one could read the cat’s emotions from its face. The cat was purring contentedly in Hermione’s arms.

“I like this girl, she has good taste.” A voice with an American accent said. Harry quickly looked around, and couldn’t identify the speaker. Neither Ron nor Hermione appeared to have heard the voice.

“Hermione that bloody beast nearly crushed me!” said Ron.

“He didn’t mean to, did you, Garfield?” said Hermione.

“Sure I did. He squealed like a girl.” Came the voice again.

“And what about Scabbers?” said Ron, pointing at the lump in his chest pocket. “He needs rest and relaxation! How’s he going to get it with that thing around?”

“Show me a cat that would eat a rat, I’ll show you a cat with bad breath.”

“That reminds me, you forgot your rat tonic,” said Hermione, slapping the small red bottle into Ron’s hand. “And stop worrying, Garfield will be sleeping in my dormitory and Scabbers in yours, what’s the problem? Poor Garfield, that witch said he’d been in there for ages; no one wanted him.”

“Wonder why,” said Ron sarcastically as they set off toward the Leaky Cauldron.

Harry sighed. He was hearing voices that no one could hear. Again. This was going to be a long year.

---oooOOOooo---

The ride on the train was relatively uneventful, if you discounted the incident with the Dementor and the fact that a psychotic murderer was on the loose, which frankly Harry did not. The welcoming feast was punctuated with the abuse heaped upon him for his extreme reaction to the Guards of the Azkaban. In short, it was turning out to be just another year at old hogy Hogwarts.

In his bed, Harry was hovering just on the edge of sleep, when suddenly a large heavy orange something landed on his chest. Groping for his glasses the all too expressive face of Hermione's new cat sprang into sharp focus.

"Yo! Four Eyes, time to feed the kitty."

That voice again. This couldn't be good. Hearing voices like this. Harry reached up to scratch behind the cat's ears. The best way to deal with hearing voices was to ignore them and hope they go away.

"What are you doing here fella? Are you looking for Hermione?" Harry whispered.

"I believe I was pretty clear Four Eyes. It's time to feed the kitty." The cat looked around Harry's four-poster bed, raised his front right paw and extended his claws. **"Nice bed you've got here... It would be a shame if something were to... happen to it."**

"It's you? You're the one I keep hearing?"

"Well, duh!" The cat rolled his eyes. **"Why do you think I'm here? Those weird elf things won't feed me, so, you're my ticket to a midnight snack."**

"But how...?"

"Look kid, I don't know and I don't care. All I know is that you can hear me, and you're going to get me some lasagna, or things might become... unpleasant."

Looking into the oddly expressive face of the fat cat, Harry decided that he really didn't want to know what the cat meant by 'unpleasant'.

Dressing quietly, Harry pulled his father's invisibility cloak from his trunk and grunted as he hefted the cat.

"Bloody hell cat, you weigh a ton!" he whispered.

"And you're ugly Four-Eyes, but I could diet if I wanted."

---oooOOOooo---

The trip to the kitchen was as uneventful as any trip under an invisibility cloak while carrying a squirming twenty kilo cat could be. Dobby was deliriously happy to prepare a pan of lasagna for the

porcine feline, and agreed to deliver one to the Gryffindor Girls 3rd year form three times a day for the kitty.

It was on the trip back the trouble started. Carrying the now twenty-**three** kilo cat under his cloak, Harry was musing about the horror that must be this beasts litter box when he started up the final stairway and came face to face with Filch's cat, Mrs. Norris who immediately began sniffing the air while looking right at them.

The Orange Cat suddenly stopped squirming. **"Well, hello Nurse!"**

Mrs. Norris froze in apparent confusion as she looked about for where the voice had come from.

Garfield managed to free himself from Harry's grasp by way of a paw full of claws suddenly being forcibly raked along Harry's left forearm. Landing on the landing next to Mrs. Norris with a light 'thud' he spoke. **"Hey Baby!"**

"Who are you?" came Mrs. Norris' voice with an oddly Irish lilt. *"Where did you come from?"*

"The name's Garfield baby. I've come from heaven to make all your dreams come true."

"Hmph." Harry was shocked that he could actually see the expression of disgust on Mrs. Norris' face. Since when did cats have expressions? *"You own one of the students don't you? You reek of Gryffindor, and not a first year either. Why haven't I seen you before? Tag along to get away from your mate for a while?"*

"No baby, you've got me all wrong! I'm a bachelor. In fact I come from a long line of bachelors." The orange cat said as he rubbed his flank along Mrs. Norris' side.

"Well..." Mrs. Norris appeared to be torn. *"You are kind of cute, in a hugely massive sort of way..."*

"Now you're talking baby! Let's go make some beautiful music together."

Mrs. Norris giggled and turned to run up the stairs. Garfield looked to where Harry was standing, still under his cloak. **"I won't be needing you anymore tonight. Get some sleep."** Then the fat orange cat loped up the stairs in pursuit of his new paramour.

Harry stood staring open mouthed after the pair of cats. Mrs. Norris giggled? That fat cat had just given him the rest of the night off? What the hell was going on, and how did he get involved?

Harry made his way back to the Gryffindor dorms, and his bed, mutter all the way trying out the various forms of profanity he had learned from Vernon and Dudley over the last few years.

---oooOOOooo---

A bleary eyed Harry Potter dragged himself to breakfast in the Great Hall the next morning. He slumped into the seat next to a very angry Hermione Granger who appeared to be directing her famous 'Dirty Look #4' (guaranteed to peel a potato at 10 yards) alternately between Ron Weasley who sat across from Hermione and her new cat who sat to her left. Both of the dirty look recipients were ignoring her and doing what they did best.

Eating.

Apparently Harry had accidentally stumbled upon an eating contest. Both the competitors had their eyes fixed upon the other, while their fore-paws were in a blur of motion shoveling whatever breakfast foods that was in reach into their respective masticating maws. The House Elves evidently took exception to the concept that anyone or thing could possibly eat more food than the Hogwarts Kitchens could produce, so more and more overflowing platters of food kept replacing those emptied by the unstoppable eating machines. Worse than that, Hermione was getting sprayed by bits of food from both of them.

“Ok.” Harry said shocked out of his fatigue. “That is more than a little bit disturbing.”

“It’s worse than that, it’s disgusting.” Hermione corrected him. “Ron, stop this right now. You’re going to provoke poor little Garfield into hurting himself.”

The youngest Weasley male ignored her. Harry shook his head. Ron would pay for that later. “I don’t see how that cat could possibly be hungry. He had a full pan of lasagna last night at around 2 am.”

Hermione rounded on him, bits of breakfast flotsam flying from her as she did so. “Why did you feed Garfield at 2 am? You could have made him sick!”

“It wasn’t my fault!” Harry said defensively. “That bloody cat showed up on my bed and demanded that I get him some lasagna. I took him to the kitchen and asked Dobby to deliver a pan to your dorm for each meal.”

“He demanded? Come on Harry.”

“It turns out I can talk to and understand cats.”

She raised a single eyebrow. “You can talk to cats?”

“Oh I see, I can talk to snakes, no problem, but you’ve got a problem with my being able to talk to cats? I was privileged with seeing and hearing your bloody cat chat up Mrs. Norris last night. Why would I make something like that up?”

“Mrs. Norris?”

It was then that the aforementioned caretaker’s cat leaped onto the bench beside the large orange Tom and rubbed her head against one of his many chins. “*Oh Garfield, last night was amazing.*” And then she began to purr.

“**Can’t talk, eating.**” Was Garfield’s only reply.

“See? See?” Harry said pointing.

Hermione stared at the pair of felines in open mouthed amazement. Ron was so shocked he actually stopped eating.

“Ha!” Garfield said finishing off the final platter of bacon. **“I win. Amateur.”** The fat cat issued a delicate belch that rattled the windows of the Great Hall.

---oooOOOooo---

After Transfiguration class finished for the day, Hermione approached her favorite teacher.

"Professor, is there a name for someone who can speak the language of cats?"

"You know someone who can speak to cats?" The older woman appeared to be enraged. "Who is it? Tell me!"

Surprised at McGonagall's reaction Hermione decided against the truth. "No, no... I just ran across a reference to someone speaking to cats in a book in the library. I thought if such a thing existed, you, as a cat animagus would know. I was just curious."

McGonagall forced herself to calm down. "I'm sorry Miss Granger, a visceral reaction on my part. Yes there are those who can speak to cats. A speaker of cat language is called a 'Ailuromouth'."

"And the language its self is 'Ailurotongue?"

"Yes."

"I couldn't help but notice your reaction..." Hermione said hesitantly. "Do Ailuromouths have a reputation for being dark like Parselmouths?"

McGonagall shook her head. "No, not exactly dark... but you should never trust one."

"But why?"

McGonagall's brogue thickening with her emotions welling to the surface again. "Because they're bastards. All of them."

Hermione's eyes widened. "Oh. Ok then. I'd best get to my next class." The bushy haired girl slowly backed away toward the door]

McGonagall turned away from her student, and leaned over her desk supporting herself on her arms. She continued on, almost too softly to be heard. "Oh, they say they'll call, but they never do. Bastards!"

Draco Malfoy and the Sins of the Father

In my dungeon dormitory I was methodically removing my school robes so that I could change into something more appropriate for what I needed to do. Vinnie Crabbe pushed the door open and stepped inside my private room.

“Draco, it’s gonna be bad.”

I’ve known Vinnie all my life, before that day I’d never suspected he was the master of the understatement. “I know Vinnie, I know.” I pulled my Slytherin house tie from my neck and started unbuttoning my shirt.

“Greg is down in the Great Hall helping with the evacuation. He said he knows the Dark Lord will kill him for it, but he couldn’t stand by and watch the little ones die without at least trying to help.”

“Greg came to me first and told me what he was going to do Vinnie. I gave him my blessing, and suggested reasons for helping that might cause the Dark Lord to spare Greg’s life.” I unbuttoned my trousers and allowed them to fall the floor so that I could step out of them.

“Why are they doing this Draco? Why hurt the little ones? I mean I don’t like the Mudbloods or the Half Bloods, and I don’t mind smacking them around, but why kill them?”

I considered the question for a moment, and then decided my oldest friend deserved an answer. “There are a lot of reasons Vinnie, but none of them are good. Our parents are willing to kill Mudblood and Half blood children because they’re afraid of them. Look at our year. The top two in class rankings are both Mudbloods. The rest of the top ten are half bloods except for Patil, who might as well be one. The most powerful among us is Potter, a half blood. This scares them. Just the knowledge that Potter could probably beat any of them in a duel scares them shitless. Our parents will kill Mudblood and Half blood children because they can, and they will kill pureblood children because the Dark Lord tells them to.”

Vinnie nodded. He knew all that, but I knew he liked to hear the confirmation from me. It was then Vinnie noticed the array of weaponry laid out on my bed, an odd mix of magical and Muggle. “What are you going to do Draco? What’s all this?”

I hesitated. My first reflex was to lie, but from the look on Vinnie’s face, I could tell he needed to hear the truth. “Do you remember what happened last summer Vinnie?”

“To your mum you mean? Yeah. I’m sorry Draco.”

“Lucius fucked up in one of his schemes.” My eyes glazed over as I relived the most horrible day of my life. “Lucius is far too important to the Dark Lord’s plans to punish thoroughly it seems, so he punished my Mother instead, and made me watch. I tried to help her and he petrified me, then had Lucius position me so that I had a ringside seat. Every single Death Eater used her, even Lucius. Even Bellatrix. Used her again and again. When they were all done, she was given to Greyback, who killed her rather than turn her, thank Merlin.”

“I remember Draco. My father spoke of it as great fun. I was never more ashamed to be his son. Your mum was like...” the large teen was at a loss for words.

“Thank you for that Vinnie.” Vinnie, like Greg had a reputation for stupid brutality. Very few knew that impression was a front forced upon him by his family’s loyalties. “When I was released from the petrification, I wanted to attack the Dark Lord, but I was terrified beyond all rational thought. After I left the manor, I apparated to Muggle London and wandered the streets for hours unable to get what I’d seen out of my head. I finally couldn’t take it anymore; I was disgusted with myself, with Lucius, with the Dark Lord, with the whole magical world. I couldn’t come back after seeing what I’d seen. So I waited until the time was right and stepped out in front of a Muggle lorry.”

“You tried to commit suicide?”

“Yes, I did. The lorry mangled me. I was taken to a Muggle hospital where a squib healer recognized some of the magical items in my pockets and called for help. An emergency team transported me to St. Mungos where they stabilized me, but I was too messed up. I would have ended up a quadruple amputee.”

“Merlin!” Crabbe breathed. “But what happened? I mean, you’re fine.”

“No Vinnie, I’m not. Lucius called in some favors. He couldn’t have his heir die after all. There was nothing magic could do to completely heal me. But there was some Muggle research that Lucius’ healer had heard about...”

“But... What could Muggles do Draco? Everyone says our medicine is so much more advanced than theirs, even the Mudbloods say that.”

The Muggles have their secrets Vinnie. They pumped me full of their machines. Tiny machines too small to see, but they rebuilt me, after they adapted to my magic. I’m stronger than I was before, and they... Well, it’s easier to show you than to explain. Watch this.” I picked up a dirk from my bed and ran it along my cheek, drawing blood, and hissing at the pain as I did so.

Vinnie’s eyes widened as the deep cut closed almost instantly, healing without even a scar. I occupied myself during this brief example of my inhuman healing ability by pulling on a pair of leather pants, and then a leather jerkin and pair of boots.

“Draco, what are you going to do? Do you even know how to use those things?”

“I don’t, but the machines do. They were developed for the Muggle military, beyond repairing wounds; they also install what the Muggle Healer called ‘Muscle Memory’. When I pick up the sword, my body knows how to use it, and reacts faster than I can think. When I pick up the Muggle guns, my body knows how to use them instinctively.” I smiled. “In the end, that will be Lucius’ only real gift to me. He has made me an unkillable, unstoppable killing machine. Everything else I’ve valued in my life Lucius has taken from me Vinnie.” I shrugged in to a pair of leather shoulder holsters, fastening them onto the jerkin. Once the holsters were secure, I stowed a pair of Muggle machine pistols into the pockets of the holsters, making sure that the ‘special’ loads were in the weapon on the left side. I saw Vinnie’s eyes widen when he recognized the guns for what they were, but he said nothing. The long sword was fastened to my back, with the hilt above my left shoulder. I finished what the Muggle scientist who healed me called my ‘Load-Out’ by storing several other blades of various sizes and shapes about my

body all within easy reach. “He took my mother, my sense of self; my status as a pureblood, he even took my ability to die. I can’t die Vinnie. I’ve tried. The damned Muggle machines in my blood repair anything I do. I cut my left fucking arm off and the damned machines had it rebuilt before breakfast the next day. I drove an ice pick into my eye and stirred it around until I passed out from the pain, and I woke up the next morning with everything restored. I cast the Killing Curse on myself. I woke up in the morning in agony. I’m going to use this gift my father has given me. I’m going to kill Lucius, Vinnie. I’m going to kill Lucius, and then I’m going to help Potter kill the Dark Lord.”

“Draco...”

“And after they’re both dead, I’m going to find Potter and beg him to find a way to kill me.” I sighed, it was then I realized I needed a way to protect Vinnie from what I was about to do. I picked up my wand. “I’m sorry Vinnie.” I petrified my oldest friend, and levitated him to the bed. “You’ll be safe here Vinnie. I’ll seal the door behind me. It should hold for at least twelve hours. I’ve begged Greg to keep his head down at the evacuation, and keeping you in here until tomorrow morning should let whichever side wins to calm down enough to not kill you on sight.”

I shrugged into a cloak that would hide the weapons I carried, yet allow me access to most of them and exited the room, sealing the door behind me. I needed to talk to Potter.

-----oooOOOooo-----

I made my way to the Great Hall, ignoring the hateful looks I was getting in the halls. I was fully aware that this reception was completely my own fault; I had made myself the public face of the Dark Lord in the school. Death was coming to the school, and no one could stop it. It was just a matter of time before someone raised a wand to me. And I would let them, I had decided that I wouldn’t respond no matter what they did. I deserved whatever was done to me.

I made my way to the staff table, where Dumbledore and Potter were leaning over an old sheaf of parchment. I stopped in front of the pair, my shadow falling over the parchment map they were studying alerted them to my presence.

“Is there something you need Mr. Malfoy?” The old man asked.

“Yes. I...”

“Let me guess. The Dark Lord will kill me. We’ve already heard this song Malfoy. Get lost.”

“I’m going with you Potter. I’ve got your back.”

Potter looked up at me with an incredulous look on his face. “Do you need a binding oath Potter? I’m coming with you. Without me you’ll need to fight your way through to him. I’m tasked to bring you to the Dark Lord. I can put you right in front of the lunatic without your having to expend any magic at all.”

The Gryffindor’s face took on a calculation expression. “What do you want for doing this? Why should I trust that you suddenly want to be my friend?”

“Fuck you Potter.” I spat. “You and I will never be friends. I disagree with the Dark Lord’s tactics, not

his objectives. If I was going to survive this I would prove my superiority at a time and place of my choosing.”

“You’ve got an interesting way of suggesting an alliance Draco.” Potter said dryly. “Why would I ally myself with someone who doesn’t expect to live?”

“Don’t kid yourself Potter. You don’t expect to live either. You’re getting ready to march off to die because you’re a Gryffindor. I’m coming with you because I’m a Slytherin.”

The old man just stared at me with those damned twinkling eyes of his. “So the rumors were true. You have my sympathies Mr. Malfoy. Losing one’s mother is always difficult. The manner of your loss would have destroyed most men.”

“It did.” I said. The old man was sharp. “But I got better.”

Potter’s eyes had widened at the news of my mother’s passing, but he uncharacteristically held his tongue. “We have similar goals Potter, possibly even similar motivations. A few illusion charms and it appears that I have kidnapped the Lights Savior and am delivering him to his doom. No one will dare touch you until you are in front of the Dark Lord, he made known the portion of the prophecy that Snape overheard. All the Death Eaters know of it now. We can use that to our advantage.” I laid out my plan before them.

“This could work.” Potter said thoughtfully. “This might actually get me close enough to Riddle to hurt him badly enough to matter.” He turned those damned green eyes on me. “What do you get out of this Draco?”

“I get your promise that Lucius is mine. Unless you are actually fighting him, you promise to leave Lucius Malfoy to me, and that you won’t interfere with what I have planned for him.”

I locked eyes with Potter. I could see the question forming in his mind. ‘What did the bastard do?’ but he never asked. A quiet nod was all the response my request got. It was all that was needed. Potter and I understood each other, but then, we always had.

“This is all very well gentlemen” The old man said in his grandfather personae. “However your plan doesn’t account for my being there as well.”

“You’re not coming.” Potter and I chorused, and then exchanged surprised looks at our unexplained synchronicity.

“Of course I am.” The ancient wizard said in that self assured manner of his.

“Of course you are not.” Potter said. “This isn’t going to be a contest of power Headmaster. This is a contest of speed and agility. You are doubtlessly the most powerful among us, but that power will do you no good if Riddle can get off three spells to your one as he did at the ministry.”

“Preposterous” The old man huffed. “I assure you that I am...”

I had heard enough. I reached to my left shoulder and drew my sword, whipping the blade out so the flat of the blade just touched the old man’s neck before the man could blink. “I think perhaps you need

to ask yourself if someone like me could have done that sixty years ago Headmaster. You are powerful, but time makes fools of us all. You are slower than you used to be, slower than you would need to be to not be a liability in the fight.”

I felt the wand tip press against the back of my neck. “Speed isn’t everything Malfoy.” Granger said a deep burning hatred in her voice. “There is something to be said about situational awareness. Lower the sword now.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

I weighed my options, and placed the sword back into its sheath. I could have disarmed the Mudblood before she could react, but that would have been counterproductive to my goal. If Granger was there, the Weasel couldn’t be far away, any move on my part would bring him into the equation, if the Weasel was involved, then Potter would jump in with both feet.

None of that would kill the Dark Lord. None of that would put my hands around Lucius’ throat.

“I was just making a point Granger. Headmaster, you coming with us would be counter productive.”

“You know how rare it is for me to agree with Malfoy Headmaster, but this time I do.” Potter said. “Hermione, lower your wand. Draco is on our side.”

“No I’m not Potter. I’m on my own side.” I had decided to fight my natural tendencies and be honest with Scarhead. It couldn’t hurt. “You killing the Dark Lord allows me to further my own plans. I’ve heard the prophecy. The whole thing. I know that you and only you are capable of killing the bastard. I’ve told no one.”

“Where did you hear the prophecy?” Granger asked as she and the Weasel joined Potter. “We’ve kept that pretty close to the vest.”

I blinked. I’d never heard that expression, though from her context the meaning came through with only a little thought. “Someone likes to brag during his pillow talk.” I said looking directly at the Weasel. “His bedmate was incapable of keeping her empty headed mouth shut. I’ve obliviated everyone who knew. Ms. Brown no longer has any idea.”

The way the Weasel blushed only served to confirm what I was saying to Dumbledore and the intelligent pair of the Gryffindor trio.

“Headmaster.” Potter said, changing the subject. “Riddle is out there at the wards right now. Arguing about who is going to face him is a waste of time. The wards won’t last much longer. I’ve got to go now. You need to stay here and assist with the evacuation.” Potter gestured toward the crowd of students at the far end of the hall. “If I fail, I don’t want the lives of these children on my soul.”

The old man hung his head. Did he finally understand it was past time he passed the torch of his position to the next holder? I somehow doubted it.

Potter nodded to me. “It’s time to go.” He led the way from the Great Hall. By the time we reached the front entrance to the school I was a pace behind the trio. Weasley and Granger were starting the latest of their arguments... Or was it the latest chapter of their single argument? Who knows? Who cares? I

drew my wand and dropped the Weasel with a whispered stunner, then trapped Granger in a body bind, catching her falling form and lowering her to the ground.

I looked up into Potter's wand. "What the hell Malfoy?"

"Goyle is helping with the evacuation; Vinnie Crabbe is in a body bind on my bed. I can't take my friends where we're going, they would be a distraction. You can't take your friends either. You know what you're up against; you can't afford the distraction either."

"Damn it Draco. She's going to kill me when this is over."

I looked down into Granger's chocolate eyes. Those eyes promised that she would indeed hurt us both. "Leaving her here ensures she'll be alive to do so Potter. It's your job to stay alive so she can kill you."

Potter nodded again. He understood. He didn't like it, but he understood. He exited the castle. I looked back down into Granger's expressive eyes. "Protect Crabbe and Goyle. They've bullied people, but they've never hurt anyone. There will be a backlash from what happens today. Protect my friends. I'll do my best to keep him alive."

She blinked at me. Was that a 'yes', or a 'fuck you'? I stood and followed Potter out the door.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Travelling by portkey is hellish now. It had never been fun, but the machines in my blood hated being squeezed through reality and made sure I understood their displeasure. But pain and I have become good friends by now. The glamour on my body held up to the transfer showing an image of me in my Hogwarts robes, and the ones on Potter showing him beaten and shackled held as well. We arrived on the outskirts of the Death Eater horde, and a path cleared toward the center. Wordlessly I levitated Potter's silent form to the Dark Lord.

"Well done Draco." The half blood Dark Lord said in his oddly hissing voice. "You have brought me the prize."

"Only due to your faultless plan my Lord." I said, doing my damndest to sound sincere. "You distracted the fools to be focusing on the outside, while your faithful attacked from the inside." I fumbled inside my illusionary robes. "I have brought you a prize from Dumbledore's own desk!" I withdrew the metallic cylinder and offered it to Voldemort.

"What is it?" he asked, taking his attention away from Potter.

I held the cylinder out in both hands, twisting the ends so that the paired halves clicked into place aligning the rune clusters. I then dropped the cylinder as it pulsed with a bright blue light. Upon hitting the ground the cylinder pulsed red, and sank from sight into the soil. Then a gold dome of energy bloomed from the ground and washed over everything within 800 meters.

"A runes shield! You fool" The Dark Lord leveled his wand at me. "Do you know what you've done?"

"I do." Potter said, casting aside his glamour. "He's trapped you in here with me Tom." In a single smooth motion Potter cast Incendio setting the Dark Lord's robes afire.

There is a reason that Voldemort is so feared. Despite having been taken totally by surprise, he reacted instantly, dousing the flames on his robes and sending a cutting hex back at Potter, who dodged. The fight was on.

The reaction of the assembled Death Eaters was to watch the battle in open mouthed amazement. I took advantage of this by drawing my sword and removing the head of the animagus standing next to me. I vividly recalled his girlish giggling as he pawed at my mother with that silver hand. I continued the stroke that took rat-man's head and opened Amycus Carrow from breast bone to crotch spilling his guts to the ground. Part of me found the fact that both Pettigrew's and Carrow's body hit the ground at the same time amusing.

I spared the fight between Potter and the Dark Lord a glance. Potter was holding his own, but some of the Death Eaters were beginning to notice that two of their own had fallen, and wands were beginning to be raised against me.

Perfect.

I surrendered control to my body. The muscle memory started a dance, I moved in and out of crowds of Death Eaters and they fell as I passed, missing limbs, blood pouring from strategic cuts, crushed bones. Other than in training at the Muggle facility that had forced my body to stay alive, I had never cut loose before. I was hit by spells by the dozens, cutters, banishers, bone breakers. The badly aimed curses never hit anything vital, so the little machines did what they were supposed to do, repairing the damage as it was being caused and I kept moving.

As I dropped yet another idiot in black robes, I heard an inhuman growl to my left, and turned to find an untransformed Fenrir Greyback charging at me. I reached for the pistol in the left holster, pulled it smoothly and unleashed five rounds into the werewolf's chest. As a rule Muggle bullets are useless against a Were, even untransformed. These bullets however were hollowed out and filled with powdered silver. They focused Greyback's attention quite effectively.

Since I had the pistol in my hand, I thumbed the weapon over to single shot and expended the remaining ten rounds into those Death Eaters still standing.

When the Pistol was empty, I dropped it, and pulled a throwing blade from my right thigh and slung it across the clearing to where Potter was still exchanging curses with the Dark Lord. The blade buried its self deep into Voldemort's hip, I saw him stumble when the universe suddenly went blood red.

I never heard the Crucio being cast, but I recognized the caster. My body's convulsions rolled me over onto my back where I could see my loving Father holding his serpent head wand, pouring all of his will into casting the pain curse.

Good.

The machines in my blood dealt with injury. The effects of the crucio was evaluated as an injury. Normally the machines ignored pain, and only dealt with injury. In this case the pain was causing the injury.

So they turned it off.

Sudden, total bliss. My vision cleared and strength returned to my body. Lucius had no idea what had happened, though a confused look was beginning to form on his face when I drew the other pistols and fired a round into his right knee.

I know I could have, should have killed him right then and there, but no. A muggle gun was far too quick a way to die. Historically most Malfoy men have died from blades. Most Malfoy women have died from poison. As I dropped the pistol, I found myself wondering just what that said about the family I had always been so proud of.

I shook that thought from my head and focused on my mother's screaming face as I leaped atop my father with a blade in both hands. I took my time, made it memorable for him. Then I ended it. Lucius screamed more than Mother did when he finally died.

I rolled off Lucius' body to a sitting position against a nearby tree. I saw the remaining four standing Death Eaters pressing against the gold energy of the Runes Shield, pleading with Dumbledore on the far side of the shield to come in and save them from the mad men inside. It was then I remember Potter. I looked to where I had last seen him and saw him limping toward me. It was obvious that his right shoulder was shattered from the way his arm hung in an odd position. There was something wrong with his leg on that side too. Behind Potter was a smoldering pile of rags that must be all that remained to the former Dark Lord. Potter stopped three paces away from me, staring in open mouthed horror.

I looked down to see what he was staring at and was surprised to see the hilt of a knife sticking out of my belly. Evidently Lucius had also used a knife in our little fight. Not surprising really, since he's the one who taught me to use one. Since the machines had turned off my pain receptors, I never notice, and the skin had healed around the knife.

Of course this was the moment that the machines decided that the danger pain offered me was past, and turned the pain receptor back on.

I thought I was dying. Again.

I put both hands on the handle of the knife and yanked it from my body. The damage this cause was severe. My loving father had used a 'gutting knife' designed to slide in cleanly and rip everything on the way out. It took the machines almost four minutes to put me back together.

Potter just stood there staring as my body healed. He slumped to the ground to sit beside me against the tree.

"Freak." He said.

"Fuck you." I replied.

"Gotta at least buy me dinner first Freak."

That made me laugh. It hurt to laugh. It hurt a lot. Then the Rune shield collapsed. Had it been four minutes already?

"Harry James Potter!"

We both looked in the direction of the scream to see an enraged Hermione Granger stalking our way, with a very angry Vinnie Crabbe at her side.

“Oh hell.” Potter said.

“At least yours is cute and pissed at you. Vinnie is ugly and pissed at me.” The angry pair got closer with a confused Weasel and Goyle following behind them. “What now?”

“I’m telling everyone it was you who killed Tommy. Me, I was tied to this tree and all beat up. And I’m telling Hermione you think she’s cute.”

He did too. Fortunately no one believed him.

Harry Potter and Obscenely Ultimate Powerups of Utter Wrongness

Voldemort's a Knocking.

Harry Potter stood in front of the entrance to Hogwarts Castle staring out at the massed crowd just beyond the castle's wards, his mouth dry, and an all consuming fear gripping his mind. At the edge of the wards, there were scores of Death Eaters clad in their black robes and white masks. A dozen Giants were assaulting the wards by of all things, throwing boulders at the magical barriers. More trolls than he could count at this distance milled about. Dementors and Harpies filled the sky, Werewolves and Vampires prowled the perimeter of the wards. Near the forbidden forest a horde of Banshees waited.

There he was, pacing back and forth behind the small crowd of curse breakers chanting and pulling at the wards. Voldemort was here. Here to kill Harry Potter.

Harry felt a hand take his own, the delicate finger intertwining with his calloused ones. He didn't need to look, it could only be Hermione.

"So," His bushy haired Soul Mate said. "What's the plan?"

Harry turned to face her, shocked. "Plan? Since when do I make plans?"

"See, I was hoping that you would reveal your super secret plan that involved coming up with something that would turn out to be the power Riddle knew not." The Brunette said.

The wards pulsed; half the curse breakers fell to the ground convulsing, while Voldemort occupied his time by alternating between screaming at the fallen curse breakers and throwing random crucio's around.

"I've got nothing." The raven haired savior of the Wizarding world muttered shaking his head. "Tom is attacking with more troops than we've got students. We need to start getting people out of here."

"Professor Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall are working on making portkeys. The Headmaster projects that the wards will last another twenty minutes at most." Hermione explained.

"Good. When they're ready, I want you to take charge of the first group out."

"Like hell I will. I'm not leaving Harry Potter, if Tom Riddle wants to get at you; he has to go through me first."

"Hermione..."

Harry found himself suddenly holding an armload of weeping woman. "I won't leave you Harry. I won't. No matter what."

Draco Malfoy watched the exchange from where he was leaning against the castle's wall and shook his head. Whatever else he was, Potter was a brave. Faced with overwhelming odds, Potter was thinking of others. Granger was terrified, but would not leave her lover. Draco turned his attention to the hordes

just beyond the wards. From what he could see the estimate of the wards lasting twenty minutes was optimistic.

Tasked with doing what he could to assist the bringing the wards down and preventing Potter from escaping, Draco reached his decision, at some level he had always known it would come to this. Draco heaved himself away from the wall and made his way into the castle, his robes billowing about his body as he moved. He needed to retrieve a few items from his trunk before the wards fell.

-----oooOOOooo-----

The wards lasted another seventeen minutes. Surprisingly, there was no mass stampede of that dark army toward the castle, instead the amplified voice Harry knew only too well boomed out.

“Your last defenses have fallen Potter. You cannot hide from me any longer. Today you die.”

Harry raised his own wand to his throat and cast *Sonorus*. “Isn’t this like the fifth or sixth day you claimed I was going to die Tom? Have you finally found enough lackeys to actually manage it?”

The only answer to that challenge was an inarticulate scream of fury. Harry canceled the *Sonorus* and turned to face the crowd of mostly DA members between him and the castle.

“We’ve got to buy the Headmaster time to evacuate the youngsters. Everyone be careful. You’ve got your portkeys, use them.”

“What about you Harry?” Padma Patil asked.

“Tom’s come all this way and gone to all this trouble just to see me.” The raven haired Gryffindor said with a grin. “It would be rude to disappoint him.”

Neville Longbottom stepped out of the crowd and moved to place himself between Harry and Voldemort’s hordes. “Harry, I found something last summer that I thought would help with if it came to this.” He gestured toward the mass of dark beings just now crossing the ward lines. “This seems to be as good a time as any.” Neville reached over his shoulder and pulled, seemingly from nowhere, an oddly shaped sword. Raising it over his head, the Scion of the Longbottom line turned to face the invaders, threw back his head and shouted **“BY THE POWER OF GRAYSKULL!”**

From the cloudless sky a bolt of lightning leapt to the raised sword, and Neville’s entire body began to glow in a blinding incandescent light. From within that light Neville’s voice rang out again. **“I HAVE THE POWER!”**

The light hiding Neville slowly faded, revealing a man who was obviously Neville, yet massively, perhaps even grotesquely muscled. The seventh year’s school robes were gone, replaced by a loin cloth, leather boots and a strange bandolier like harness over his upper torso. This new Neville pointed his sword at Hermione’s cat Crookshanks, and a bolt of energy leapt from the sword to the large orange cat.

The cat’s body was suddenly incandescent, much as Neville’s had been moments before, but the transformation was much more extreme. The cat’s body lengthened and grew until a huge green tiger like animal stood where the half kneazle had been before, complete with what appeared to be a saddle

and a battle helmet. The new beast's roar split the air, shaking the very foundation of Hogwarts castle. Neville leapt onto the saddle on the huge cat's back.

“Don't worry Harry” He said in a thunderous echoing voice. **“Battlecat and I will thin out Voldemort's herd a bit for you. If anyone sees Bellatrix LeStrange, she's mine!”** He pulled back on the reins and the gargantuan green tiger reared back on his hind legs. **“Let's go Battlecat! Let's teach Voldemort and his armies what war is all about!”**

With yet another earth shaking roar, the warrior and his mount sprang toward the minions of evil.

Harry Potter and Hermione Granger stared after the pair in open mouthed amazement.

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

"I've got a surprise too Harry," Dennis Creevey piped up breaking the silence that followed Neville's transformation. "Neville won't be out there alone. I know a little something that'll even the odds a bit." So saying, he pulled out a very odd-looking throwing knife and hurled it down towards the grounds.

"How is that going to help?" Hermione asked.

"Like this," Dennis replied, muttering a few words under his breath, the small boy vanishing in a puff of vapor.

Hermione knew this wasn't the time to point out that 'Hogwarts, A History' said that you can't Apparate on Hogwarts' grounds, but she was going to have _words_ with Dennis when this was all over.

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

Dennis' disappearance caused the remaining students to erupt into conversation.

"Everyone settle down." Harry shouted down the chaos. "I don't know what's going on, but we've got to stay calm and plan our defenses properly!"

"You can't expect the Weasleys to stay out of the fight Harry!"

Harry turned to see Ron, Ginny and all of their brothers standing in a group a few paces away. What now? This day wasn't insane enough without Ron... doing what ever the hell he was doing. Hopefully the twins brought some of their more... interesting inventions.

"Ron!" Hermione said shrilly. "This isn't the time for..."

Harry's eyes widened as Ron pulled a very short sword from his robes while the other Weasley siblings and oddly Colin Creevey crowded in close. Harry pulled Hermione to stand behind him, just in case Ron had come completely unhinged.

Ron Weasley held the short sword out in front of his body at eye level. Harry could see his best friend's blue eyes as the red head stared at him through the hilt. Ron then raised the sword above his head with the blade pointed skyward.

“**Thunder!**” he said. The sword seemed to pulse, and Harry would have sworn it doubled in length.

“**THUNDER!**” Again the sword pulsed, and doubled its length. Somewhere in the back of his mind Harry felt a tickle of recognition. He had heard this before... somewhere. While he was in his... cupboard?

“**THUNDERCATS! HO!**” The Weasleys (and Colin) disappeared in a burst of white light. When the light faded the Weasleys (and Colin) were gone, and in their place stood eight humanoid... cats.

“Thundercats?” Hermione asked almost hysterically. “He-man and the Thundercats?”

“**We’ll deal with Riddle Harry!**” boomed the tall lionish catman. “**You explain everything Colin!**” The six of the seven former Weasleys leaped into a large white treaded vehicle, while the female raced ahead on foot at incredible speed.

The smallest of the transformed group, a being seemingly of mixed reptile and cat heritage waddled over to Harry and Hermione dragging his tail on the ground. “Don’t worry Harry (**snarf!**) We’ve been waiting for this day (**snarf!**) for years! V-V-V-Voldemort (**snarf!**) doesn’t stand a chance. (**snarf!**)” The odd creature turned and waddled after the rapidly departing vehicle holding the Weasleys. “Wait for me Ron-O! (**snarf!**) I can help!”

“Wait a minute.” Hermione said. “Wiley Kit and Cheetara were both female. If Ginny became Cheetara, then which of the twins is Wiley Kit? That would mean...”

“Hermione.” Harry interrupted. “With all the insane things that are happening THAT’S what bothers you?”

The young woman thought for a moment, the manic look fading from her eyes ever so slightly. “You make a good point. I’ll be quiet now.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

At the edge of the fallen wards, Voldemort looked disdainfully at the figure that was riding some sort of animal as he approached. Slightly behind the rider was another group of Hogwarts defenders in what appeared to be some kind of Muggle vehicle. In a sudden puff of vapor a small blond haired third year boy appeared at the gates and began walking directly toward the Dark Lord while shedding his school robes to reveal an orange boilersuit. "And who are you, little boy?"

"I'm Naruto Uzumaki, shinobi of the Hidden Village of the Leaf, on an S-rank mission to protect this school. I've been here for three years, waiting for you to attack, in a country with NO RAMEN. For making me wait in such barbaric conditions, I am going to beat you into the ground, and then I will laugh at you. BELIEVE IT!"

He made several gestures with his hands, and shouted "TAJU KAGE BUNSHIN NO JUTSU!"

Before the Death Eaters' bewildered eyes, the very air wavered across the whole frontage of Hogwarts' grounds, before a veritable army materialized out of thin air. An army where every member looked

exactly like each other, and exactly like the boy who had summoned them.

Lucius Malfoy cleared his throat and stammered, "Wh-what are you?"

As one, every one of the identical thirteen-year-olds crossed their arms and said, "We are called Legion...because there are a whole lot of us."

With that, the battle was joined.

Lucius cast a cutting curse at one of the horde of boys in orange jumpsuits, only to see his intended target cartwheel out of the path of his spell, sending a throwing knife back Lucius' way. Out of the corner of his eye he spotted the Dark Lord Face palm himself while muttering "It had to be Japanese Magic. I fucking HATE Japanese Magic. If one gigantic, pipe smoking, talking, toad shows up, I'm so out of here!"

-----oooOOOooo-----

Daphne Greengrass rushed out of the castle to stand in front of Harry.

"Daphne, it's dangerous out here. Get back inside and get evacuated with the others."

"Hermione Granger." The Tall raven haired beauty put her right fist into the palm of her left hand and bowed slightly. "In 1216 Amicus Granger happened upon a cloaked traveler being attacked by highway men. Without concern for his own safety Amicus waded into the fight with his sword and assisted this unknown traveler against her attackers, taking an arrow meant for her. That traveler was my adopted mother, Queen Hippolyta of Themyscira. Amicus died saving my mother's life. Themyscira owes a debt to the House of Granger, since that day the women of Themyscira have protected those of the House of Granger, waiting for the opportunity to repay the debt we owe. Today is the day that debt is finally paid."

The young woman's robes fell to the ground revealing a form fitting black body suit that appeared to have a moving sparkling star field covering its expanse. (and provoking a gasp from a majority of the observing males) Each forearm was encircled by a silver band from the wrist to half way to the elbow.

"I am Troia. I am tasked by my mother to fight your battle Hermione. The fact that I will enjoy it is just icing on the cake." The young woman leaped into the air, and amazingly flew toward the battle that roiled at the edge of the fallen wards. "For Themyscira!"

Hermione looked to Harry. "Daphne is an Amazon?"

"Don't look at me." Harry said shaking his head. "This one is all on you. I had nothing to do with that."

Out of the corner of his eye Harry caught some movement... Was that Dean Thomas in a blue trench coat flying on a... dustbin lid? What the hell was going on?

-----oooOOOooo-----

Neville riding astride a very transformed Crookshanks approached a cluster of Death Eaters and

Werewolves at a gallop. A sickly yellow crucio arced toward them, only to be absorbed by Neville's sword.

Neville dismounted from the huge cat in a smooth motion. "Werewolves Battlecat! Sic 'em! If you kill 'em you can eat 'em."

The cat unleashed another ground shaking roar, and was among the Weres with a single leap claws and teeth slashing.

"It's time to pay the piper little Death Eaters, but if you point me to Bellatrix LeStrange, I'll let you surrender!"

The Death Eater in the front of the formation reached up and removed her mask. Her actual face a mask of astonishment. "Longbottom? What happened to my ickle Nevie?"

An evil grin crossed Neville's face. "Happy Birthday to me!"

-----oooOOOooo-----

"We're here too Harry."

Harry turned his attention to Filius Flitwick. "Professor?"

"Wait until you see what Ravenclaw can do to lad!" The small man raised his wand and twirled it above his head. "Ravenclaws! To me!"

Members of Ravenclaw house rallied to their Head of House's side. They began to chant in unison with the small man as his raised wand began to emit a strange blue mist. After a few moments the mist obscured the students of Ravenclaw house, then as quickly as it appeared the mist dissipated, revealing the Ravenclaws to be very changed.

The 'claws now appeared to be universally male, and to be very short, no more than three apples tall. Their skin was blue; from the waist down they wore a white body stocking, with holes in the rear that exposed a short blue tail. Atop their hairless head were white Phrygian caps. A few wore spectacles. They were rallied around a single noticeably different individual. His skin was also blue, but his body stocking and cap were red, and his tiny chin was covered with a white beard.

Harry glanced over to Hermione; she was staring at the transfigured 'Claws in open mouthed amazement.

"Is the one in red Flitwick?" He asked.

"I have no idea." She shook her head as if to clear the insanity of the situation away. "You know what they are, right?"

"I wish I didn't."

The small red clad blue man began to speak. "You all know why we're here. We fight evil for Hogwarts, for Ravenclaw, and for all those perceived to be too small and weak to fight for

themselves!” The small man gestured and a cigar appeared in his right hand. He clenched the lit stogie between his teeth and ran toward the pitched battle, stopping at the edge of the crowd of transfigured Ravenclaws and looked back at them. “Come on, you mother-Smurfers! You wanna Smurf forever? Let’s go, and let the forces of Darkness hear your battle cry and know that blue death comes for them!”

The assembled mass of tiny blue hominids began to skip toward the battle and their battle cry rent the air.

“La la la la la, la te la te da!”

Harry and Hermione again exchanged looks. Hermione’s eyes were wide and very nearly hysterical. Harry just turned away from the battle and walked to the castle wall, where he sat down with his back against the castle. Hermione followed him, and sat down next to him, again taking his hand.

“This sounds stupid to ask, but...” she paused. “What’s wrong Harry.”

“I was bugged by what Neville did. Dennis just weirded me out. I flat out refuse to believe what Ron and Ginny and the rest of the Weasley’s did, and don’t get me started on Colin. I saw it, but I don’t believe it. Daphne was weird and the rest of them... But what the ‘claws did... That was just...”

“Smurfed up?”

“Yes damn it. Completely Smurfed up.” He looked Hermione in the eye. “I swear to God and Merlin, if the Hufflepuffs change into Snorks, I’m going to kick someone’s ass.”

Hermione nodded her understanding, and then started to giggle uncontrollably. “The ‘Puffs wouldn’t be Snorks. They’d be Care-Bears.” She gasped out between fits of giggling.

“Oh, please. Don’t give them any ideas.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

Riddle was near panic. The flying woman had cut a swath through his dementors and harpies and was now bearing down on him. She parried every spell he cast with the bracelets she wore on each arm as she swooped in to attack. Worst of all, her attacks were not magical, despite the magic he could feel was part of her. No, her attacks were physical. The last time the woman had flashed by him she had landed a punch that had broken his jaw in three places and cost him four teeth. How could a woman hit so hard?

Finally Riddle could hear the screech of the banshees as they arrived to defend him. The woman actually laughed and moved to intercept the Irish deamons.

The Dark Lord cast a quick healing charm on himself, and then gathered his strength to prepare for apparition to anywhere that wasn’t here. It was then he noticed that it had suddenly become very dark.

-----oooOOOooo-----

The young woman known around Hogwarts as ‘Daphne Greengrass’ urged a bit more speed out of her power of flight. She hadn’t tussled with banshees for a while. They were always fun. She noticed that there was a figure suddenly flying in formation with her to her left, she glanced over to find Seamus Finnegan clad in a green and white body suit. The cheeky Irishman winked at her, then cut loose with a piercing scream and dropped three of the Demon Banshees to the ground.

“You’re good.” Daphne shouted. “We’ll talk after.”

Seamus winked again, then focused his sonic scream on his next target.

-----oooOOOooo-----

“Harry!” The Lionized Ron called out as the oddly transformed Hogwarts defenders came running back to the castle. “We did it!”

“We sure did Harry!” The pumped up Neville added, tossing a pale leathery mass at Harry’s feet. “This is what’s left of Voldemort!”

Harry looked down at the crushed wheezing form of the former Dark Lord. “What the hell happened to him?”

“Sorry.” Dennis said with a shrug. “Daphne beat on him for a while, and then, well, Gamakichi sort of stepped on him.”

“Gamakichi?” Harry asked.

“Oh, he’s just this giant Toad I’ve got this deal with.”

“A giant toad? Ok, given all that has happened today that makes perfect sense. Why is he still alive?” Harry asked.

“Because ‘either must die at the hand of the other’ Harry. Remember?” Hermione said breathlessly.

“So he can’t die until I kill him?” Harry asked kneeling down beside the murderer of his parents. “Hello Tom, you’re a mess.”

The wheezing form managed to whisper. “Damn you Potter...”

Harry reached out and laid his hand on the man’s head, attempting to whip the blood from his enemy’s eyes. He wanted Riddle dead, but couldn’t kill him while he was like this. As soon as his fingers touched Riddle’s homunculus, the body convulsed and collapsed.

“He’s dead.” Harry said standing away from the body in horror. “I didn’t do anything, I just touched him!”

“Wow ‘either must die at the hand of the other. That’s awfully literal for a prophecy.” Hermione observed.

-----oooOOOooo-----

That night, the parties were still in full swing. But Harry had begged off, retreating to the Gryffindor Head's suite where Hermione was waiting.

Breaking the kiss he shared with the bushy haired Head Girl, Harry said, "I'm actually free Hermione. We can have a future together."

"Believe me I know Harry." She said standing up. "I'm going to slip into something more comfortable"

Oh hot damn! Harry thought as he watched her enter her bedroom of the suite. "You know it's funny, just about everyone but you and me ended up having some kind of weird secret power."

"Actually, just you Harry. I got my own powerup." Hermione's voice drifted out from her bed chamber. "It's just mine didn't have any combat applications."

"You did? What was it?"

Hermione appeared in the door way to her bed room, dressed in a black leather bustier, G-String, fishnet stocking and stiletto heels. "I'm Nasty Girl." She said. "Wanna see my power?"

-----oooOOOooo-----

In Order of appearance:

- **Unless otherwise noted, all of the crossovers are products of my own sick mind.**

He-man: Property of Mattel Toys (If it's Mattel, its swell) and Filmation Television Productions.
Neville/He-Man Because Nev never got the respect he deserved in canon.

Naruto: Property of Masashi Kishimoto and Viz Media. The Dennis Creevey/Naruto scenes suggested and mostly written by Ronnie.McMains II

Thundercats: Property of Warner Brothers Entertainment
Weasley/Thundercats
Bill/Panthro, Charlie/Tygra, Ginny/Cheetara, the Twins/Wily-Kit and Wily-Kat (techie pranksters both of them). Percy/Jaga. Ron/Lion-O, Colin/Snarf.

Troia: Property of DC Comics
Daphne/Troia. Just because you know she's look hot in the outfit.

Static: Property of DC Comics
Dean/Static... Why not?

Banshee: Property of Marvel Comics
Seamus/Banshee... Well because he's Irish.

Nasty Girl: Property of Jim Valentino Productions
Hermione/Nasty Girl, because you know she would be.

Harry Potter and the Personal Ads

A blurry eyed Harry Potter stumbled down the stairs from the 7th year boy's dormitory to the Gryffindor common room. Even with Tom gone for six months now, he still couldn't manage to sleep through the night without potions. Potions he stubbornly refused to use.

Not a healthy train of thought he mused as he threw himself onto one of the sofas. As was usual at four am, the common room was empty, the fireplace banked, and the room lit only by a few flickering wall sconces.

Why couldn't he sleep? Tom was gone. Malfoy's father, Bellatrix, all the Death Eaters were gone. Why couldn't he sleep? Harry knew the answer. He felt the pain of every victim, the loss of every family. There were those who blamed him for the deaths he hadn't prevented. Hell, he blamed himself for the deaths he hadn't prevented.

Shaking his head as if to jar that thought loose, Harry noticed the copy of the Daily Prophet laid on the table where Lavender and Parvati had left it the night before. He reached out to pick the paper up, and was unsurprised to find that the giggling pair had been looking through the personals. Even after all that happened, those two were just so... normal.

Hmm...

SMM: 17. Seeks double-jointed supermodel type who owns a brewery. Access to free concert tickets a plus, as is an open minded twin sister. Contact Seamus F. ref: DP30421

Harry stifled a laugh. Pure Seamus, it couldn't be anyone else. Of course the damned Irishman would get half dozen replies and the women would mud wrestle to decide who got him. Lucky Bastard.

SMM: 38. Potions Master. Hideous-looking, greasy haired, smelly, ill-tempered, lazy, cowardly, chronically abusive, and a complete bastard seeks total opposite for romance and meaningless sex. Bushy hair a plus. Contact Sevvie S ref: DP1923

Harry's laughter terminated immediately. Surely not. It couldn't be... Wizards of generations past had odd names on average... Surely Snape wasn't the only potions master named 'Sev'... right? "Bushy hair a plus"? What was that Brain Bleach spell?

SMM: 97. Short, charms-minded, balding, partially blind ex-professional duelist with a passion for covering lovers in sour cream and gravy seeks exotic, heavily tattooed piercing fanatic, preferably hairy and stinky, either sex, for whippings, bizarre sex and fashion consulting. No freaks. Contact The Wick Man. Ref: DP0043

The Man-Who-Conquered was starting to think he should be putting the paper down and walking away from it as quickly as he could. He refused to believe the association he had just made. He refused to believe that Professor Flitwick would ever...

SMM: 38. Bitter, unsuccessful middle aged loser who yearns for his happier youth while wallowing in an unending sea of inert, drooping loneliness looking for a specific 24 year old needy leech-like hanger-on with pink hair to abuse with dull stories, tired sex and Herb Alpert albums. Come back to me Baby, you'll be my Tijuana Taxi, I'll be your furry little problem. Contact Romulus L. Ref:

DP6548

Pink hair? Furry little problem? Romulus? Who did he think he was fooling? Was Remus using the personals to talk to Tonks? This was wrong, so very wrong. It was like a car wreck, he didn't want to look, but he couldn't tear his eyes away.

SMM: 17. Submissive male seeks dominant female with extensive knowledge of knots. Redheads a big plus. Contact Drake-O ref: DP982451

Drake-O? Drake-O? Who the hell did he think he was fooling? Redheads?

SMF: 64. When I was thirty my dates had to be young, tall, handsome, rich, intelligent. Now I'm 64, they only have to know how to read and use an owl! Contact Miss Kitty. Ref: DP4580

That could be anyone. Harry told himself. Why am I reading these things? Stop reading this you idiot before you do yourself damage! Harry wet his lips and looked to the next ad.

SMM: 17. Looking for SMF 18-65 for an intimate encounter with my Mum and myself in a threesome. She's a young 53 yrs of age and she's very pretty. 4' 3" 420 lbs. Sure, her tits drag on the carpet till her nipples bleed and she had to lift them and her belly out of the way just to sit down, but she's beautiful. The things she does with her teeth are out of this world, too, especially when they're in her mouth. Little Won is three and a half inches long. I hope that's not too big for you ladies. If it is, I promise to be gentle. Anyway, Mum's got dinner ready, and I gotta go take a shit to clear out some room, so I'll just wait for you ladies to respond if you think you can handle all this Red Headed love. If you just want Mum, that's cool too. I can just watch. Let me know soon. Contact Won-Won. Ref: DP432654

The words **NO-NO-NO-NO-NO** ran though Harry's head. Not Ron and ... **No-no-no-NO!**

SMF: 16. Obnoxious, silly, pierced, tattooed, insane, hormonally unbalanced, potion using, bat-bogey casting, Savior-watching redhead student from Hell, seeking Harry. My body is all yours. I'M YOUR PONY HARRY, RIDE ME. Contact Gin. Ref: DP786234876

Harry dropped the paper, heaved himself from the sofa and ran to the far side of the room, trying not to scream in terror. This couldn't be real. This must be one of the Twin's jokes... Right? Sure, a joke paper. Ha, they got me this time. A joke. Ha!
Please god, let it be a joke.

-----oooOOOooo-----

After five minutes of standing on the far side of the room, Harry began to feel very silly. Even if it wasn't a joke paper (which it had to be!), was there really anything all that wrong with people looking for love? Of course not (excepting that Ron and his Mum thing, and that Ginny and him thing, those two were just **WRONG!**.)

Harry returned to the sofa he had been laying on. Harry picked up the paper again. No more personal ads. On the off chance this turned out to be the real thing, he didn't need to be clawing his eyes out. He began to page through the paper in search of the Quidditch league scores, when, while still in the ads section, he noticed a large ad circled in red. His curiosity overwhelmed his better judgment and noting

that this was in the Employment section, he began to read the highlighted ad.

20-30 henchmen needed for moderately-sized Dark organization with large expansion potential (magical fortresses built into geological structures, corruption of government officials, and possible genesis of 'nemesis' vigilante). The Magical themed Corvid-Talon organization is seeking applicants willing to learn new skills, including but not limited to the operation of specialized 'combat curses' including but not limited to the Unforgivables. Applicants will also be required to wear specialized uniform when at work (functional traditional robes with open faced hoods.), except in cases where deception is required (posing as hostages in order to ambush vigilantes, etc) Corvid-Talon employees will always display their faces to the world.

Desired (but not necessarily required) in applicants:

- interesting deformations/obsessions/abilities giving rise to interesting nicknames (e.g. Lucky, Moldishorts, Wormtail, or similar)
- unwavering loyalty
- being an easily corruptible government official
- ability to work as part of a close-knit team (unless interesting obsession is of the 'lone wolf' variety)
- Marksmanship is a must. Any applicants unable to hit a moving man sized target seven times out of ten shots will be used as a moving man sized target for the next group of applicants.
- Holding a grudge against any well-known vigilante
- A flexible moral code
- All applicants should appear before and swear fealty to The Dark Ladies Athena, Saraswati, and Selene

Equal opportunity employer. Both henchmen and femmes fatales absolutely welcome. Great promotion opportunities - right-hand-(wo)man positions constantly being unexpectedly opened. Would look good on any future Dark villain resume/CV.

Send an owl with details of any prior henchperson work, or details of what is driving you to join the ranks of a Dark organization. Will reply to all serious applicants. Hope to hear from you, and with luck, welcome you into a rewarding and promising career as a Dark Henchman!

- * Location: London, but planned global expansion
- * Compensation: 10,000 Galleon per annum starting salary, with added commissions based around success of dark operations and any incidental theft. Contracts negotiable depending on applicant's personal skills/abilities

Special bonuses available for Metamorphic and Animorphic abilities.

Note: Animagus forms must be in some way useful.

- * Principals only. Recruiters need not apply. If the applicant isn't dark enough to deal with our

application process, perhaps a different vocation is in order.

* Please do not contact us about other services, products or commercial interests upon pain of death.
We know who you are.

Dark ladies? Harry sighed, hoping against hope that this was the latest joke of a joke Newspaper. What was going on here? Since when were such things advertized? This had to be a joke.

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

Breakfast in the Great Hall seemed more or less normal. Ron was eating like a starved man as usual, so he was missing the way Harry kept glancing at him. The morning rush of Owls delivering the morning post, and to his great surprise a rather regal Horned Owl landed in the middle of Harry's plate and offered it's leg to him.

"You're a cheeky one aren't you?" Harry said gently removing the roll of parchment from the bird's leg.

The Owl rolled its eyes in a most owl like manner, then dipped its head to take a piece of bacon off his plate.

"Oh, by all means, help yourself." Harry said unrolling the roll of parchment.

April 12, 1998

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Great Hall

Gryffindor Table

Seat Thirty Four

Dear Mr. Potter,

Congratulations on your selection as the Primary Designated Nemesis of the Corvid-Talon organization. It is with great enthusiasm that we welcome you to the exciting field of Designated Nemesis. Dark Ladies Athena, Saraswati, and I look forward to many years of plotting your down fall, planning death traps, kidnapping your loved ones, and of course attempts on your life.

You've got the reputation; you've certainly got the DADA scores. And now you've got a letter from Corvid-Talon. Maybe you're surprised. Most heroes would be.

But you're not most heroes. And that's exactly why my partners and I urge you to consider carefully attempting to thwart one of the most selective dark organizations in the world.

The level of potential reflected in your performance against the Dark Lord Voldemort is a powerful indicator that you might well be an excellent designated nemesis for Corvid-Talon. It certainly got our attention!

Technomagery's not for you? No problem. It may surprise you to learn we offer more than forty major fields of villainy, from Bunko to mind magics and cognitive sciences, from embezzling (perhaps the best plots in the world) to writing whiney country music songs.

What? Of course, you don't want to be bored. Who does? Life here is tough and demanding, but it's

also fun. Corvid-Talon minions are imaginative and creative - inside and outside working hours.

You're interested in athletics? Great! Corvid-Talon has been fixing more game for more professional sports - 39 - than almost any other dark organization, and a tremendous amateur program so everybody can participate.

***You think we're too psychotic? Don't be too sure. We've got surprises for you there, too.
Why not send the enclosed Information Request to find out more about this unique organization?
Why not do it right now?***

Sincerely,

***Dark Lady Selene,
Director of Nemesis Relation***

P.S. If you'd like a copy of a fun-filled, fact-filled brochure, Death threat, just check the appropriate box on the form.

It was things like this that made Harry really miss Tom Riddle. He may have been a homicidal maniac, but at least he didn't send smarmy letters like this.

This had to be a joke. He glanced around trying to spot the twins. But they weren't in anywhere in sight. Ok, fine. If they were going to these lengths, the least he could do is play along. From his book bag he pulled a sheet of parchment.

"What's all this Harry?" Hermione asked coming to the table for a bite before her first class. "Just some fan mail from some flounder." Harry muttered digging in his bag for his quill. He looked up to see Hermione looking at him oddly. "Sorry. Just a letter I have to answer so that this owl will get out of my plate."

He inked his quill. "Nothing up my sleeve..."

"But that trick never works." Hermione said giggling.

"No doubt about it, I've got to write another letter."

Harry squared his shoulders and began to write.

***April 12, 1998
Dark Lady Selene
Corvid-Talon Director of Nemesis Relations
Where ever the hell you are.***

Dear Dark Lady Selene:

You've got the delusions. You've certainly got the pomposity. And now you've got a letter from Harry Potter. Maybe you're surprised. Most dark organizations would be.

But you're not most dark organizations. And that's exactly why I urge you to carefully consider one

of the most selective Nemesis' in the world, so selective that he will probably choose as many as none of the thousands of accredited dark organizations in the world.

The level of pomposity and lack of tact reflected in your letter is a powerful indicator that your august organization might well be a possibility for Harry Potter's future villain needs. It certainly got my attention!

Don't want Slacker sidekicks? No problem. It may surprise you to learn that my interests cover over 400 fields of heroism, from magical animal control to self resurrection, from Dark Lord Termination (perhaps one of the youngest professionals in the world) to classical damsel rescuing.

What? Of course you don't want egotistical jerks. Who does? I am self indulgent and over-confident, but I'm also amusing. Harry Potter is funny and amusing - whether you're laughing with him or at him.

*You're interested in athletes? Great! Harry Potter has played more sports - 47 - than almost any other Hero, including oddball favorites such as Gob Stones
You think I will pay your organizational fees? Don't be too sure. I've got surprises for you there, too.*

Why not send a deposit of twenty million galleons to increase your chances of being selected by Harry Potter? Why not do it right now?

*Sincerely,
Harry Potter
One hell of a guy.*

P.S. If you'd like a copy of a fun-filled, fact-filled brochure, Harry Potter: What a Guy! just ask.

Satisfied that this was as smart assed an answer as was possible, Harry rolled the sheet up and fastened it to the leg of the Owl, which took a dump on his plate, then took flight with his answer.

Harry looked down at his ruined meal and wondered if the day could possibly get any worse.

Oops!

“Ron. Stop it. Stop it right now.”

Ron Weasley was drunk. Very drunk. Gryffindor had won the Quidditch cup decisively under his Captainship, and the party to celebrate this win started at 4:30 pm not fifteen minutes after Harry had caught the snitch right out from under Malfoy’s nose. In order to ‘liven up’ the party Seamus had produced a case of Firewhiskey from ‘somewhere’.

Ron had been drinking heavily for almost six hours. During that time he had decided a few things. First, He was tired of being in Harry Potter shadow. Second he was tired of being a virgin. The third thing he had decided that night was that he was going to do something about both of those other things. And he was going to do them with Hermione.

The Brainy Gryffindor Witch was NOT drunk. The only thing that kept her at the party was her sense of responsibility toward her Head Girl position. Every part of her wanted to grab her boyfriend of almost a year (though at her insistence they hadn’t told anyone so as to not put forth the impression of impropriety while she was the Head Girl.), drag him to her suite and have her way with him, but that would have to wait a while longer.

“Oh, come on ‘Mione.” Ron slurred. “You know you wanna. You’ve got to be tired of waiting from Harry to grow a pair.” The youngest male Weasley had backed his friend into a corner and was leaning in close enough that she could smell the alcohol on his breath. Ron licked his lips in what he imagined was a seductive manner, “Come on, let’s go up to my dorm. No one’s there but Neville, a couple of silencing charms and he’ll never know.” Ron reached into the gap in the front of Hermione’s robes and lightly squeezed her breast.

Suddenly Ron’s head jerked to the right. It took him a moment to realize that his sudden head movement was caused by Hermione slapping his face.

“You listen to me Ronald Weasley. If you ever make such an insulting proposition toward me or touch me again I will hex you until you’re nothing but a greasy spot on the floor.”

Hermione stomped to the center of the room. “Alright everyone, this party is getting entirely out of hand. Seamus, get rid of the Firewhiskey. Some people...” she shot a filthy look at Ron, “Cannot handle it. I’m leaving for the night. If you want to ensure that there aren’t any more parties this year do something to make me come back. Merlin help you if Professor McGonagall has to come in here.”

Hermione made her way to the door only to have it open before she could touch it. There he was, with those beautiful eyes.

“Hello Hermione.” He said quietly. “The noise of the party was getting to me so I went for a walk.”

Those eyes. He had such beautiful eyes. She took his hand. “Come with me. I want to spend some time with my boyfriend.”

“Really?” His features brightened as that smile that always made her heart flutter crossed his lips. “Are

you sure? I mean you said you wanted to keep a low profile...”

“To hell with it.” She said. “I’m tired of sneaking around. I’m proud of you. I want everyone to know we’re together. I want all the girls to see what they can’t have. But tonight, I want you.”

His smile got wider. “I think I can help you there.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

Ron stumbled into his dorm. Damned stairs. He glanced to Harry’s bed. Empty. Of course. He was out there, doing Hermione. His Hermione. What the hell was with Harry anyway? He could have pretty much any girl he wanted with his money and his Quidditch playing and his good looks and everything. Why did he have to take Hermione? He knew that Ron wanted Hermione. Selfish Bastard.. Ron disrobed for bed, just allowing his clothing to fall to the floor. He spent a few moments searching for the pajama bottoms he wore while sleeping, but... screw it. Sleeping in skin was better anyway.

Harry and Hermione. They were out screwing around, weren’t they? Why did Harry always get what Ron wanted?

The map. He could use the map and see where they were doing it, and turn them in. Serve her right for slapping him like that. Serve Harry right to. Where did he get off humping Ron’s girl?

Ron padded over to Harry’s trunk. Locked.

Crap, he didn’t have his wand! Ron returned to his pile of clothing, and searched until he found the wand, then returned to the trunk.

What was he doing again?

The Map! That’s right, find the map. Catch Harry screwing Hermione and turn them in.

Serve them right.

Ron waved his wand at the trunk. “Alamohello!”

Nothing happened... What that the right charm? ‘alamohello’ Yeah, that sounded right. Just like Potter to have some super secret lock on his trunk while he was fucking Ron’s Hermione. Bastard.

Tired. Ron sat on the bed. Just for a tic. Just to rest.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Harry was in bliss. Being inside of this beautiful girl was heaven; the way she wrapped her legs around his body to hold him inside while she used her hands to hold his face to that she could stare into his eyes while they thrust together amazed him beyond all words.

The first time had been horrible. He had hurt her, made her cry. She had assured him that the first time was often painful, but that with practice it would be so very good.

She was right as usual. They practiced, and it was very good.

They had kept their relationship a secret at Harry's insistence. No sense drawing unwanted attention to the woman he loved.

She was getting close, her eyes dilated, a thin sheen of sweat on her upper lip, her movements faster, more demanding. Recognizing the signs of her approaching orgasm, Harry picked up his tempo and quit reciting potion reaction tables in his head. If he timed this right... Her hands slid to the back of his head and tangled in his hair. She pulled his head down and covered his mouth with her own. As their tongues touched, she peaked. Another stroke, he followed her into orgasm.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Ginny Weasley had a plan. A lot of effort had gone into this plan. It was a good plan. She had a limited window for it to be successful. Tonight she would sleep with Harry Potter.

Time was of the essence. The fertility potion was a complex one, brewing time came from a complex process that varied internally based upon the freshness of each of the fifty seven ingredients. The brew finished today at 5pm. The potion had a shelf life of six hours. It had to be tonight.

Even if the potion wasn't in the picture, she knew her time was running out. Harry and Hermione were both conveniently 'disappearing' at the same time and showing up later with near identical goofy grins. Really, who did they think they were fooling?

Well tonight, Ginny Weasley was getting what she deserved.

-----oooOOOooo-----

She untangled herself from him. She leaned down and kissed him. "I need to use the loo." She whispered.

"Use my cloak, no one will bother you."

She took hold of his penis and stroked him. "You rest. When I get back, I'm going to want a second go."

Harry watched her gorgeous ass disappear into his invisibility cloak and felt the bed move as she left. He reached for his wand where it was wedged into the headboard.

"Nox" he murmured and the wand ceased its gentle glow. His beautiful love had problems with her appearance, no matter how many times he told her she was breath taking. Somehow making love in the dark made her even more uninhibited than she normally was. They had developed this tradition between them. They would make love with his wand lit so that he could see her, then they would repeat in the darkness so that she could release her wild side more completely.

Sometimes he loved being Harry Potter.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Ginny silently crept into the seventh year boy's dorm. She hurriedly cast some whispered silencing charms on his bed, and then tipped back the fertility potion. She was about to crawl into the bed when an idea occurred to her.

A swish of her wand and a muttered incantation caused her long straight hair to kink and bunch up. No sense in taking any chances. She pulled open the drapes and climbed onto the bed.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Hermione returned to her lover, drawing back the drapes and finding him dozing. She smiled to herself. There was a certain satisfaction to know that she could exhaust him so very pleasantly.

She stretched in the darkness, luxuriating in the afterglow. Perhaps it was a reaction to having to deal with Ron and the other idiots at the party, but she was feeling somewhat... aroused by this wonderful man, more so than she normally would be after they made love... He deserved a reward. Something special perhaps, something a bit naughty, something she didn't do all that often. Hermione slid into the bed alongside her lover, and took him in hand and guided him to her mouth.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Ron Weasley woke suddenly from his deep sleep with a start. Something was happening to him. Little Ron was engulfed in a wonderful warm wet suction. With trembling hands he reached toward his crotch in the darkness and encountered hair. A mass of bushy hair bobbing up and down over that breathtaking feeling of suction.

Hermione! Was the only word that flashed across his mind. The feel (dare he imagine skill? No don't dwell on that) of what she was doing was amazing. Ron so wanted this feeling to last, but he was powerless to prevent his orgasm, and he emptied himself into her. To his amazement, she never stopped with her ministrations, bringing him back to full erection in less time than he thought possible.

Once he was fully erect, her mouth abandoned him and she crawled forward. Not wanting to take a chance of jinxing what was happening, Ron lay quietly trembling waiting to see (or rather feel) what his busy haired lover would do next. When the girl straddled him, guided his length into her body, and began the most wonderful motion he had ever imagined he found that he no longer cared.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Harry pulled his lover up to a kiss, loving the feeling of her erect nipples pushing into his chest. He reached down with both hands to cup that wonderful ass. He loved the sound of her giggle as he squeezed her lower cheeks coinciding with her downward stroke. He raised his head to nibble on her neck where it joined to her shoulder, and she squealed into orgasm.

Harry buried himself inside her body completely before rolling her onto her back to continue. "Nice one Potter" she growled. "Don't stop. Do me, do me. Make me come again."

Never one to disobey, Harry slowed his motion, making each stroke slower, and more deliberate. At the same time he moved one hand to her left breast rolling her nipple between his fingers while suckling at her right.

This was their favorite position.

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

“I love you.” Hermione whispered to the man in whose arms she laid, their bodies still joined. He responded by nuzzling her neck sleepily.

She loved the feeling of being so very sexy when he fell asleep with her like this. The idea that she had managed to exhaust him so completely with her body offered a sense of power she found intoxicating. She wasn't hiding this anymore. To hell with appearances, to hell with Voldemort. She wasn't going to waste another day not glorying in their relationship.

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

Ginny woke when her new lover began to stir. She had gotten her Harry. She laid her hand on her stomach and imagined that she could feel the new life moving inside of her. Her baby, Harry's baby.

She couldn't wait to see the look on Hermione's face once the seventh year knew she had lost. There was no doubt in Ginny's mind that Harry would be upset, but once he knew of his child, he would forgive the mother of his child anything. She reached out to shake the shoulder of her life mate, wondering if he would be up to another go before breakfast.

“Gerroff Mum.” Was the response to her gentle touch. Her mouth went dry. Ignoring her nakedness she threw open the drapes of the four poster to allow the morning light into the bed.

Then she began to scream.

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

Harry arrived in the Great Hall to discover the Gryffindor table in an uproar. Harry was ninety eight percent certain that nothing he had done could have caused the excitement. Surely everyone was over yesterday's game.

It was when he sat down and discovered that the anxiety was of the bad variety that his estimation of his blamelessness ticked up to ninety nine percent. Dean Thomas slid into the seat across from him.

“Harry. Where the hell were you last night?”

“Harry was with me.” Said the girl who was just sitting down next to Harry. “He was with me all night.”

“What?” Lavender Brown asked from three seats down the table.

“You and Harry spent the night together?” Parvati asked incredulously.

“Yes we did. Is that a problem?” was the Ravenclaw's response

“Padma! Mum is going to freak completely out!” Parvati predicted. The Gryffindor gossip queens slid

down the bench to Padma's side. "So... is he any good?"

Harry shuddered at the thought of how long it was going to take for the news of his and Padma's relationship to reach all parts of the castle. He turned his attention back to Dean. "What's going on?"

"You and Padma? Good on ya Mate!"

"Dean!"

"Sorry Harry. I'm not sure of the details; all I know is that I got woke up this morning by Ginny Weasley screaming from your bed."

"What the holy hell was she doing in my bed?"

A wide grin spread across Dean's face. "Well, I don't know for certain, but when Seamus and I got there, she and Ron were both in your bed naked as Jaybirds."

"What?"

"Honest to god." Dean said knowing that as a Muggle raised wizard Harry would accept that.

"Oh, that's just... just... His own sister? In my bed?" Harry looked more than a little disgusted "Dobby?"

There was a quiet pop and Dobby appeared at Harry's side. "Yes Harry Potter sir? How can Dobby help the Great Harry Potter Sir?"

Dobby, could you please change the linins on my bed? And the drapes? For that matter could you replace the mattress?"

The elf nodded. "Dobby hear what Weezys do and already replace Harry Potter Sir's entire bed. Dobby sad to hear what Weezys do. Dobby hoped that Weezys not do that anymore, but..." the elf sighed sadly. "Theys do."

Harry wondered what that was about, but had learned not to question Dobby unless he really needed to. "Thank you Dobby."

"Harry Potter sir is calling Dobby if Dobby is needed." And with another pop the Elf was gone.

Harry shook his head. "I can't get the image out of my head. God this is disturbing."

"What's disturbing Harry?" Hermione asked as she sat next to Dean and Neville sat at her other side.

"Neville, where were you last night? You missed the excitement this morning." Dean asked excitedly.

The blond Gryffindor hesitated. "I was... um."

"Neville spent the night with me." Hermione said simply. "What happened that has everyone so excited."

“You and Neville?” Lavender squealed. Hermione responded with a smile and a nod that told the women at the table that details would be available later.

Dean explained about finding the naked Weasleys in Harry’s bed

Hermione summed up the feelings of everyone at the table succinctly. “Ew.”

Harry suddenly looked around the Great Hall.

“What is it Harry?” Padma asked taking his hand under the table.

“It’s nothing.” Harry said. “For a second there I thought I heard Banjo music...”

-----oooOOOooo-----

Ginny sat in the Headmaster’s office, staring at the floor, her long red hair, once again straight, hung down hiding her face from the room. What had she done? What had Ron been doing in Harry’s bed? Harry would never have anything to do with her once he found out. Her blood ran cold. What if the potion worked?

Ron was also in the Headmaster’s office suffering through one of his mother’s traditional screeching lectures. Ron honestly thought he was dying. For the first time in his life he wasn’t hungry. The pain from his binge the night before was devastating, and so obviously so that the Headmaster had sent for Madam Pomfrey asking that she bring Ron a hangover potion.

Dumbledore waited for Molly Weasley to pause her tirade for a breath when he interrupted the Weasley matriarch. “Miss Weasley, I’m afraid I need to know exactly what was in this vial.” The Headmaster held up a small crystal container.

“A fertility potion.” Ginny said without looking up.

“Why on earth would you use a fertility potion on your own brother?” Minerva McGonagall asked.

“Ron wasn’t supposed to be there. It was supposed to be Harry.” The girl said in an emotionless monotone.

“A fertility potion?” Molly gasped. “Oh Ginny how could you?”

It slowly dawned on Ron through the pain that he had actually had sex. And as he recalled it, pretty good sex too. Sure it was with his sister, but still...

Poppy Pomfrey bustled into the Headmaster’s office with a potion vial clutched in her hand. “You pamper them Headmaster.” She stopped to regard Ron with a gimlet eye. “If we let them suffer a bit they might not do it again.”

“Poppy, please?” Dumbledore was having a disturbing bout of déjà vu with this.

Madam Pomfrey shook her head and handed Ron the vial. He unstopped it and tipped the potion

down his throat. Relief was almost instantaneous.

“Thanks Madam Pomfrey, you’re a lifesaver.” Ron paused for a moment. “Is it too late for Breakfast?”

“Poppy, if you would please, it seems we may need more of your services this morning. Miss Weasley seems to have ingested a fertility potion last night before she had carnal relations. If you wouldn’t mind?”

The School Healer made her way over to the youngest Weasley muttering all the while. Poppy made several passes over Ginny’s body with her wand all the while muttering a complex charm. When completed, Ginny’s body pulsed blue twice.

“Congratulation Miss Weasley. You’re going to be a mother.”

Molly gasped, but a grin spread across Arthur’s face. “Well Molly, you can’t say we haven’t been expecting it. There’s only one thing for it. Ron, Ginny, you’re going to get married.”

Dumbledore shook his head sadly. Minerva planted her face into the palm of her right hand muttering something about ‘not again’.

“Married?” Ron sputtered. “Dad, I can’t marry my sister.”

“Oh, of course you can Ronald.” His father said. “We’ll take care of the sister thing. When I’m done no one will remember she’s your sister except family, everyone else will remember Ginny as your cousin on the Prewett side.” Arthur laughed. “Relax son, this is all in hand. It’s not like it hasn’t happened before.”

“What do you mean it’s happened before?” A flustered Ron asked. “Ginny is the first girl in ten generations.”

“That’s what everyone believes Ronny.” Molly said patting his hand. “The truth is all the Weasley women in the last nine generations have married within the family. Whenever a young Weasley girl falls in love with her brother, a family spell is cast that causes almost everyone to believe she is actually from the Prewett clan.”

“But Mum,” Ginny said, horrified at what she was hearing. “You’re from the Prewett clan.”

“No dear. There is no Prewett clan. I was born Molly Weasley, and I fell in love with my handsome big brother.” She leaned over to Arthur for a kiss. “We’ve always been together, just like you and Ron will be.”

There was a short pause. Then Ron and Ginny looked at each other, their eyes met, and for the first time each of them knew what they other felt in their heart of hearts.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Harry Potter was sitting in Charms class watching Professor Flitwick demonstrate a charm for distracting large beasts when a scream rang out in the castle. It took a second of listening to the screech of horror before he realized that it wasn’t one, but two people screaming.

Now what? He asked himself, deciding then and there to stay completely out of what ever it was Ron and Ginny were screaming about.

Mirror Crack'd

When Voldemort had punished Gibbs for not providing a virgin, he had mentioned something about "completely unpredictable results" occurring because of his mistake. Well, early the next morning, just as the sun peeked over the horizon that "completely unpredictable result" woke up in a very confused state of mind in the cavernous master suite of a most impressive mansion.

A slightly modified excerpt from Cloneserpents' Crack'd Mirror

Chapter One

Harry Potter slowly woke with a confused look etched on his face. He was on a huge bed with silk (!) sheets the color of blood in a cavernous room. He found this situation to be exceedingly odd, seeing as he had fallen asleep in his lumpy bed in the smallest bedroom of Number 4. But what had amazed and confused Harry the most was that he had been wakened by several most amazing sensations.

The first being a wonderfully warm wet suction on 'Little Harry'. 'Little Harry' was at full embarrassing attention. The second amazing sensation was in his left hand. It appeared to be cupping a most supple breast, a rock hard nipple pressing against his palm. He raised his head to look down. How very odd. All he could make out was a black haired blur over his crotch. To his left was another black haired blur. The two did not appear to be connected. Why couldn't he see? He had never needed his glasses in his dreams before.

Looking to his right he could make out a blur that appeared to be his glasses on an ornate side table next to his wand. Not wanting to disrupt the dream, but still wanting to see what was going on he snatched his glasses up and put them on. His breath caught in his throat, the girl bobbing on his penis while gazing lovingly into his eyes was one of the Patil twins. Cool, he couldn't remember ever dreaming of them before. The girl whose breast he held in his hand was... the other twin. Ok, this was even better than cool. He had never once managed an 'actually having sex' dream before, much less a 'two girls at one time' dream, and never mind twins.

"Ooh Master" the twin on his left cooed, "You are so good to us. After Padma finishes, will you fuck me, please?"

Ooh. Dream Parvati had the best ideas. Harry's eyes glazed over as he considered the possibilities and was about to agree whole heartedly when the girl on his left gasped. Harry returned his focus to her to find she had a knife against her throat. A knife held by a very angry Luna Lovegood.

"No, no, no little slut. If the Master wants to fuck you, he will. You don't ask."

"Luna?"

"Good morning my love." The grey eyed blond smiled. "I'll be taking care of your needs in a moment; this is just a bit of harem business."

The wonderful warm suction stopped, he looked away from Luna to see Padma had been pulled off of 'little Harry' by her hair by a very angry Hermione Granger. This did not bode well for the dream...

Wait, did Luna just call him her 'love'?

"What are the rules, slut?" The angry Hermione asked.

"Sluts fluff, Alphas fuck." Padma said through teeth clenched in pain from what the bushy haired woman was doing to her.

Harry blinked. What the holy hell is going on? What kind of dream is this?

"The next time you try something like this, we'll cut your tits off." Luna hissed.

An angry Luna? Harry had never even imagined an angry Luna. "Luna?"

"Sorry Master, I over stepped." She returned her attention to the girl under her blade. "The Master likes your tits... He doesn't care about your fingers and toes, I'll remove them instead."

"You two have done your duty." Hermione said angrily. "The master is well and truly fluffed. Get out."

The twins scampered naked from the room. Harry lay on the bed, naked and fully erect, paralyzed by the situation.

"Honestly Harry," Hermione said unlacing her top. "We can't leave you alone for a minute." At some level Harry realized that she had her hair cut to a different style. It now framed her face in a much more flattering manner.

"The nerve of those two, thinking they could take our places, as if we were just your favorite pair of fuck toys." The now naked Luna said taking Parvati's place at Harry's side."

"We are his favorite pair of fuck toys." Hermione said as she straddled him, reaching down to grasp 'little Harry'.

Harry tried to understand what was happening, tried to ask the naked pair what the hell was going on. Then Luna covered his mouth with her own, and Hermione sank down taking his length inside of her. He discovered that he no longer really cared.

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

Now this is the best dream ever. Harry told himself as he collapsed upon the bed. Dream Hermione and Dream Luna seemed to like everything he did to them. With them? Whatever. The point was, this was a fantastic dream. Best of all Dream Luna and Dream Hermione didn't seem to have problems with his poor misshapen 'little Harry'. Harry had lived in fear of any woman ever seeing his wedding tackle since Ollie Wood made comments in the Quidditch shower room first year comparing him to a hippogriff. He figured that no woman would ever be interested in anyone so disfigured.

After an hour and a half of what he prayed was a realistic bout of carnal experimentation, Harry laid on the bed looking up at the two women his subconscious had made for him when he noticed that they were both looking at him oddly.

Suddenly the pair had their wands pointed at him. Some part of his orgasm addled mind wondered just

where they had stored those wands...

"Who are you?" Hermione hissed.

"What have you done to our Master?" Luna demanded, her eyes slits of fury. "You look like him, you smell like him, you even taste like him, but you fucked up."

"You cared about our pleasure far beyond what Harry Potter ever would. You fucked up when you didn't make it all about you." Hermione continued. "Where is Harry Potter?"

Well hell. Harry thought. **Even in my dreams the universe craps on me.**

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

"Ok." Harry said. "I want to wake up now."

"Nice try. Who are you?" Dream Luna pushed the tip of her wand into his neck.

"I really want to wake up now." Harry said again speaking to the room at large rather than the two women who had inexplicably gone from having sex with him to pointing wands at him. "The sex was great, but this dream has taken a most unpleasant turn."

"To hell with this." Dream Hermione said. "I'm done wasting time on you. Legilimens!"

And she was in his mind. Harry felt his every memory pour out to the dream woman. This wasn't like when Snape attacked his mind. It wasn't like when Voldemort possessed him. Dream Hermione's Dream legilimency was seductively gentle, a light suction on his memories, which pulled them to the woman without causing any him pain. He poured himself into her, an act more intimate than any of the sexual acts they had just shared. Every moment of his life from his first memories to waking up this morning with a pair matching Patil twins having their amazing way with him moved before his eyes and drained into the woman until he knew orgasmic oblivion.

Still naked, Hermione Granger rocked backward on her haunches, dazed by the extent of what had just happened, her mind desperately attempting to process the memories she had just received and a crushing headache starting to bloom in the middle of her forehead, "Holy Fuck."

Those words shocked Luna Lovegood more than the substitution of this doppelganger for her beloved master. Hermione never swore, except during sex. "Who is he?" she asked.

"Headache potion" Hermione gasped through clenched teeth. "He and I just had a full mind meld."

Luna immediately scampered to the potions locker and returned to her friend. Hermione tipped the vial back and sighed as the potion worked its magic.

"A full mind meld? How is that possible? That's only supposed to happen when the caster has the complete and utter trust of the subject. He isn't Harry, hell even Harry wouldn't trust either of us enough to successfully meld."

"He IS Harry Potter." Hermione said as the pain behind her eyes abated. "He's just not our Harry. He's

from, well, I guess we could call it a parallel universe, and has no idea of how he got here. He doesn't even know that this is real. He woke up with his cock in Padma's mouth and thinks this is all an especially vivid wet dream. He knows both of us as friends; in his reality we are all students together at a school in Scotland, the twins included. The mind meld worked because he trusts the Hermione he knows completely."

"Then where is our Master?" The blond asked.

"I don't know, and neither does he." The bushy haired woman said gesturing toward the sleeping man. "Perhaps he's where this one came from."

Luna rose from the bed, pulled on a thin robe, and began to pace. "We've got to protect our positions here. Without Harry and his power keeping out enemies at bay we are dead you and I, and everyone else connected to Harry."

"I agree." Hermione thought for a moment. "We aren't without Harry though. This IS Harry Potter. Maybe not the right one, but he could learn. He's Harry without the arrogance."

"But with the nice big cock, boundless energy and an inordinate willingness to please." The blond noted.

"Trust you to keep the important things foremost in your mind Luna." Hermione smiled. "We need him. Through this Harry, we can take control of this fortress and remain safe from the King."

"He has the power of our Master. Just not the experience in using it."

"I agree. He doesn't know it yet, but this Harry Potter just got himself a pair of Mistresses." The Brunette smirked. "Mistresses who appreciate the nice big cock, boundless energy, and the inordinate willingness to please."

Luna laughed. "Now who's keeping the important things foremost in her mind?"

Harry Potter and the Fine

Pain.

That pretty much defined the universe that Harry Potter found himself in.

Pain.

This was what he had imagined Hell to be like back when he went to Sunday school, before Dudley's behavior caused the fat little boy to be ejected from services, which meant that there must be something wrong with the church, so the Dursleys never attended again.

Pain.

Was he still alive? It didn't seem possible, not really. But could you really hurt this much and not being alive? The darkness exploded into light which caused even more pain. He was suddenly aware of a horrible taste in his mouth and a buzzing sound.

...dmast... rry? ... me ack .. me.

Padma's voice?

PADMA! The last thing he remembered was stepping between Padma and the oncoming blue curse. He remembered being surprised when the curse had shattered his shield and hit him fully in the chest... then nothing.

The light was fading again. The pain was reduced, but still almost all consuming, as the universe grayed, Harry tried to remember how to pray so that he could ask the all powerful being they told him about in that Sunday school to protect his friends.

Yet another vile taste filled his mouth and the light came back.

"...amn yo... rry Pot... die... me..."

A different voice broke in.

"...I can... o. ... up to... "

Something (someone?) was touching his face, his lips... his face seemed to be... wet?

Padma was speaking again. "... ove...ou...ke up...Harry. Wak.. up...."

Harry ignored the pain. Padma needed him. He put all of his effort into opening his eyes. There she was. Tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"Harry?"

He tried to speak, but nothing came. A small amount of water was poured into his mouth. Harry painfully swallowed. "Padma?" he managed to whisper.

"Harry!" the witch clung to him.

Hermione came into his field of vision being supported by Luna Lovegood. "Harry?"

"Hey H'mione." He managed to whisper. "Luna. Where's Ron?"

"Ronald is in the far bed Harry." Luna said. "He's sleeping. Madam Pomfrey says he'll be fine in the morning. Amazingly we didn't lose a single student or staff member. You were hurt the worst, Madam Pomfrey didn't know if you'd ever wake up."

"Why..." Harry's strength was fading. "Why are we still alive?"

Luna gestured with her wand and a chair slid from the wall to Harry's bedside. So very carefully the blond Ravenclaw assisted her lover into the chair. Hermione looked up from her seat and gave Luna a chaste kiss that promised more to come. Through his pain Harry remembered how surprised he had been when the pair had come out to the castle only a few days before.

Hermione took a painful breath and explained.

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

The Dark Lord Voldemort and a contingent of fifteen of his best Death Eaters had made their way into Hogwarts Castle via the Vanishing Cabinet that Draco Malfoy had located in the Room of Requirements and had painstakingly repaired.

Once inside the ancient castle's ward, the Dark Lord and his minions made their way to the Great Hall where the evening meal was in session. Voldemort burst into the Great Hall and immediately fired off the curse he had specifically designed to destroy Harry Potter.

Taking the boy's damnable luck and freakish reflexes into account rather than curse the boy himself the Dark Lord targeted the girl his spies had told him was Potter's woman, and of course the boy placed himself in the way of the curse. The Dark Lord's laughter when 'The Chosen One' fell to the curse chilled the blood of all who watched.

Neither the Dark Lord, nor his minions expected the maelstrom of spell fire that came from every direction when the students reacted to the attack. Still the fight, though brutal was short as the Death Eater's cut a swath through the assembled students and staff while the Dark Lord himself dealt with the Headmaster, after almost twenty minutes of magical combat did the fight between the two magical titans reach its climax, with an exhausted Dumbledore on his knees before an injured but victorious Voldemort.

"Here he is, the Champion of Mudbloods and Squibs!" The Dark Lord said, his voice magically amplified to echo throughout the castle. "Any last words Headmaster?"

Dumbledore looked up and drew a painful breath, but before he could speak the Great Hall went dark, a storm forming in the enchanted ceiling. An actual bolt of lightning arced from the ceiling to the Staff

Table. It was only after his eyes cleared from the flash blindness that Voldemort discovered that everyone of his Death Eaters were now dead, each with a knife from the Hogwarts Dinner service buried in each eye.

“What is this? How did you do this Dumbledore?” The Dark Lord screamed.

“**THOMAS MARVOLO RIDDLE**” a new voice echoed throughout the castle. “**THE TIME OF YOUR JUDGEMENT HAS COME!**” Every eye in the Great Hall was focused at the far entrance to the Great Hall, where hovering over the Slytherin table was Madam Irma Pince, the school Librarian, magic arcing from her body, her hair, having escaped its normal bun, cascaded around her in ways that caused more than a few of the male students to suddenly start drooling slightly.

“What is this?” Voldemort bellowed

“**YOU LEFT HOGWARTS IN JUNE OF 1945 AND NEVER RETURNED THE COPY OF OGDEN TRULOVE’S DARK ARTS OMNIBUS YOU HAD CHECKED OUT OF MY LIBRARY.**” The woman took a breath and gestured at the shredded paper littering the Great Hall “**YOUR IDIOT DEATH EATERS HAVE DESTROYED AT LEAST FIFTY OF MY PRECIOUS BOOKS TONIGHT. I CAN HEAR THE DAMAGED BOOK WARDS SCREAMING EVEN NOW. IT IS TIME TOM MARVOLO RIDDLE, TIME TO PAY YOUR FINE.**”

-----oooOOOooo-----

“It was horrible Harry” Hermione sobbed at the memory. “I mean, it was Voldemort and everything, but the things she did to him, just horrible. Every sword and battleaxe in the castle, flying from every direction, she sliced him into tiny little pieces.” The bushy haired Gryffindor shook her head.

“That was when Ron got hurt, instead of standing still, he jumped up to try to hex Riddle and caught the flat of a battleaxe in the back of the head.” Padma explained.

“Riddle was begging Madam Pince to let him die, but she wouldn’t, she just kept at him for three hours.” Hermione continued. “It was horrible.”

“It truly was Harry.” Luna said sobbing. “Her power was unbelievable; I guess all that time with unrestricted access to all those books, let her become so very powerful. I never thought I would feel sorry for a dark lord, but...” the blond Ravenclaw couldn’t continue,

“When she finally let him die,” Padma pickup up the story, “She just straightened her robes and went back to the Library.”

“Bloody Hell.” Harry breathed. “Is Neville here? Dean? Seamus?”

“I’m here Harry.” Neville said stepping into Harry’s field of view.

“Nev, I need you to go to the dorm. I need...” Harry’s strength failed him.

“What is it Harry?”

“I need you to go to the dorm...”

“Yeah Harry?”

“There’s a library book under my pillow... It’s due back today; could you turn it in for me?”

The Hufflepuff Conspiracy

Part One

"It is somewhat interesting that Hufflepuffs and Hufflepuff graduates of Hogwarts are victims of homicide and other violent crimes to amuch lesser extent than Gryffindors, Ravenclaws, and Slytherins. There is, however, no adequate explanation for this. This fact is viewed as a statistical anomaly."

***-- "Hogwarts, a History", 155th edition.
Theodore Entwistle, Editor (Hufflepuff 1865)***

When he looked back, even a month later, Harry found he had only scattered memories of the next few days. It was as though he had been through too much to take in any more. The recollections he did have were very painful. The worst, perhaps, was the meeting with the Diggorys that took place the following morning.

They did not blame him for what had happened; on the contrary, both thanked him for returning Cedric's body to them. Mr. Diggory sobbed through most of the interview. Mrs. Diggory's grief seemed to be beyond tears.

"He suffered very little then," she said, when Harry had told her how Cedric had died. "And after all, Amos... he died just when he'd won the tournament. He must have been happy."

-Excerpt from Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.

The Review

The Hufflepuff Council was assembling in what my Auntie Amelia described as our most holy of holies. Helga's Redoubt. A chamber accessible to students only through the Hufflepuff common room, and even then only after all six of the currently serving Prefects pressed their wands to the House Crest over the Common Room's main fireplace and incanted Helga's name. Godric Gryffindor had his Armory with his weapons and armor. Rowena Ravenclaw had her near mythic Potions Labs, Salazar Slytherin had his sinister Chamber with its secrets and monster, Helga Hufflepuff had her Redoubt, a meeting hall dedicated to the continued unity of her house.

Helga herself chaired the very first meeting of the Hufflepuff Council. The House Histories tell us that at the time it was called the 'Council of Badgers' and indeed even Hufflepuff House itself was known as The Badger House. The current name only came into use following the death of our beloved Helga, when the house and Council renamed themselves by unanimous vote. The other houses (Lion, Serpent and Corvid)followed suit to honor their own founders shortly thereafter.

As new fifth years my entire cohort was inducted into the Council. To be clear, everyone in the house knew about the Council, actual membership wasn't offered until fifth year, but during their

indoctrination sessions with Professor Sprout, every first year 'Puff was told of the Council and informed of the first and most important rule of the Hufflepuff Council. No One Talks About the Hufflepuff Council to any outsider. Ever. Full Stop.

I recall first year how we all we all thought that the First Rule was so funny. It wasn't until after the Christmas Hols third year we found out just how serious the First Rule was, when it was discovered that Sally-Anne Perks had mentioned the Council to her cousin, who was a sixth year Ravenclaw.

The next day Sally-Anne was gone, and everyone in the house got a refresher interview with Professor Sprout, wherein she explained the importance of the First Rule again. Sally-Anne's disappearance frightened me to no end. I ended up begging Auntie Amelia to meet with me on the next Hogsmeade weekend. She explained that both Sally-Anne and her cousin had any and all references to the Council obliterated from their memories, and that Sally-Anne, having proven that she could not be trusted with house secrets, had been transferred to Beauxbatons to complete her education. Auntie smiled at my concerns and told me that it was my Hufflepuff side that had me so worried about my friend.

So, we filed into the Redoubt for the first Council meeting of the year. As per tradition we were seated in our cohorts, my best friend Hannah was to my left, and Justin Finch-Fletchley sat to my right. The room filled quickly. I was surprised to see the seats on the far side of the Redoubt filled with so many adults. "Legacy 'Puffs" the Seventh year Prefect told me when I asked. The floor of the chamber was a raised platform with a row of seats. Those seats were also filling up. I could see my Auntie Amelia, and it was clear that Auntie was not happy in the slightest. That was when I spotted her.

Cho Chang. Ernie Macmillan, who was sitting on the other side of Hannah just stared at the Ravenclaw in amazement.

"This is the first time in living memory a non-Hufflepuff has been allowed into a meeting of the Council!" He whispered. The rest of us nodded. Ernie was our resident history buff.

Cho sat next to the Diggorys, in the row of seats reserved for visitors down on the floor facing the raised platform. "This must be about Cedric." Hannah breathed in my ear. "That's the only possible reason for her to be here."

I fought off a smile. A lot of the 'Puff Witches harbored resentment toward Cho for daring to date Cedric, causing him to be unavailable to his housemates. Until this moment I hadn't known that Hannah had been one of them. I wondered if Ernie noticed.

Evidently he had. "I wonder..." Ernie said with a slight smile. "Will the concealed council's counsel console Cho?"

Professor Sprout entered the chamber, preventing any of the normal violence that Ernie's word play usually garnered him. Our Head of House was followed by Madam Pomfrey. That struck me as odd that I hadn't known that the School Healer was a 'Puff... Professor Sprout was obviously furious, yet another oddity. Our Head of House was usually the model of the jovial elder witch.

The Head of Hufflepuff house reached the podium, and looked out at the assembled Council. "Thank you for coming so promptly for this first meeting of the Council for the year. As all of you know, one of our own was murdered last year. This session of the Council is convened to determine exactly what happened. Rumors are rife in the castle and indeed the world at large. The only witness to this

unforgivable act of violence was Harry Potter, who says that Cedric was killed by Peter Pettigrew on the orders of You-Know-Who. The official position of the Ministry of Magic is that Potter is delusional, that both Pettigrew and He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named have been dead for more than a decade and that Cedric's death was due to 'Misadventure' whatever that means."

"The Ministry has made no effort to discover the truth of the situation. I find this to be unacceptable. In accordance with the ancient rules of the Hufflepuff Council, I call for a Hufflepuff Inquiry."

Auntie Amelia stood. "Amelia Bones, Hufflepuff cohort of '36. You all know me. Despite the best efforts of our Housemates, the Ministry remains corrupt and incapable of doing what needs done. I second Pomona's call for an Inquiry."

"The call for an Inquiry has been seconded." Professor Sprout continued. "Any discussion?"

Silence filled the Redoubt. "The call for an Inquiry has been seconded and no discussion has been offered. I now call for the vote. All in favor of a Hufflepuff Inquiry say 'Aye'"

Helga's Redoubt rang with the rumbling 'Ayes' of the assembled members of my family's traditional House.

"Opposed?"

This was met with silence.

The Inquiry

"The proposal passes." Professor Sprout intoned. "I call the Hufflepuff Inquiry to order. Some of you may have noticed Miss Cho Chang, Ravenclaw cohort of 97 in the gallery. Given her relationship with Cedric Diggory she was offered the chance to sit in on our inquiry in order to know what had happened to the young man she had betrothed herself to. Miss Cho has agreed to be voluntarily obliviated upon the completion of the Inquiry; she will be left with the knowledge of what has happened to Cedric, but not of the Council itself."

Sprout paused while the assembled Hufflepuffs digested this information, and then she continued. "I call Hogwarts Healer Poppy Pomfrey."

The Healer stepped up to the podium with a small file of notes. "Most of you know me. Poppy Pomfrey, Hufflepuff cohort of 1933. I treated Harry Potter after his return from his purported encounter with the Dark Lord Voldemort, but not before he was attacked by the Death Eater Barty Crouch Jr, on the castle grounds."

A gasp ran through the room. I, like most of the assembled students, had no idea who this 'Barty Crouch Jr.' was supposed to be, but evidently he was well known to the adults.

"After some stressful interviews with the Headmaster and the Minister of Magic," The expression on Madam Pomfrey's face spoke volumes as to what she thought of those two men stressing a patient in her care, "I managed to get young Potter to sleep. This is when I did something I am more than a little ashamed of. After the ward was cleared of everyone except my patient, I dosed Harry Potter with a hypnotic potion and woke him up. I wanted to hear the story of what happened to our Cedric with my

own ears."

The Healer took a drink from the glass in front of her. "What he told me is practically word for word what he tried to tell everyone who would listen. Voldemort is back. Cedric was killed by Peter Pettigrew. In addition he named all of the Death Eaters he saw that night."

The room was silent waiting for her to finish. "A hypnotic is not Veritaserum, not by a long shot. A disciplined mind can still lie while under a hypnotic. While I do not believe that Harry Potter has sufficient discipline to resist, I cannot offer what he told me as evidence. I however believe him."

"Following this evening's Welcoming Feast, I requested Mr. Potter report to the Hospital wing that I might check on his recovery from the injuries he sustained at the end of the last term. Once he was there I 'discovered' something that I could inform the Headmaster required he be monitored overnight. As I have already told Madam Bones and Professor Sprout, I have Harry Potter waiting outside this room under another dose of the hypnotic potion. I propose that he be brought into the Redoubt and given Veritaserum so that we can find out exactly what happened. The hypnotic will guarantee that Mr. Potter will not remember being here. This will allow us to finally know what happened that horrible day."

Auntie Amelia stood up and said, "I feel I need to inform everyone here that doing this is patently illegal. That being said, I, for one, believe that it is necessary. We will be invading Harry Potter's privacy in the most distasteful way possible, and if, as I suspect, he is telling the truth we will owe a debt to the young man that we may never be able to repay."

The Redoubt burst into a flurry of conversations as everyone seemed to feel the need to discuss what Auntie had said with their neighbor. Ernie, Hannah, Justin and I just looked at one another. Between us, we had suspected Harry of so many things over the years, most recently that he was trying to steal Cedric's glory, and each time we had been wrong.

"The Inquiry will come to order!" The magically amplified voice of Professor Sprout rang out. "The Inquiry will now vote on this proposed action. All in favor signify by saying 'Aye'."

The walls of the Redoubt practically vibrated from the collective 'AYE!' that rang out from the crowd.

"Opposed?"

A scattering of 'No' came from various places in the cavernous room. One older Wizard, easily Dumbledore's senior, stood.

"Algernon Blakeslee, Hufflepuff cohort of 1829. 'Tis plain ye intend to do this... this evil thing. This invasion of the boy's mind. 'Tis wrong, wrong Itells ye. 'Tis clear that each of ye believe the boy, but ye want to use his words to convince the rest of us. I tells ye, I be convinced now without what ye'r about to do. From what I've heard of the Potter Boy, he would have agreed if ye'd only asked, but ye didn't, did ye? Even criminals are treated better than this. I'll be leavin', havin' no part of this."

The old man made his way to the exit. He was joined by almost two dozen others. His words caused me to second guess my vote of Aye. Looking around I could see I wasn't the only one having second thoughts.

"The Ayes have it." Professor Sprout continued, not looking anywhere nearly as self assured as she had been. Somehow seeing that even the leadership of my house sometimes felt a bit of doubt somehow made me feel a bit better. "Poppy, bring Mr. Potter in."

The Witness

The room quieted again as Madam Pomfrey made her way to the anteroom, and then she returned half guiding and half carrying what appeared to be a very drunk Harry Potter.

"Madam Pomfrey, you gotta tell me where to get some more of that purple stuff..." the boy who lived slurred. "I mean it's great. Really great. I mean Kickapoo Joy Juice is a really stupid name, but wow, its great stuff."

"We need you to sit over here Mr. Potter."

"kay." Harry stumbled over his own feet, ending up flat on his back looking up into the gallery. "Ha! I fell down! Hey, there's Hannah!" He said recognizing my best friend. "Hi Hannah!" Harry waved at her from where he laid on the floor. Harry returned his attention to his healer. "Hannah hates me."

Hannah gasped at my side. "I don't." she whispered.

"She does." Harry continued nodding enthusiastically. "She thought I was Slytherin's heir. Ha! I wasn't, but I can talk to snakes. Have you ever spoken to a snake Madam Pomfrey?"

"No, Harry, I haven't."

"They're not the most sparkling convo...conver... conversationalists; mostly they wanna talk about food and going to warm places. Hannah knows I can talk to snakes, and that old Sal could talk to snakes so that makes me a bastard just like Sal, 'cept he probably wasn't such a bastard, you know? Probably jus' a thousand years of bad press. I wonder if the kids back then made buttons that said "Godric Rules" then flashed "Sal Sux"? Hannah had a button last year. It was supposed to flash between 'Support Cedric Diggory' and 'Potter Stinks' but hers always seemed to say I stunk." That seemed to sober Harry a bit. "Do I stink Madam Pomfrey? I shower every day, but there were so many of those buttons... Do I stink?"

"No Harry." The older witch bent down to help him back to his feet. "People were emotional last year. Sometimes that makes them do cruel things."

"I guess." The boy who lived said as he stood up. "Hey, there's Hannah! Hi Hannah" and he waved at her again with a beaming smile, seemingly having forgotten the last few seconds.

Hannah managed another weak wave to him.

"HEY SUSIE!" the drunken boy suddenly yelled when our eyes met. He ambled over to where I was sitting and leaned on the railing in front of me, swaying slightly. "HEY! God you're beautiful! I could look at you all day! The guys in the dorm say I shouldn't ask you out because you've got red hair, and my mum had red hair and that dating a girl with the same color hair as my mum would be weird and sick and weird."

I couldn't believe that of all the pretty girls at the school Harry and his friends talked about me.

"Come on Harry." Madam Pomfrey tried yet again to get Harry moving toward the chair waiting for him.

"I mean the only reason I know that mum had red hair is because people tell me she did, all the pictures I've seen are in black and white. Why don't Wizarding photos come in color? Muggle pictures don't move, but they're color." He allowed Pomfrey to guide him toward the chair. "And why are they called 'Wizarding photos?' What if a Witch takes them? Shouldn't they be 'magical photos?' Harry drifted for a moment. "Isn't Susie pretty? I think she's pretty, and god but she's got great boobies... I mean seriously, we call them her 'Hufflepuppies' in the dorm, though she'd probably kill us if she found out. So Shhh!" He said with a finger in front of his lips. "Hermione hexed us all good when she heard us talking about Susies' puppies. She likes Susie too. She says that Susie is too good for us."

The pair had finally made it to the chair when Harry suddenly turned to Madam Pomfrey and repeated himself. "You gotta tell me where to get some more of that purple stuff... Kickapoo Joy Juice is a stupid name really, but wow, its great stuff." He sat down at her urging.

"Mr. Potter?" Auntie Amelia approached Harry.

"Madam Bones? Hi! Are you Susie's mum?"

"The hypnotic has something of an intoxicating effect as well as affecting short term memory." Madam Pomfrey noted.

"No kidding?" Auntie asked before turning to Harry. "No Harry, I'm her Aunt."

"She's pretty."

"Yes she is." I felt my blush returning. I knew that Auntie could never resist a chance to tease me. "I hear you'd like to date her."

"Oh, yeah, but I can't."

"Because of her red hair?" Auntie looked up and locked eyes with me.

"Yeah... No. I mean everyone says that would be weird, but the real reason is I'm going to die." He said matter of factly.

"You're going to die?"

"Yeah." Once again he appeared to sober a bit. "Voldemort is going to kill me."

Gasps filled the room at the mention of the forbidden name.

"Oh come on!" Harry said looking around the room, "It's just a made up name, and it doesn't mean anything." Harry swayed on the chair for a moment. "You know Madam Bones; I've never understood one thing about the whole 'everyone afraid to say Voldemort' thing, if no one ever says the name, so how does anyone know to be afraid of it? They don't even write it down! That's really really stupid."

"I agree, it probably is stupid Harry. What makes you think he's going to kill you?"

"Well, he keeps coming back. He tried to kill me when I was less than two years old. He tried to kill me first year when he was riding in Professor Quirrel's head trying to get the Philosopher's Stone, he tried to kill me second year in the chamber of secrets when he had possessed Ginny Weasley, and he tried to kill me last year after the stupid Triwizard Cup portkeyed Cedric and me to the graveyard, how many times can I get lucky before he manages it? As long as the Death Wankers like Lucius Malfoy are around any girl I went out with would be in danger." Harry seemed to think for a moment. "Hey, maybe I should date Pansy Parkinson!" He had amused himself so much by that comment he fell off the chair laughing.

"Harry" my Auntie said as she helped Harry back into the chair. "We want to talk to you about the day Cedric died."

"Cedric died. It was all my fault." Harry looked up and spotted the Diggorys. "Mr. Diggory? Mrs. Diggory? It was all my fault. I'm so sorry. I was trying to let the real champion win; I didn't know that sharing the cup with Cedric would get him killed."

"Harry." Auntie said, getting his attention. "We would like you to take a potion. One that would only let you tell the truth."

"Verasim? Snape said something about that last year." Harry's brow furrowed. "That Snape is a right bastard, you know? Why would anyone who hates kids so much be a teacher? 'Potter! Your toenails are growing to loudly' Harry said in an uncanny impersonation of our Potions Professor, "Twenty billion points from Gryffindor."

"Yes, Veritaserum. We want to know exactly what happened to Cedric. You taking the Veritaserum would allow us to know for certain."

"Oh." Harry rocked back and forth in the chair for a moment. "This is why Madam Pomfrey gave me the purple stuff isn't it?"

"The Joy Juice will keep you from remembering this Harry." Madam Pomfrey said.

"So you can have secrets, but I can't?" He thought for a moment then grinned, "What the hell. Sure, I'll take your potion, on one condition."

"What's that Harry?"

"Don't tell Susie what I said about how pretty she is."

The Guilt

I couldn't believe it. Harry had forgotten I was here. With each word out of Harry's mouth I was more ashamed of what we were doing. The potion had Harry completely out of control. Hannah and I shared a look, and then we both made a move to stand up.

Amos Diggory beat us to it. "Amelia, stop this."

The man had seemingly aged twenty years since the night his son died. "There is no reason for this. We all know the boy is telling the truth. Old Blakeslee is right, this is an evil thing."

"Amos, we need to know."

"We do know Amelia. Harry has told us what happened. If you need to use the Veritaserum, wait until he's in his right mind and ask him, or use his memories in a pensieve. Anyone who knows him would tell you he would agree to it. The boy deserves to be treated better than this."

"He brought Cedric back to us" Mrs. Diggory added. "He risked his life to bring my boy back to me. This isn't right. You believe him, we believe him. This just isn't right."

"I agree." Justin was on his feet next to me. "I accused him of setting a snake on me second year, a snake conjured by Draco Malfoy. A snake that any fool could see Harry was trying to calm down. I was one of those wearing the Potter Stinks badges. I wore it even after Cedric told me that Harry wanted nothing to do with the Tournament. I'm ashamed of myself. If we do this I will be ashamed of my House."

"He was put on trial for defending himself Amelia." An older Witch called from the far gallery. I recognized Griselda Marchbanks as the speaker. "The Full Wizengamot empanelled for a case of under aged magic. Explain to me how what we are doing is any better than the actions of that idiot Fudge."

"Fudge is an idiot!" Harry agreed. "And that froggiebread that was at the welcoming feast looks like a winner too." He looked around. "Madam Pomfrey, have you got any more of that purple stuff? Hey Justin! How you doin'? You gotta try this purple stuff!"

Hannah stood up. "Someone had better alert the obliviators and get my transfer to Beauxbatons started. As soon as Harry sobers up I'm telling him what we've done to him."

I stood next to my friend. "And me." I shouted.

"And Me!" Ernie and Megan Jones chorused.

Throughout the Redoubt guilt about what we were doing spread. Aunt Amelia saw what was happening. She tried to regain control. "This is what we voted. This is the will of the house."

"NO!" Madam Marchbanks shouted. "Evil is evil even if it is popular. You know this Amelia."

I watched as Auntie, Madam Pomfrey and Professor Sprout huddled together. Their discussion took only seconds, and then Professor Sprout returned to the Podium.

"Fellow Hufflepuffs, I have erred. In my indignation at the loss of one of our own with no apparent action by the Ministry, I was determined to use the power of our house to do something. In my hubris, I forgot that young Mr. Potter is a human being as well."

"Nah, I'm a freak." Harry chuckled. "Just ask my relatives."

"I think perhaps our guest should be taken somewhere where he can sleep off Madam Pomfrey's potion

so that I can apologize to him properly in the morning." Professor Sprout looked toward Hannah and me. "Miss Abbott, Miss Bones, would you please escort Mr. Potter to the guest suite?"

Hannah and I left the gallery and approached Harry as the assembled Hufflepuffs began speaking among themselves.

"Hey Hannah!" Harry said brightly. "Hey Susie. When did you guys get here?"

Hannah took his left arm and I took his right, together we lifted our classmate to his feet.

"We just stopped by to get you to bed Harry." I said pulling his arm around my shoulder while Hannah did the same.

"Both of you?" Harry seemed shocked. "I appreciate the vote of confidence, but I'm really pissed even if you can't tell, I don't think that I could..."

"We're PUTTING you to bed, you prat." Hannah laughed. "Not TAKING you to bed."

"Oh." Harry pouted a bit. "Would it have killed you to have let me think I was going to be the luckiest guy in the castle at least until I fell asleep?"

"It might have killed you." I noted dryly.

"Oh. Hey Hannah! Do you know where the Dark Lord keeps his armies?"

"No, Harry where?" Hannah asked giving me an odd look.

"Up his sleeve!" Our very drunk friend doubled over in laughter. I found myself wondering if I would ever be so drunk that joke would be funny.

"Through here Harry." I said pushing the door open. The light sconces flamed to life and the room was lit revealing a Hogwarts standard four poster bed.

"You know..." Harry said, looking at the room. "I have no bloody idea where I am. That's odd isn't it?"

"You're in a guest suite in the Hufflepuff dorms." I explained.

"Wow. Cool. I don't think the Gryffindors even HAVE a guest suite." He looked around again. "Where am I?"

"Let's just get you out of those robes Ok?" Hannah said.

"Ok."

Hannah put up with his fumbling with his clothing for almost twenty seconds before she pushed him onto the bed and started pulling his clothing off.

"Hannah!" I said, a bit shocked.

"What?" she asked as she undid his belt and pulled his trousers off. "Four younger brothers Susie. Nothing I've not seen before. In fact, he's cleaner than most of what I've seen before."

Harry lay on the bed in his school uniform shirt and boxers, looking more than a little disoriented. "Susie?"

"What is it Harry?"

"Are you going to have your way with me?"

"No Harry. I'm just putting you to bed." I removed his glasses and set them on the bedside table, before pulling the comforter over him.

"Oh." He said, his eyes closing. "Damn."

Hannah looked at me and smiled. "Even pissed out of his skull he knows how to feed a girl's ego."

"Tell me about it."

The Very Worst Sort of Muggles

The door to #4 Privet drive opened. Out stepped the newest resident of Little Whinging, the man who purchased the place from that nice Vernon Dursley fellow only the week before.

Dressed in his plaid robe and slippers, the man took a deep breath of the pristine suburban air and looked down at an unexpected noise. He was so surprised at finding a small child wrapped in blankets rather than his newspaper on the step, he barely noticed that his stylish permed hair kept moving for several seconds after his head stopped moving.

How very odd. He thought, before turning to call into the house. "Carol!"

--10 years later.

Hermione Granger was searching for Trevor the toad, as she passed the door of the latest compartment something caught her eye... was that a lava lamp? But how??? She worked the latch on the door and stepped into the compartment. The compartment was inexplicably carpeted in... astroturf? Beaded curtains covered the windows. What was going on? In the center of the room, was a boy approximately her own age, he seemed to be working on a bicycle. Why had he brought a bicycle?

"Excuse me?" She said. "Have you seen a toad?"

The boy turned and rose effortlessly to his feet. It was then she noticed that he was wearing denim bell bottom pants and zip up boots, his shirt was a day glow polyester paisley open to the navel with a huge collar. His head was topped by his black hair in a tight perm, from behind a pair of what Hermione thought of as 'John Lennon' glasses a pair of blazing green eyes shown.

"Hey there Pretty Lady" The boy said. "No toads here, just one amazingly cool dude!"

"If you see a toad would you let someone know? I'm Hermione Granger." she said extending her hand.

The boy immediately began an amazingly complex and completely unnecessary handshake. "My name's Harry Brady," he said with a smile. "But a groovy chick like you can call me 'Johnny Bravo!'"

"Here's a story, of a boy named Harry,
Who had some very special skills.
His eyes were emerald green, just like his mother's,
He was so very hard to kill!"

"Here's a story, of young Hermione,
The smartest witch in many years,
A Muggleborn, like Harry's mother,
The kind that You-Know-Who fears!"

"Till the one day when Hermione met our Harry,
and they knew it was much more than a hunch,
that this pair would somehow form an alliance,
and Draco's nose Hermione gets to punch..."

"That's the way they both ate the Dark Lord's lunch!"

The Answers

Her seventh year at Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry was turning out to be the best that Hermione Granger had ever known.

Harry had defeated Voldemort in a spectacular display of magic, and despite the adulation heaped upon him, Harry remained Harry. Specifically, Harry was her Harry. After a disastrous two months of trying to date, she and Ron had finally acknowledged that they would never be what the other needed, then Ron, wonderful, sweet Ron had gone to Harry to ask if the raven haired wizard would consider ‘softening the blow’ to Hermione’s ego by spending time with her.

After the third time Harry softened the blow, he told her what Ron had done. Together they laughed.

Then they made love for the first time.

Hermione’s mother loved Harry from the first. Her father put up a good show of being the stereotypical hostile father, but Hermione knew that Daddy thought Harry was a good man, almost good enough.

In late July her seventh Hogwarts letter appeared tied to the leg of an owl, included with that letter was a new badge. Hermione had reached her goal, she was now the Head Girl. Harry was happy for her, not a hint of the jealousy that Ron would quite likely have shown.

Upon returning to school, her friendships with the other seventh year girls grew. There was more than a little surprise that she was now dating Harry, but her friends were actually happy for her, there were many nights in the common room of the Gryffindor Heads suite where the girls told each other of their romances, and for the first time Hermione was happy to join in with her own stories of Harry and his quirks.

Time passed, Halloween came and went with no incidents for the first time in her time at Hogwarts. Harry was welcomed to her home for the Christmas holidays, though he refused to sleep with her under her parents roof.

Returning to school she and Harry became even closer, even after Hermione discovered that Harry had declined the Head Boy position. She asked why and Harry posited that he didn’t need the honor of the position, his reputation was already set for life, that the honor should go to someone who would benefit from the effort. That was how Blaise Zabini got his badge.

Now the year was coming to a close, the NEWT exams were only days away, everything was perfect... except...

The damned Hair Growth potion

To get a perfect score on the Potions NEWT one had to brew twelve potions, and Hermione found them all easy. Except for one.

The damned Hair Growth potion

Hermione had brewed all twelve of the potions through the year, and each of them had come out perfectly. Except...

The damned Hair Growth potion

Twenty six attempts. Twenty six failures.

Hermione had searched every note, every book in the library and even the personal volumes of Professor Lister, the new Potions Mistress, but she couldn't find what she was doing wrong. Professor Lister helped as best she could (the twelve 'NEWT Potions' were not to be covered in class) but Hermione wasn't making any progress.

This left her with a single option. Hermione was ashamed that she was even considering taking this step... but she needed that perfect score.

-----oooOOOooo-----

It was the last Hogsmeade weekend of the year. Harry was playing a pickup game with Ron and several other of the more Quidditch obsessed boys and had promised to find her after lunch.

In the meantime Hermione along with Lavender and both Patils were shopping for last minute needs, quills, parchment, reference material, as well as sweets and special items of clothing to surprise and entice the men in their lives. Hermione deftly steered the group toward her destination.

"Ooh!" she said as they were making their way to the Three Broomsticks. "A shoe shine stand." She looked down at her sensible shoes. "I could use a shine."

"If you wore trainers like everyone else you wouldn't have to bother." Lavender laughed.

"Oh, you three go on, I'll catch up."

Hermione approached the stand as the previous patron was leaving, she sat on the chair offering her left foot to the attendant.

"How's it going, Johnny?" she asked.

Johnny, a man in his mid twenties with rodent like features nodded. "Just fine Miss."

Hermione looked to the left, then to the right, making sure that they were alone. "What do you know about Hair Growth potions Johnny?"

"I shine shoes Miss," Johnny said quietly. "How would I know anything about potions?"

Hermione reached into a pocket of her robes and pulled out a pair of Galleon coins, and hands them to Johnny.

The shoe shine boy looked to the left and right, then pocketed the coins, and began to work on Hermione's shoes.

"The Hair Growth potion is the twelfth potion on the NEWT list and has a seventy three percent failure rate."

"I've managed a one hundred percent failure rate." Hermione said quietly. "When ever I expose a hair sample to my potion the hair is dissolved."

"You're lacking an emulsifying agent. Since your potion isn't a proper emulsion, the hair is reacting to bubbles of reactive ingredients."

"Then what should I do?"

Johnny shrugged. "How would I know?"

Hermione shook her head and reached into a pocket of her robes for another pair of Galleon coins, and handed them to Johnny.

"I would suggest you try Irish Moss."

"Irish Moss?"

"*Chondrus crispus*, known by the common name Irish moss, is a species of red alga which grows abundantly along the rocky parts of the Atlantic coast of Europe and North America. In its fresh condition the plant is soft and cartilaginous, varying in color from a greenish-yellow, through red, to a dark purple or purplish-brown. The principal constituent of Irish moss is a mucilaginous body, made of the polysaccharide carrageenan of which it contains about 55%; the plant also has nearly 10% of protein and about 15% of mineral matter, and is rich in iodine and sulfur. When softened in water it has a sea-like odor, and because of the abundant cell wall polysaccharides it will form a jelly when boiled, containing from 20 to 100 times its weight of water. It is an excellent natural emulsifier."

"But where would I find any?" Hermione asked.

"It's in your basic potions kit, fifth vial from the left, green stopper. It's not used in many potions and is included in the potions kit specifically for the NEWT Hair Growth potion."

"Thanks, Johnny, you're a life saver." Hermione handed Johnny a bag containing twenty galleons, then turned away and made her way to the Three Broomsticks.

As soon as Hermione was around the corner a well dressed woman settled in Johnny's chair.

"Hello Johnny." She said.

"Ms. Rowlings." Johnny acknowledged her.

"Johnny," she said. "What do you know about writing an Epilogue that satisfies the readers?"

“I don’t know nuttin’ about no writing Ms. Rowlings...”

The woman sighed and handed Johnny a roll of bills.

Johnny looked about to ensure their privacy. “You see, what you need to do is...”

Harry Potter and The Agents of Order and Chaos

Chapter One – Malfoy’s Mistake.

Malfoy Manor was in flames when Amelia Bones arrived. The amusement factor of seeing the ancestral home of one of the more vile families in Magical Britain collapsing upon its self easily countered the annoyance at having been called at three a.m. to a fire.

Still, fires (however entertaining) were not her job. Catching and imprisoning criminals was her job. Amelia was very good at her job, just as a Hufflepuff should be. As a consequence she had to act annoyed when called. “Shacklebolt!” she barked. She liked Shack. Good Auror, good man. If it wasn’t for his unfortunate trust of Albus Dumbledore and his membership in the Headmasters little busybodies club, Shacklebolt would easily be the best Auror in the Ministry’s employ.

Almost instantly Kingsley Shacklebolt was at her elbow. “Yeah Boss?”

How the hell did he do that? She was alert, she was looking for him, expecting him to do his ‘appear out of nowhere’ trick, and still he managed to startle her. “Why am I here Auror? The house of a Noble family is burning, there’s no Dark Mark, and there are no bodies on the lawn, what makes this my concern?”

“I was the second Auror on the scene Director. At first this appeared to be a classic paranoid family has an accident. We were kept at bay by the wards, and we were watching the mansion burn. It was then I realized that the fire suppression wards were utterly shattered. Every other ward on the property was intact, if not reinforced.”

“Was?”

Shacklebolt hesitated for a second, then handed Amelia a pair of Auror’s standard issue omnioculars. “If I told you, you’d relieve me from duty. They’re cued up. You’d best see it for yourself... I’ve watched it four times and I still don’t believe it.”

A simple glance told Amelia that Shack wasn’t joking. She raised the omnis to her eyes and thumbed the playback control.

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

The scene began. The Mansion was aflame, though had not yet begun to collapse. The front door burst open and Amelia counted four, no five Wizards running from the burning structure. Lucius Malfoy, easily identifiable by his platinum hair, lead the mad scramble away from his burning home, then two more figures exited the building chasing those running away. The pair of newcomers leaped into the air, bounding ten, twenty meters in a stride, they both easily overtook the fleeing wizards. Now that they were closer to the Auror recording with the Omni she was using, Amelia could see that the newcomers didn’t wear robes, but were in some sort of form fitting outfits, one white with red trim giving the impression of a raptor, the other blue with silver patterns, that appeared to be modeled on a different sort of bird.

Lucius Malfoy raised his wand toward the figure in white and red, his wand was snatched away and the man physically lifted off the ground, struggling. The figure in blue and silver was moving around and between the other four wizards at blinding speed. Amelia found that even slowing the playback speed of the Omnis could not bring the blue figure in to sharp focus. The four Wizards under the attention of the figure in blue fell to the ground in seconds.

It was then the figure in white and red did something that caused Amelia to pause the play back, blink twice in disbelief, and then reverse the playback so that she could see it again. The figure in white and red simply reared back and flung Lucius Malfoy atop his burning home. The Blue figure hefted one of the four others and did the same. In short order each of the attacking figures had repeated their actions, leaving only a single of the original group lying on the ground between them.

The survivor was pulled to her feet; Amelia could now identify Narcissa Malfoy as her hood had fallen and was no longer disguising her features or her signature hair style. Amelia watched as the pair dismembered the aristocratic woman with their hands, throwing the severed parts into the fire with a casual ease. Amelia wasn't sure just when the woman died, but it couldn't have been a pleasant death. After heaving Lady Malfoy's torso onto the flaming building, the pair in the odd clothing again began moving at an inhuman speed, moving quickly out of frame and the Auror doing the recording never managed to get them into his sights again.

Amelia lowered the omnis. "Morgana." She breathed.

"I know Boss, that's why I showed you instead of trying to tell you." He led her forward, the destruction of the house having eliminated the wards. He stopped in a spot with many lighting charms over it; the grass was red with blood. "This is where they did it."

Amelia swallowed. Whoever that pair was, while they wanted Lucius and the men with him dead, they HATED Narcissa Malfoy, with a deep undying passion. "Shack, I want a full investigation on this. No leaks. I read one word of this in the Prophet about this and I'll be having an in depth personal interview with ever single member of your team."

As Amelia finished speaking the west wall of the Malfoy Manor fell outward, revealing an electric blue dome of energy. A shield?

Shacklebolt reacted first. "Possible Survivors!" He barked at his team, then as one, with wands out they all rushed forward.

Amelia fought the instinct forward to rush to lead the team. They were Shack's people; it wasn't her place to try to lead them. She hated being an administrator.

Wands out, snuffing flames and cooling the wreckage to the point where it couldn't reflash the Aurors made their way to the shield. It wasn't from the first floor they saw, nor was it from the basement. It took almost ten minutes to find their way to the hidden subbasement. The subbasement was fitted out as a dungeon. In one of the cells, they found three corpses, and three unconscious teen aged girls.

Amelia took one look at the girls and her blood ran cold. The trio had been missing, along with the rest of the twin's family for more than a month. They had been tortured; the state of their

unconscious forms spoke volumes. She pulled Shack aside.

“Get them to St. Mungos. Make sure they use female healers only. I’ll get some female Aurors to take their statements. This is still your investigation. I want to make sure the world knows that Malfoy and his friends did this. I’ll need more proof than the victims simply being here.”

“I’m on it Boss.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

Amelia Bones had been an Auror for most of 60 years, she had seen firsthand Grindelwald’s atrocities, and those of Voldemort in the ‘70s, but this... The people found in the hidden dungeon of the Malfoy estate had experienced horrors beyond anything she had ever seen.

The Twin’s parents, Chandrahas Patil and his wife Dhanyata, had been dead for a week, possibly more. They had been killed by some sort of cutting curse, one that had left thousands of deep cuts over their entire bodies. The forensic healers’ report said that death for them had been very slow and extremely painful, taking perhaps three days to finally succumb.

Six year old Ganish Patil’s death on the other hand had been faster, but even crueller. The boy had been stabbed with a cursed knife. The curse compelled the victim to disembowel himself with the dull blade. To do that to anyone, much less a child...

As disturbing as that was, the reports from the Mind Healers were possibly worse. Lavender Brown, seventeen, was withdrawn almost completely into herself. She had witnessed her widowed father Charles murdered before her eyes in the original abduction, the slow murders of her friend’s parents and brother, and suffered through the horrors that the Death Eaters had inflicted upon her. The other two girls, the Patil twins, Padma and Parvati both seventeen, were injured and traumatized, but unlike their friend, conscious and very very angry. They had identified the five who had held and tortured them and killed their parents and brother. All three Malfoys, Marcus Flint and Rabastan LeStrange.

Parvati seemed consumed with rage, while her twin Padma was a fount of information, each detail cataloged in precise detail, though neither girl could describe the mystery individuals who had so utterly destroyed the Death Eaters (the remains recovered from the fire still had the Dark Mark clearly visible, the magic somehow resisting the fire) and the Malfoy Mansion.

Both girls were adamant on one point. They wanted, needed, demanded, to speak with Harry Potter.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Amelia Bones was sitting at her desk when Nymphadora Tonks entered her office. Bones looked up from the document she was reading and gestured Tonks to one of the chairs in front of the desk, then returned her attention to the papers in her hand. She made a few notes, and then placed the document and the notes into her out basket, where they vanished on their way to the Director’s secretary.

“Auror Tonks” Amelia said leaning back in her chair.

“Director.” Tonks said fidgeting slightly. At some level she had been expecting this discussion since that night in the Department of Mysteries the year before when Sirius had died.

“You’ve heard of the Patil/Brown case Auror?” Amelia asked, as business like as always.

As she nodded the unexpected question puzzled Tonks. Everyone had heard of the Patil/Brown case. What those Death Eater bastards had done to those girls... But what did any of that have to do with her?

“Ms. Brown is still catatonic, but the Patil sisters are awake and angry.” The Director paused to clean her monocle. “They have described every detail of what was done to them and what they witnessed being done to Ms. Brown and to their parents and younger brother. When they finished answering all our questions, they both had a single simple request. Then want to speak with Harry Potter.”

Tonks nodded again. Why she was here was becoming more clear by the second.

“As you might have heard, I’ve taken a personal interest in this case. Oddly, the senior investigator on this case, Senior Auror Shackbolt seemed to be ignoring the victim’s request to see a class mate and friend. So I attempted to contact Mr. Potter myself. I’ve sent four owls and gotten no response. This struck me as odd, so I accessed the Ministry Archives to determine his home address for a more personal visit.” The Director of the DMLE regarded Tonks with a steady gaze. “Mr. Potter has a file in the archives, just as we all do, yet his has no reference to a home of record. His record in the Improper Use of Magic office is under a Wizengamot seal, one that can be opened by the Chief Warlock –or- the Minister of Magic.”

Tonks had taken Divination at Hogwarts and had turned out to be simple pants at it. As a consequence of that she had dropped the subject after third year and started in on Ancient Runes instead. However her ‘inner-eye’ was telling her she wasn’t going to like what was coming next.

“So, I have a Senior Auror ignoring the requests of a pair of victims and a possible path of inquiry, I have a young Wizards incomplete record from the Central Archives, and I have sealed records in the Improper Use of Magic office, the only Ministry office to have any interaction with Mr. Potter since his placement with whoever his current guardians might be. This raises a question in my mind Auror Tonks. Which of your responsibilities holds your strongest loyalties? Are you an Auror or are you a member of the Order of the Phoenix?”

-----oooOOOooo-----

A thousand answers flit through Tonk’s mind. The honest one came to her lips. “I’m an Auror Director, that’s all I ever wanted to be.”

Amelia Bones nodded. “Good. What you do in your off hours is your business Auror. I was hoping that you could clear up a few things for me. I ride this desk these days but I still remember how to run an investigation. I’ve discovered a few things that I don’t understand. First, following the death of Sirius Black, your mother and yourself were reinstated into the Family Black after Andromeda having been cast out for marrying your father thirty years ago. According to Gringotts, the Lord Black who did this reinstatement was none other than Harry

Potter. It strikes me as somewhat odd that the man sent to Azkaban for betraying James and Lilly Potter would make the son of his victims his heir.”

“Sirius was not the Betrayer Director. Peter Pettigrew was.”

“The man Sirius was convicted of killing?” The older woman asked.

“There was no conviction Director, Sirius never had a trial. Pettigrew is alive and is supporting You-Know-Who.”

There was a short pause while Amelia digested that tidbit. She quickly jotted a note, and then continued. “The more I look into this, the more I find that needs investigation. Fine, let’s cut to the chase shall we? Auror Tonks, do you know where Harry Potter lives?”

“Yes Director, I do.” The Metamorphmagus’ mind was racing. Tonk’s had long been of the belief that Harry was being mistreated at his relative’s house, but could not get Dumbledore to listen. She hadn’t been the only Order member to make the case, so she knew that she wasn’t imagining anything.

Amelia Bones stood from her desk. “Get your cloak Auror. We are going to pay Mr. Potter a visit and get his views on the situation with the Patils.”

“Yes Director.” Tonks stood as well, and then hesitated. “Harry lives with Muggle relatives Director. Those relatives are fairly anti-magic. We might get a better reception if we appeared in Muggle attire.”

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

Unlike most of her contemporaries, Amelia Bones was well aware of the basics of Muggle fashion, a hard won knowledge that had come from her interactions with Muggle Law Enforcement. Dressed in a tasteful business suit, she was also well aware of the capabilities of Muggle machinery, which was only one of the reasons she was looking askance at the deathtrap Tonks had lead her too.

“THIS is the infamous Muggle stealth machine?” she asked trying not to stare at the rust covering the bonnet of the 1978 Austin Mini-Metro.

“Sure is director.” Tonks, now clad in boots, denim jeans and a tee-shirt that proclaimed her allegiance to what Amelia assumed to be a Muggle band called AC/DC. Tonks covertly vanished several weeks worth of fast food containers and drink cups from the interior of her pride and joy so that Amelia could sit in the car without fouling her clothing. “I bought this beauty the day I finished Hogwarts. When Shackbolt found out I owned a car and that I was the only active duty Auror who could drive, he got the Department of Mysteries to make a few modifications.”

“Modifications?” Amelia asked as she slid into the front passenger seat and closed the door.

“Some good ones.” Tonks said as she pulled out into traffic. “To start with, for high speed travel, my sweet ride can move like the Knights Bus.” She pulled a lever on the control console and the Mini blasted forward as if shot from a cannon, weaving between the Muggle vehicles as if the

other cars were standing still.

“Sweet Merlin, Tonks!” Amelia sputtered. “Warn me if you’re going to do that!”

“Sorry Director.” The Auror fought against the smile that threatened to cross her lips and likely as not end her career.

Amelia fought against the vertigo caused by the almost instantaneous changes in direction by closing her eyes and holding on to the handle over the door frame of the tiny auto. This was one of the reasons she never took the Knights bus after that first time back during the summer following her third year. “At least it will be over quickly.”

“Sure will Director. About five minutes.” Tonks said happily. She loved this car.

Harry Potter and the Clockwork Leap

"After hearing Hermione Granger theorizing that one could time travel within his own lifetime, Harry Potter stepped into the Department of Mysteries' Time Turner Acceleration Chamber and vanished. He woke to find himself trapped in the past, facing mirror images that were not his own and driven by an unknown force to change history for the better. His only guide on this journey is Luna, an observer from his own time, who appears in the form of an Astral Projection that only Harry can see and hear. And so Harry Potter finds himself leaping from life to life, striving to put right what once went wrong, and hoping each time that his next leap will be the one that allows him to kill Voldemort."

CHAPTER TWO

Harry launched himself across the room, his borrowed invisibility cloak falling from his borrowed shoulders in midair.

The sight of Mundungus Fletcher suddenly appearing in mid air shocked Selene Lovegood into immobility, her silver grey eyes growing large in her amazement. Harry's body block knocked the woman away from the unstable slug of magic that the Spell-Crafter had been working just as it discharged.

The wild magic burst from its rune generated containment field and blasted Harry across the room. Harry impacted on the wall next to the fireplace and slid slowly to the floor, feeling his life slipping away. His only thought was wondering if this was how his adventure was to end.

Selene Lovegood climbed to her feet and sparing only the slightest of glances to confirm that her hysterical nine year old daughter was alright, she rushed to examine this stranger who had saved her life. The news delivered by her wand's medical diagnostic charm was not good, not in the slightest. She hurriedly cast a partial stasis charm on the man, and then rushed to the hearth to floo for help.

Nine year old Luna Lovegood knelt next to this strange man who she somehow knew was not who he appeared. With a trembling hand she reached out to touch the unshaven face of the man almost, but not quite frozen in time.

"Thank you Harry Potter." She said simply

The astral projection of seventeen year old Luna Lovegood knelt on the man's other side as a now familiar spectral aura flared around Harry before he was replaced by an unconscious Mundungus Fletcher. "Yes," She said, though no one except her younger self could hear her. "Thank you Harry Potter."

Selene turned from the hearth to see her daughter kneeling next to the man who probably saved her life. On the other side of the man knelt... a spectral older version of her daughter?

"Luna?" she gasped.

“Yes Mummy?” the two girls separated by almost ten years chorused.

That was when the spectral mirror in the hand of the ghostly girl started screeching.

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

~ discontinuity ~

Harry was surprised to find his face in cold water. He experienced a split second of panic until he realized that the water he was face down in was cupped in his own hands.

What had he been doing?

Oh, yes. Leaping. Jumping between lives did something to his memory. Harry continued to wash his face, using the cool water and the mindless act to calm himself. It was somehow relaxing to suddenly become aware while doing something so... normal. Not suddenly appearing in a newlywed's body just as his wife was coming to him for the first time, not suddenly waking in a pitched battle, not coming to standing over a dead man. Just washing his face. After dozens of leaps into dozens of lives, combined with that was happening to his memory, somehow something so ordinary actually gave him hope.

That was when he spotted the Dark Mark on his left forearm.

All thoughts of normality vanished as Harry panicked and tried to scrub Voldemort's mark from his body, to no avail. Staring down into the basin with the tap still running, his arm all but scrubbed raw, Harry risked a glance up into the mirror.

A young Peter Pettigrew stared back.

Harry gaped at the image in the mirror. “Oh Boy.”

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

“Well, this one should be interesting.”

Harry spun to face a smiling Daphne Greengrass.

That made no sense, the Peter Pettigrew in the mirror was barely in his twenties, but Daphne was... well Daphne. The Slytherin looked just like he remembered her, just over eighteen. Her mother maybe? No that was ridiculous, while Harry ‘looked like’ his father, the young woman WAS Daphne Greengrass, or at very least her identical twin.

“Uh, hello.”

“Hello? Is that anyway to greet your girl friend Potter?”

She knew who he was. Wait. Girl Friend?

“Uh, what?”

The oddly decorated hand mirror in Daphne's left hand chimed, and the raven haired beauty raised it to her face. "It sounds like his memory is more mangled than usual." A voice Harry recognized as belonging to Tracy Davis issued from the mirror. "And I'm his girl friend."

Harry waved his hand through Daphne's form.

"Copping a feel off an astral projection is a bit pointless Love, though I appreciate the effort." Daphne said with a come hither look.

"Daphne, if you're quite done with your feeble attempt to distract my Harry? Harry, Millie says that the highest probability is that you are supposed to prevent your parent's deaths." Tracey said over the mirror.

"Wait. Where's Luna? And why can I understand Tracey over the mirror? Where's Hermione?"

A look of concern crossed Daphne's face. "You've always been able to hear Tracey."

"Since your first leap four months ago when you stupidly jumped into the Acceleration chamber." Tracey agreed. "And if by 'Luna' you mean Luna Lovegood, she's probably in the Hufflepuff dorms just now in 'real' time, why?"

"Luna's the only one who could astral project." Harry said, sitting down on the toilet. "Why would she be in the Hufflepuff dorms? She's a 'Claw."

"Luna Lovegood a Ravenclaw? How do you figure that Harry?" Daphne said, her expression shifting from concern to worry. "I've been your contact since you made your first jump." She lifted the mirror to her face again. "I think his memory is worse than ever Tracey, you've got to get him out of this stupid situation."

"Wait, I've got a theory," Tracey said. "Harry, what do you remember about your last leap?"

Harry concentrated for a moment. "I think it had something to do with keeping Luna's mother from being killed."

"It's possible you changed reality by doing so. When Selene Lovegood took over the Arithmancy Professorship our first year..." there was a pause while the unseen Slytherin witch thought. "What house are you in?"

"Gryffindor."

"Yeah right," Daphne snorted. "Harry Potter in Gryffindor."

"I'm not?"

"Harry, love, we met the night we were sorted into Slytherin."

"Sorted into Slytherin?"

“Look, as interesting as this all is, the clock is ticking.” Tracey said from the mirror. “Harry it’s October fifteenth, 1980, today is the day that your mother cast the Fidelius with Pettigrew as the Secret Keeper. You are in the upstairs bath of your parent’s home in Godric’s Hollow Wales. Since you’re here, and you’re Pettigrew, you must be here to prevent it, either by not becoming the Secret Keeper or doing something to ensure that Pettigrew never reports back to Riddle.”

“What if I kill him? Kill me I guess.”

“Then the Fidelius would fall. It would survive a while after the Secret Keeper died, but it would fall.”

“Then what do I do?”

“Sirius was supposed to be the Secret Keeper, you know that Harry,” Daphne pointed out. “Perhaps he actually should be.”

“That is the best suggestion I’ve heard Harry,” Tracey added. “Millie is telling me that getting them to use Sirius is the most likely key to get you to jump again.”

“Maybe home this time Harry!”

Harry wasn’t sure what shocked him more to hear Millicent Bulstrode’s voice, or to hear the breathy wistful tone she used. How the hell had he managed to get Slytherin groupies?

“Ok, so I head down stairs and somehow convince my parents and Sirius that they shouldn’t use me for the secret keeper.”

“Yes,” Daphne said with a smirk. “And you better hurry; they’re going to think you fell in.”

“Right,” Harry crossed to the door, and then stopped. “What happened to Hermione Granger?”

Daphne looked puzzled. “Who?”

“Oh, I think I remember her,” Tracey said via the mirror. “She was that Muggle born girl who was killed by that Troll first year.”

“Ron Weasley and I didn’t save her?”

“Weasley?” Tracey snorted. “Weasley was the reason she got caught by the monster. You were busy arguing with Dumbledore when the ass tried to send us into the path of the Troll. No, we didn’t know she was out of the Great Hall until her body was found.”

Harry leaned his head against the door. Did he want to live in a reality where Hermione was dead and Luna was a stranger?

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

Harry looked around in wonder, he was actually in the same room as his parents, he had a chance to make right what had once gone wrong, he could save his parents.

"Something wrong Peter?" James asked wondering why Peter was looking at him like that.

"No, nothing at all," Harry stuttered, hoping that he at least sounded like Pettigrew. "It's just a wonderful day."

"It is," Lily said, taking Harry's hand. "Peter, we have a huge favor to ask of you."

"What?" Harry asked, dreading the answer.

"We were just talking about how you should become the secret keeper instead of Sirius," James explained.

"Peter, we all know that I'm the obvious choice," Sirius said. "Everyone knows how close James and I are. So I lead them on a wild chase across the country side, mean while no one is looking for you. It's perfect."

"Oh . . . right, I can see that, that's really a great plan, but I don't think that's such a good idea." Harry said.

Lily blinked. Since when did Peter disagree? "Why not?"

"Well..." Harry said, rolling up his shirt sleeve, exposing the Dark Mark.

"You're a Death Eater?" Sirius shrieked.

"It showed up after I woke up from a night of heavy drinking about two weeks ago," Harry said, trying to come up with a convincing story on the spot, "at first I thought James and Sirius put it on me like that time they had the words 'insert here' and an arrow pointing down tattooed onto my lower back." Sirius had told him that story over Christmas fifth year, who knew it would come in handy?

"Sirius, did you do that? Are you pranking Peter?"

"Lily!" Sirius said in an offended tone. "Would I do that? That thing on his back was funny, but this..."

"I for one hadn't completely ruled that possibility that it was a Padfoot special," Harry said quickly thinking it sounded in character for Peter Pettigrew, "but after I got called to a meeting yesterday I stopped thinking that it was a fake."

"How could you kill innocent people?" Lily demanded.

"Not sure I could," Harry admitted, "and as far as I know I haven't."

"Why didn't you tell us about this?" James asked.

"I just did." Harry noted.

"Oh . . . right."

"I would suggest that you actually do make Sirius the Secret Keeper, but Sirius should mention it to someone like Mundungus that it was just a ruse and that I am the actual Keeper," Harry said quickly. "That would have the baddies chasing me, and even if they do find me, I can't tell them anything, but they wouldn't believe me."

"A double blind," Lily breathed. "That's ingenious."

"No, a triple blind." Harry said as he spotted Daphne entering the room. "As soon as the spell is cast and Sirius and I leave, get the hell out of the country, or don't either way don't tell us."

"Harry! Daphne shrieked. "No! You can't change that much, who knows what effect that will have?"

"Take the Longbottoms with you. Head for Australia or Canada, or somewhere else where you can blend in and don't surface until the Dark Lord is defeated."

"Harry, you can't do this." The Raven haired beauty said, trying to distract him from his efforts. "Think of everyone we know, this could change EVERYTHING!" The woman was crying. How odd. Harry thought who knew that an astral projection could cry. "Harry, please! Everything changed for you after your last leap; I don't want to lose you!"

"Thank you Peter." Lilly drew him into the only hug from his mother that he could remember.

"Sirius, I'm going to have to start running, but you need to tell Dumbledore, Voldemort is using Horcruxes."

"No!" Lily gasped.

"What are Horcruxes?" James and Sirius asked simultaneously.

"It doesn't matter; just tell Dumbledore he's made them. I don't know how, but they've all got to be found and destroyed."

"How do you know these things Peter?"

"Lily, you wouldn't believe me if I told you. Take Harry; force Frank and Alice to come along with Neville. Run, hide, until you hear that the bastard's dead. Please? Just do it."

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

It was four days before the Dark Mark began to burn, the snake writhing on his forearm moving in and out of the skull. Harry took to moving daily, using Muggle methods of transportation, and staying in Muggle Hotels. Both Sirius and his father had been generous with the funds to finance this chase, so Harry made sure to take care of himself.

The first Death Eater didn't find him for three weeks. The man immediately attempted to stun Harry which told Harry that Voldemort wanted Peter alive. That meant that the bait had been

taken. Harry killed the man, leaving his body in the Foyer of the Daily Prophet, fully kitted out in his Death Eater regalia.

A week later, the second through tenth Death Eaters to find him seemed quite surprised when the ambush they planned turned out to be an ambush Peter had planned. That bit of surprise paled in comparison to the revelation that came to them when the assault team found that rather than the meek hanger on they had expected they discovered that Pettigrew was an unstoppable machine during the fight that ensued.

Of the nine, only one made it back to Voldemort, and his survival was measured in minutes because, quite frankly, the Dark Lord did not really handle disappointment terribly well.

The day after that battle was the last he had any contact with Daphne and Tracey, the brilliant pair of Slytherins couldn't get the alignment right, he could see Daphne, but not hear her, and he could hear Tracey but she couldn't hear him. Trace had told him that too much had changed in the time line and they were losing him. Daphne was crying throughout the odd conversation between a time displaced Harry and the pair. The last thing Tracey said before all contact was lost was that they understood why he was doing what he was and that they both loved him.

Today was the December 9th. Harry had lead Voldemort and his minions on a snipe hunt for more than seven weeks, but it ended today. Harry had chosen the place for his last stand with great care, a secluded farm house in the highlands of Scotland. The tiny building had a fairly substantial root cellar that Harry had filled with more than a ton of ammonium nitrate fertilizer, now soaking in liquid nitromethane. Surprisingly, the blasting caps had been the hardest thing to come by, Harry had resorted to breaking into a quarry and lifting a few boxes from inside a locked room. Fabricating his 'dead man's switch' had driven Harry crazy until it occurred to him that he could use practically anything because the Pureblood Wizards wouldn't recognize any of it.

Voldemort himself was outside, probing for defenses. On several levels this amused Harry to no end. The link between the Dark Lord and The Boy Who Lived remained, despite the fact that said link had yet to be formed, and now it appeared might never be. Harry grinned as he settled into the chair in the center of the farm house's small great room, leaning over to remove the cotter pin from the spring loaded switch that would detonate his makeshift bomb should he get out of the chair.

"Hello Harry Potter."

The unexpected voice almost caused Harry to stand up, it was then he saw the speaker, an ethereal blond woman who appeared to be a ghost who had passed on in her mid 30s. Harry found himself wondering if she knew who he was because his state was so close to being a ghost himself. It was then he took in the line of her jaw, the way her hair hung, and her eyes... "Luna?"

The spectral woman laughed. "No, thank you though. It is surprisingly satisfying to be mistaken for my seventeen year old daughter."

"Forgive my bluntness, but I'm expecting company. Why are you here?"

"I wanted to thank you for saving my life Harry Potter." The woman said in a sing-song way that

reinforced her resemblance to Luna. “I share Luna’s ability to see what isn’t readily apparent to most people. After your essence jumped out of the unfortunate Mr. Fletcher, I had the opportunity to speak with my Luna as she was at seventeen in your original timeline. It took most of two hours for the universe to settle into its new patterns, and Luna managed to remain and speak with me for the full time. It is you I have to thank for saving my daughter from her own eccentricities in your original timeline; your friendship meant everything to her.”

“Luna’s a friend.” Harry said simply. “I miss her.”

“Your intervention that prevented my death set up a series of circumstances that prevented her from becoming the young woman you knew. She has friends this time around; on occasion she has even been in love with various young men around the school. It isn’t the burning passion she felt for you, but she may still find that with someone. I did.”

Harry blinked. Luna had felt that way about him? “Good. Luna always deserved better than she got.”

“It is odd the effect my surviving had on you personally.”

“Really?” Harry asked. “How so?”

“I abandoned spell creation following the incident, and applied for the Arithmancy professorship here when Septima Vector mentioned that she would like to retire, but was holding off until a suitable replacement could be found. As the junior member of the staff, I was tasked to retrieve you from your relatives, and taking you to purchase your school supplies. During that day I told you tales of my time in Slytherin house, which you told me later, caused you to ask the Sorting Hat to send you to my old house. The Luna from your original time line told me that you had been a Gryffindor, I never expected you to go anywhere else.”

“I’d wondered how that happened.”

“I must go Harry Potter. Your Luna told me how to contact you, but never explained how draining it was.”

“Wait!” Harry said. “Do I win? Does what I’m about to do make any difference?”

The ghostly woman smiled. “That would be telling Harry Potter. No man can know his destiny, not even a time traveling Savior of the Magical World.” Before he could reply, the woman faded from his sight.

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

The door to the farmhouse disintegrated to dust falling silently to the floor. There was a short pause then Voldemort strode in followed by his entire inner circle. Harry recalled Voldemort’s features from ‘meeting’ the man in the Chamber of Secrets, but the once handsome man had sacrificed his looks in ritual after ritual until he appeared to be little more than a parody of his former appearance.

“Pettigrew. Did you think you could escape my punishments?”

Harry smiled and leaned back in his chair. “No, not really Tom, but it was fun while it lasted. You should be thanking me, I pruned what? Fifteen, twenty bits of deadwood from your organization. How many did you kill for not managing to capture me?”

“You will address me as your Lord or your Master.”

From his seat Harry snorted.

“You think this is funny Peter? Do you think I’m amused?”

“Tom, please. You’re one powerful bastard, true. Both the ‘powerful’ and the ‘bastard’ part, but you’re not a lord, or my master. You’re just a half blood with delusions of entitlement.”

“WHAT?” Voldemort screamed.

“Boo Hoo!” Harry said in a childish whine while pantomiming knuckling away a tear, “I’m Tommy Riddle; I had a hard life when I was a little kid and everyone should fear me because I’m such a powerful little bitch.”

“YOU DARE?” Voldemort’s wand was pointed directly between Harry’s eyes.

“Aren’t you paying attention?” Harry said hoping the idiot would blast him out of the chair. Sure he could do it by standing up, but what if dying that way hurt? “I’m saying it to your face Tommy; I really can’t dare anymore than that unless I tattoo it on Bellatrix’s bum. But then EVERYONE would see it.”

“I’m going to strip your mind clean Pettigrew, then I’m going to kill you slowly. It will take you weeks to die. And you’ll be begging me to finish you off.”

“Yeah, sure. You know Tom, about Bellatrix, you can do better, really you can. I mean, if you’ve got to have one of the Black sisters, at least Narcissa is a tasty piece, you know, but Bella? Come on man.”

“What are you talking about?”

Harry shrugged, wondering if Riddle was going to get this joke. “Women like Bella are like a sampler from Honeydukes, you know? They all look pretty good, but then you bite into one and it’s all green and oozy inside, you know?”

“Legilimens!” Voldemort barked as he dove into Harry’s mind. What he found there shocked him to the point that he couldn’t maintain the spell.

“Potter?” He whispered. “But how?”

“How else Tom?” Harry said standing up to hear a satisfying ‘click’ as the spring loaded switch engaged after being relieved of his weight. “Magic.”

HPCL * HPCL * HPCL

~ discontinuity ~

Harry became aware of the sound of a door slamming and locking behind him.

Something was wrong; his thoughts were coming so very slowly, he was so angry, angry and... hungry. But it was those wooden stalls that annoyed him. A whole row of wooden stalls. Their symmetry, their shiny parts infuriated him.

Harry looked into his large callused hand and found a huge wooden club in it. Good. That would show those stalls who the big one was. He swung the club effortlessly, and the stalls stopped being stalls and became splinters. Good!

A shrill scream pierced the air and there cowering on the floor in the wreckage of the stalls was a small bushy haired... girl?

Something wasn't right. Something was... wrong. This was familiar, but the screaming hurt his ears, then something was on his back, and a sharp... something was stuck up his nose.

I know this. Harry thought. I know this, but I can't remember...

He turned to find a miniature Ron Weasley waving his tiny wand at Harry.

Harry dropped his club as it all came together for him. From deep in his chest, a sound rumbled.

“Oh boy.”

Wendell and Monica have a Daughter

"- are you sure you've thought this through?" Harry persisted.

"Let's see," said Hermione, slamming Travels with Trolls onto the discarded pile with a rather fierce look. "I've been packing for days, so we're ready to leave at a moment's notice, which for your information has included doing some pretty difficult magic, not to mention smuggling Mad-Eye's whole stock of Polyjuice Potion right under Ron's mum's nose.

"I've also modified my parents' memories so that they're convinced they're really called Wendell and Monica Wilkins, and that their life's ambition is to move to /Australia/, which they have now done. That's to make it more difficult for Voldemort to track them down and interrogate them about me - or you, because unfortunately, I've told them quite a bit about you.

"Assuming I survive our hunt for the Horcruxes, I'll find Mum and Dad and lift the enchantment. If I don't - well, I think I've cast a good enough charm to keep them safe and happy. Wendell and Monica Wilkins don't know that they've got a daughter, you see."

- Excerpted from Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows, chapter 6

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

Harry Potter paid the cab driver and stepped onto the walk pausing to look up at the signage on the office building.

Great White Teeth the sign proclaimed, A Wilkins Dental Corporation the sign continued in smaller letters with the stereotypical shark attacking a swimmer from below. The man who won smiled for a moment at the innate humor of the sign, reflecting that it mirrored the humor of the man who no doubt had a hand in designing it. Then Harry's smile faded when what he had to do came back to him. He sighed and climbed the stairs to the offices.

Harry pulled the door open and stepped into the waiting area. Several people were waiting to be seen. A young woman in surgical scrubs decorated in Disney characters looked up and smiled.

"Good afternoon, could I help you?"

"Good afternoon. I'd like to make an appointment with Dr. Wilkins."

The woman pretended to look at the schedule in front of her. "I'm sorry, but both the Dr. Wilkins' schedules are full for today."

Harry leaned over to look the receptionist in the eye. He hated doing this, but it was very necessary. "I can wait. The Wilkins' were my dentist back in England, you see. I would really like to see them about the filling I lost on the flight out here. They are old friends after all."

The woman's eyes glazed a bit as the compulsion took effect.

"Well, I can't promise anything... but you can wait if you like." She blinked, and then smiled shyly. "I get off at five thirty."

"That's good to know," Harry said with a smile. "I'll wait."

-----oooOOOooo-----

Four Years ago:

Harry stared at the ceiling of Ron's room. Why couldn't he sleep? Besides the obvious of course, being depressed about the death of Moody and the maiming of George was only natural. The news of what Hermione had done to protect her parents was just the straw that was breaking the camel's back,

Ron was also awake. "Harry?"

"Yeah mate?"

"What are we going to do Harry? This is killing Hermione."

"I know. I never expected her to do that to her parents. Not for this."

"We need her Harry, without her we'll be dead, but if anything happens to her I don't know if I could go on."

"She's never going to forgive herself for this Ron, you know that," Harry said turning to face his friend in the darkness. "Can we let her do this to herself?"

Ron sighed. "You know Hermione; she'll never admit that she's questioning herself," The redhead sat up. "She's been crying all day."

"Damn it," Harry said. "Why did I ever let her get involved with me?"

"Let her?" Ron laughed. "Mate, we're both lucky she let us get involved with her."

"Yeah, I know." Harry stood from his cot and wrapped his dressing gown around himself. I'm going down stairs for a bit Ron; maybe a little exercise will let me sleep."

Harry made his way down stairs as quietly as possible, so as not to disturb the sleeping Weasleys. He made his way to the sitting room, finding it dimly lit by the banked fire. Harry settled himself onto the scruffy sofa only to find that he was sitting on something that moved and squawked.

"I'm sorry," he whispered, trying to see who or what he has sat on.

"Harry?"

"What are you doing down here Hermione?" Harry asked sitting next to his best friend.

"I couldn't sleep." The girl said simply in a way that Harry took to mean she was not willing to discuss the reason.

"Hermione, I've been thinking."

"Really? We should inform the Daily Prophet."

"Ho ho. Funny girl," he said sarcastically. "I was thinking about your parents. We should really do something about them."

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked dangerously.

"What we're going to be doing is horribly dodgy Hermione, you know that. If anything was to happen to you they would never be able to mourn properly."

Hermione stiffened. "That would be best. They don't need to remember me."

"Hermione, they're your parents. They deserve to remember their only child if anything were to happen to you."

"Harry..."

"Hermione, I want you to teach me how to counter the charm and return their memories. If anything happens to you, I'll give them their memories back."

"Harry," Hermione protested. "We're going to be together, if anything happens to me, it will probably happen to you as well."

"That's why we're going to each teach someone else, and get them to teach someone else, and I'll make sure funds are available so that they can make the trip."

Hermione hesitated. "In order to know how to counter the charm, I'd have to teach you the charm itself."

"So teach me."

-----oooOOOooo-----

Things got messy for a while, with Bill and Fleur's wedding and the aftermath of the fall of the Ministry. The trio made their escape to Grimmauld Place through Harry's reflexes, Hermione's planning, and Ron's bravery.

The trio threw themselves into researching the locations and methods of destroying Voldemort's Horcruxes. When ever they could steal a moment together Hermione taught Harry how the memory charm she used on her parents worked. As soon as Harry mastered that bit of complex magic, Hermione moved the lessons on to teaching him how to counter that charm.

Following the first lesson on breaking the charm Hermione sat back on the chair facing Harry.

"Who are you going to approach about covering for us if anything happens?"

"Neville," Harry said without hesitation. "You?"

"Padma Patil, if I can contact her. Parvati was saying that their parents were planning on taking the family to India if Voldemort took the Ministry. If not her, Morag MacDougal."

Harry nodded, he has suspected as much.

Ron entered the library with a tray of sandwiches. "You two done for the day?"

"Yes we are Ron, thank you." She took a sandwich off the pile.

"Cheers mate." Harry agreed taking one himself. "Are you sure you don't want to learn this?"

"No mate, not me. I don't have the precision you need to do mind magic, besides I'd have to travel like a Muggle to meet them, I don't think I could pull that off."

Harry grinned at his friend, "When you're right Ron, you're right."

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

It was always satisfying to finish with your last patient of the day; Wendell Wilkins thought to himself as he finished drying his hands. The dentist made his way to the scheduling desk to look over his next day's appointments. He looked out into the waiting area and spotted the man sitting in a chair reading a horribly out of date magazine.

"Harry?" The dark haired man in the waiting area looked up. "Harry!"

Harry stood from the chair. "Hello sir. I hope you and your family has been well." The glasses were new, but the Dentist had hardly changed since Harry had seen him last.

Wendell wrapped the younger man in a tight hug, and whispered, "It's over?"

"Yes sir. It's over. We finished it more than a month ago, but I could only get away two days ago."

"You came directly here after that flight? You're likely to kill yourself." Wilkins turned to his receptionist. "Thank you Julie, we're done for the day, I'll lock up."

A brief look of disappointment crossed the young woman's face, before she opened a desk drawer and removed her purse. "Good night Doctor Wilkins," She said as she exited the offices.

"Mon!" Wilkins called, "Mon, your case notes can wait, get out here."

"That's the attitude that has you panicking to finish at the end of the month Wendell." Monica Wilkins said as she came out of the office space in the back of the clinic. "What could possibly be

so important?" She spotted their visitor. "Harry!"

"Hello Mrs. Dr. Wilkins." Harry said repeating the silly joke he had made the first time he had met the woman. Monica Wilkins had picked up a bit of grey in her hair over the last few years, but she was still as pretty as ever.

Monica rushed to embrace the young man. "You're here, so... it's over?" she asked.

"It's over," Harry agreed. "If you'd like you can return to England..."

"We'll need to talk about that Harry, it's been four years." Wendell said.

"How's Wendy?" Harry asked, suddenly very interested in his shoes.

"Happy. Happy and insanely busy. She's a finishing up her Bachelors of Biomedical Science last month, six month early." Wendell said proudly. "She's been accepted at three different medical schools, she wants to be a surgeon... of course that will probably change."

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

The Wilkins exchanged a look.

"Magic changes everything. At least it always has in the past Harry." Wendell said.

"Let's go home Harry." Monica said, wrapping her arm around Harry's.

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

Harry opened his eyes and was dazzled by gold and green; he had no idea what had happened, he only knew that he was lying on what seemed to be leaves and twigs. Struggling to draw breath into lungs that felt flattened, he blinked and realized that the gaudy glare was sunlight streaming through a canopy of leaves far above him. Then an object twitched close to his face. He pushed himself onto his hands and knees, ready to face some small, fierce creature, but saw that the object was Ron's foot. Looking around, Harry saw that they and Hermione were lying on a forest floor, apparently alone.

Harry's first thought was of the Forbidden Forest, and for a moment, even though he knew how foolish and dangerous it would be for them to appear in the grounds of Hogwarts, his heart leapt at the thought of sneaking through the trees to Hagrid's hut. However, in the few moments it took for Ron to give a low groan and Harry to start crawling toward him, he realized that this was not the Forbidden Forest; The trees looked younger, they were more widely spaced, the ground clearer.

He met Hermione, also on her hands and knees, at Ron's head. The moment his eyes fell upon Ron, all other concerns fled Harry's mind, for blood drenched the whole of Ron's left side and his face stood out, grayish-white, against the leaf-strewn earth. The Polyjuice Potion was wearing off now: Ron was halfway between Cattermole and himself in appearance, his hair turning redder and redder as his face drained of the little color it had left.

"What's happened to him?"

"Splinched," said Hermione, her fingers already busy at Ron's sleeve, where the blood was wettest and darkest.

- Excerpted from Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows, chapter 14

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

Four Years ago:

Hermione was finally asleep. Ron made his way from the tent to where Harry was standing watch with the damned locket around his neck.

"Hey Ron. Feeling better?" Harry asked from his guard position.

"Yeah, some." The redhead grunted as he cast a privacy charm around the two of them. "Harry, we need to talk."

"Yeah." Harry agreed. "I'm sorry Ron."

"Not about my arm Harry. It's better now and will be right as rain in a few days."

"What then?" Harry asked.

"Hermione. You saw what they were doing to the Muggle born at the Ministry. You saw the bodies, the people being forced to do things under the Imperius. If the bastards catch you or me, we get killed. But if they catch Hermione... They're doing horrible things to the Muggle born, but they'd make a special example of her."

"She won't leave Ron, you know that."

"Harry, I love her."

"I know that Ron." Harry said, puzzling his own feelings for the witch.

"Merlin's Balls!" Ron shouted, testing the limits of his privacy charm. "I am such an idiot splinching myself like that! Why do you put up with me?"

"You're my best friend," Harry said quietly.

"Only because you had such exceptionally low expectations of a friend when you were eleven." The redhead calmed himself with visible effort. "We've got to protect Hermione, we've got to get her somewhere safe."

"And how do you propose we do that Ron? I mean seriously, I'd love to protect you both, but if either of us even suggested it, she'd hex us into small greasy puddles."

Ron's eyes narrowed. Harry recognized that look, it usually preceded his being metaphorically beaten about the head and shoulders in a chess game. "Use the memory charm she taught you on

her."

"What?" Harry asked.

"She's shown us how to protect her. Do to her memory what she did to her parents. Then you'd have to take her to Australia and reunite her with her Mum and Dad."

"She'll kill us."

Ron laughed. "Mate, she'll have to be alive to do that, and we'd have to survive."

Harry had to acknowledge that Ron had a point there.

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

Hermione woke to the smell of bacon frying.

Bacon? Where had they gotten bacon?"

The bushy haired girl exited the sleeping area of the magical tent to find Harry cooking while Ron was setting the small table.

"Ah, Sleeping Beauty awakes!" the big goof said.

"Sleeping Beauty?" She huffed.

"Well, I'm no prize, and Harry wakes up seriously ugly, so you're stuck with the job." Ron said with a grin.

"Where did the food come from?" Hermione asked.

"I made a pit stop at a Muggle Market." Harry said as he delivered a pair of eggs sunny side up along with several slices of bacon to her plate. "And I'll have you know, I'm quite fetching in the morning."

"Ok." Hermione said wondering what the hell the two idiots were up to. Still, it had been a while since she had enjoyed her favorite breakfast along with pleasant conversation. After an enjoyable twenty minutes Hermione pushed her clean plate away. "That was lovely, thank you. I just wish we had some tea."

"Tea!" Harry said slapping his forehead. "I forgot about the tea, it's in the pot brewing."

When Harry rose to get the tea, Ron took Hermione's hand and raised it to his mouth, kissing her palm.

"Ron?"

"I love you 'Mione." The redhead said, leaning into kiss her properly.

***Hermione was thrilled. Did he finally want to commit? Was he...**

"Get a room you two." Harry laughed sliding a mug in front of her. "I'm the youngest one here, and you two are scaring me for life with your inappropriate behavior!"

"Harry, you're a prat!" Hermione laughed raising the mug to her lips.

-----oooOOOooo-----

The trip had been hell. Twenty five hours in an aircraft with a seriously blissed out, very randy Hermione had been just about more than Harry could handle.

The first thing Harry realized when he and Ron had agreed upon the plan to protect Hermione was that he didn't know enough to just charm her memory and send her to her parents. The former Grangers not being aware that they were parents being only one of the problems.

A quick trip to Knockturn Alley under Polyjuice had provided an alternative. There Harry purchased a highly illegal potion known as the 'Weekend of Bliss'. This was a magical version of Muggle Date Rape drugs; it rendered its victim to a state of suggestibility, absolute honesty, and extreme sexual arousal for seventy two hours or until the antidote was administered. The victim would find anything suggested to them to be an utterly good idea.

Harry's trip under Polyjuice included a trip to his vault, which he emptied, converting the proceeds to pounds sterling. The goblins never lifting an eyebrow after he proved his identity via a blood offering.

It had taken most of a week to arrange, then Harry had to rearrange the trip when Hermione let it slip that rather than Australia, she had sent her parents to New Zealand. When asked why, she told Harry that she had spread the 'Australia' idea as part of a false trail in case anyone thought to go looking for the elder Grangers by asking the neighbors. Harry quickly exchanged his tickets explaining it off as 'his bride changing her mind.' Oddly enough, no one at the travel agency he used batted an eye.

The story Harry told everyone from the Ticket agent to the stewardess who seated them in the first class seats of the British Airways flight was that they were newlyweds on their honeymoon, a story much aided by Hermione's giggly amorous behavior. More than once, Hermione had crawled onto his lap, taken his face in her hands and kissed him soundly, then whispered what she wanted to do to him. All of this amused the other passengers and the flight crew immensely, while it had Harry cursing his morality.

Harry fended off his friend's advances with judicial uses of magic in minor bursts to put her to sleep. He found himself mildly annoyed by the knowing smiles of the flight crew.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

"You've moved," Harry said looking about the Wilkins' home while feeling a bit stupid for stating the obvious.

"We were fortunate to have a mysterious benefactor whose generosity allowed us to establish our own practice." Monica said as she led him to her spacious kitchen. "We can never thank you enough for that Harry."

"It was only because of your relationship with me that you lost everything. It was the least I could do."

"Well, Partner." Wendell said with a smile, "I think you'll find that your investment will be returning a tidy income."

"That money was a gift, not an investment."

"Sorry Harry. I don't like gifts; they make me feel indebted to the giver. A partner on the other hand I can deal with," Wendell smiled. "When I make money my partner makes money, when I don't neither does my partner. Confidentially, we're doing quite well, Partner."

Harry didn't look any happier at this news.

"So, what are your plans? Returning to Britain?" Monica asked.

"No," Harry shook his head. "I can't go back there, people... I just can't deal with how everyone is reacting to me."

"I can understand that," Wendell said, "That's pretty much how we feel. I like it here, our practice is in excellent shape, I don't really remember what it's like to be Daniel Granger."

"And Emma Granger seems like an old friend," Monica agreed. "So, how bad was it Harry? Is Ron ok? What about Molly and Arthur?"

"Yes, and no," Harry could see that the Wilkins' weren't going to accept that for an answer. "We didn't lose any of the Weasleys, though it was a close thing more than once and they lost their ancestral home. They won't be able to reclaim it for a while, the ground itself is cursed so that nothing will grow and no structure will remain standing. Ron lost his right forearm in the battle that ended the war, so he has had to learn to cast with his left hand." Harry hesitated.

"What is it Harry?" Monica urged.

"Ron married a little more than two years ago, to a classmate of ours. I don't think you ever met her, Sue Bones. They just had their second baby, another little girl. Falling in love with Sue while we were on the run ate Ron up inside. He kept trying to tell me that he didn't want to betray Hermione. I told him that I never thought he was. I don't know how Hermione will take it."

"I don't know how she's going to deal with everything she's going to learn today. What about you and Ginny?"

Harry grimaced a bit. "We didn't work out. After Hogwarts fell, she ended up on the run with her parents. We linked up with them after a few weeks, but she kept accusing me of being too focused on others. She felt that Ron and I had wasted the time we used to relocate Hermione. She

finally hooked up with Dean Thomas."

Monica reached out across the table to take his hand. "So you've been alone all this time?"

"Not so much alone as too busy fighting to have a relationship." Harry blushed. "There have been a few girls, but... I don't really have all that much experience with people outside of Ron and Hermione."

"So what are your plans then Harry?" Wendell asked.

"I've not made any plans, not really. I'm here to give Hermione her life back, take my punishment for what I've done to her, and then I'll go and try to find my place in the world..."

"Harry," Monica said squeezing his hand.

The kitchen door opened, "Mum! I'm home."

-----oooOOOooo-----

Four Years ago:

It had been a long day for both the Wilkins'. The positions they had found didn't reflect their experience, or their previous incomes. The lack of money was reflected in the fleabag apartment that they now called home.

Still they had each other, but even so Wendell often wondered just why he had ever dreamed of moving to New Zealand. Wendell opened the door for Monica who almost immediately let out a startled gasp.

Wendell pushed past her to find a pair of strangers, still in their teens sitting on their threadbare jumble sale sofa.

"Who the hell are you and what are you doing here?"

Hermione looked up from Harry's face. "Daddy?" A huge smile spread across her face. "Daddy what are you doing here? You're not supposed to know me."

Wendell Wilkins placed himself between the strangers and his wife. Why was this girl calling him 'Daddy'? What was she on anyway?

The dark haired boy frowned, then lifted a stick and pointed it at Wendell. "Memor vestry" he intoned.

A shaft of orange light arced from the stick to Wendell's forehead, and the dentist's face creased into a grimace as he fell to his knees as a lifetime of memories returned all at once. When he opened his eyes, Daniel Granger was back.

"Hermione?" the man gasped. "What happened?"

Granger's eyes widened as he watched the boy he knew as Harry Potter raised his wand and pointed it at his wife, "Memor vestry" the boy said again as Emma fell to her knees beside her husband.

"What the bloody hell is going on Hermione?"

"Language Daddy!" his daughter giggled. Granger watched in amazement as Hermione rose from the sofa and wrapped herself around the Potter boy.

"Sleep." Harry said with the palm of his left hand against Hermione's forehead. The girl slumped nervelessly, Potter catching her before she could fall to the ground.

Potter laid the sleeping girl on the sofa, then turned back to the elder Grangers. "Could we go to the kitchen and talk? I've got a whole lot to explain, and she'll be waking up in about an hour."

-----oooOOOooo-----

The explanation took most of the hour. It took longer for the Grangers to believe what Harry was telling them. After Hermione woke from her magically induced nap, she explained what she had done, while attempting to grope Harry under the table until he put her to sleep again.

"Is all of this just because of how close she is to you?" Daniel Granger asked.

"Partially." Harry said his guilt rising to the surface yet again. "The blood bigots that are now ruling Magical Britain would still be after Hermione, but being associated with me would have only made it worse for her, and by extension, you."

"So what happens now?" Emma asked. "It's obvious that you can't keep Hermione in this condition forever. It's also very clear that you intend to return the Britain to make your stand. What is to prevent Hermione from following you?"

"With your permission, I'm planning on doing to her what she did to you. I would ask that you remain here where it's safe and keep Hermione safe by doing so."

"With our permission?" Daniel asked. "You want our permission to modify Hermione's memories?"

"Yes." Harry said simply. "If the bastards get hold of me... They'll kill me, the same for Ron or Neville or any of the other pure or half bloods in opposition to their bigotry. But it would be several times worse for Hermione or any other Muggle born. They are doing horrible things to them."

"Worse than death?" Emma asked, horrified at the concept.

"Yes. There are many things worse than just dying. Hermione's moral code would force her to follow me back to Britain and back to the fight... Please help me protect her."

"And what of our memories?" Daniel asked angrily "Will you be putting us back the way you found us, only with a daughter this time?"

"No." The boy looked more than a little bit lost. "I need you to protect her, and you couldn't do that if you weren't... you."

"You magicals are awfully cavalier with other people's minds." Daniel spat.

"Yes we are, and it's wrong." Harry said hanging his head in shame. "Hermione did what she did to protect you. It has been killing her a little bit at a time. I'm asking that you allow me to do the same thing to her to protect her and I hate myself for it."

"And what if you're killed Harry?" Emma asked gently. "Then she's the person you create forever."

"Believe me, I've thought about that." Harry reached into the small satchel he carried and brought out a sheaf of parchment. "This is an explanation of the memory charm I'm using and an explanation for why I've done this to Hermione, as well as directions for how you would go about contacting the New Zealand version of the Ministry. If you don't hear from me in say, five or six years, go to the New Zealand ministry and they'll fix her memories." Harry smiled wryly. "And probably put out an international arrest warrant for me."

"Harry..."

"I know that the move here has to have been disastrous to your finances." Harry continued, not meeting their eyes. "I'd like to offer you this to help you get started."

From his satchel Harry slid a cashier's cheque from Barclay's bank to Daniel Granger.

"Harry, we can't take this."

"You can and you will. This," he gestured around the room, "is all because of me. Your daughter tried to protect you by wiping your memories because of me. You moved from your home and practice to... this, because of me. I'm going back to Britain, going back to a war, you may never see me again, and this money will do me no good at all. Please, take it, use it to protect yourselves and protect Hermione."

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

The kitchen door opened, "Mum! I'm home."

Harry rose to his feet as Wendy Wilkins entered the house. The young woman was Hermione, yet she wasn't. Her bushy hair had softened to curls, wearing a blue and orange polo shirt that proclaimed her employment at the CityStop chain of convenience shops; she dropped a book bag next to the door in a manner that Harry had seen thousands of times before. "I've invited Candace to dinner!" she called before looking up and taking in the people in the room. "HARRY!"

Harry barely had time to blink the young woman had crossed the room and wrapped him in a

hug.

"Something you want to tell me about Wendy?"

Harry looked up from the girl attempting to crush him to see a smiling woman approximately the same age as Wendy Wilkins, tall with long blond hair, and an evil grin that spoke of the teasing she would soon be delivering to her friend.

"Oh, sorry." Hermione said stepping back from Harry. "Candace, this is Harry Potter, an old family friend from Britain, I haven't seen him in four years. Harry this is Candace Macalister, we attended Uni together, and now we slave away in a horrible little shop together."

"Oh wonderful." Candice said with a smile taking Harry's hand in a firm grip, "Another bloody pom to teach how to loosen up and have fun."

"Why don't you two go get ready for dinner?" Monica asked sensibly.

"That'll be beaut, Mon." the Candace said leading Wendy Wilkins toward her room. "Come on Wendy, we need to hit the loo." The blond pulled Wendy from the room.

"Hello Wendy." Harry said quietly as she disappeared behind the door.

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

Safely ensconced in Wendy's room Candace Macalister gave her friend an appraising look.

"That Harry bloke's a tasty bit isn't he? Were you bonkin'that back in old Blighty?"

"Candace!" Wendy said in a scandalized tone. "Harry's an old friend, who I haven't seen since he accompanied me here from England four years ago. And no, I wasn't 'bonking' him."

"Oh lighten up Wendy. He's tasty is all." The blond gave her friend a mischievous look. "If you don't want him, mind if I take a run at the bloke?"

"I don't even know how long he's going to be here." Wendy protested with a smile. "Besides, I haven't decided if I'd like more from him or not yet and you're supposedly dating Stephen."

"Did you pay attention to his eyes? The poor sod couldn't say a word, but he never looked at anything or one in the room from the time you came in. I doubt he even saw me."

"Hmm." Wendy said looking for something in her closet to wear. She pulled out a blouse.

"Wendy!" Candace said. "You aren't wearing that shapeless thing. I've been dragging you down to the beach for a reason girl." The blond looked through the clothing in the closet and pulled out a different blouse. "Here we go."

"Candace, that's at least a size too small for me."

"More like a size and a half dux." Candice grinned. "Let's see how your 'old family friend' likes

a face full of your norks"

"You're terrible." Wendy said pulling the blouse on, then turning to examine her appearance in the mirror. "What do you think? Second button?"

"Third." Her friend laughed. "Let him see what he's going to be dreaming about."

-----oooOOOooo-----

"Harry?" Monica touched his shoulder. "Are you alright?"

"No, I'm not. She's going to hate me."

"Harry," Wendell laughed. "She's going to be angry, but it isn't in her to hate you. I remember how angry I was when you gave me back my memories, but I couldn't hate my little girl. You were her first and best friend Harry, she won't hate you."

"You'll just have to explain your motivations," Monica continued. "She'll respect them; she has to because she used them herself."

"Yeah," Harry said, not sounding all that convinced.

"It's not like she loses who she is now" Wendell said. "She will just gain who she was as well."

The two young women returned to the kitchen area laughing among themselves. Monica found Harry's reaction to Wendy's choice of outfit to be highly amusing.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Four Years ago:

The preparation had taken most of the day, with Hermione waking several times and still being under the influence of 'The Weekend of Bliss' had to be gently distracted. Together with the Grangers he carefully built the personae that Hermione was to take on. She would be... Hermione, only without the magic.

Much discussion went into Hermione's new name. After rejecting Susan, Melissa, Devon, and they settled on 'Wendy Olive'. Daniel enjoyed the fact that her initials spell out 'WOW'.

*Harry returned to his satchel and removed a wooden case and carefully placed it on the table. "You should put this somewhere safe."

Emma picked up the box and carefully opened it. "Hermione's wand." She breathed.

"She'll need it when I return her memories."

"What for?" Daniel asked.

"To kill me."

The three people at the table broke into laughter that carried on for several seconds, and then Daniel sobered.

"If this is going to work, we have to be Wendell and Monica. Harry, you need to call me Wendell."

"Yes sir." Harry frowned. "I think I'm ready. The sooner I do this, the sooner I can get out of your lives and get back to Britain."

"Are you sure?" Monica asked.

"Yes. Hermione should be waking again any time now, I'll give her the antidote for the potion and then..."

-----oooOOOooo-----

Hermione sat at the kitchen table swaying slightly and giggling. "Harry... why don't we go to the backroom and talk for a while?"

"Maybe later Hermione," Harry said uncomfortable with how the potion was affecting his friend. He dug in his pocket for a tiny crystal vial and handed it to her. "I need you to take this for me. Could you do that Hermione?"

"Harry!" she giggled. "You don't need a love potion for me."

"It's not a love potion Hermione. It's just a little something to calm you down."

"k," Hermione thumbed off the vial's stopper and tipped the contents into her mouth. Almost immediately she shuddered, then her eyes dilated and she shook her head as if to clear her mind.

"Harry?" the bushy haired witch said, suddenly aware of her surroundings. "Mum? Daddy?" Hermione Granger turned back toward Harry. "What have you done? What have you done?"

"I'm sorry Hermione, I'm so sorry," Harry said blinking back tears as he waved his wand in the complex pattern she had taught him. "Novus monumentum!"

A yellow pulse of magic leaped from Harry's wand to Hermione's face, shocked her eyes closed in reaction to the bright light. Then her expression calmed and a smile spread across her face.

Wendy Wilkins opened her eyes. "Hi Harry," she said before turning to her parents. "Mum! Daddy! It's so good to see you, was your flight as bad as ours was? Harry and I thought we were going to die from boredom!"

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

Harry faced Hermione across the small kitchen table. The raven haired Wizard reached into his ever present satchel and withdrew the familiar wooden box that he had retrieved from Monica

earlier in the evening. With trembling fingers he worked the latch and removed the precious Vine wood and dragon heart string core wand in front of a very puzzled Wendy Wilkins.

Candace had left for the evening an hour before and Wendy had been looking forward to maybe spending a little alone time with Harry, but she had been surprised when he had asked her parents to join them in the kitchen. Mum and Daddy had been acting oddly all evening, and this, whatever this was, seemed to be the cause. "A polished stick?" Wendy asked, picking it up. "That seems like an odd gift Harry."

"I've got one too," Harry said pulling his from his left sleeve.

"What's it for?" she asked, looking from her friend to her parents and back again.

"Oh, it's very handy," Harry said as he moved the stick in his right hand in a complex pattern that seemed somehow familiar. "Memor vestry."

Orange light suddenly burst in her face and Wendy Wilkins squeezed her eyes shut to protect them from the glare.

Suddenly, memories she didn't know she had rushed back into the girl's consciousness. The shock took her breath away as she recalled her childhood home, school, success and being bullied for daring to be smart, of her parents, Granger not Wilkins, learning of magic, meeting Harry and Ron, and a troll, a dragon, flying on a hippogriff, fighting for her life in a dark somewhere against adults who hated her for who her parents were, of pain when the curse cut her open, of Ron, Ron, Ron. And Harry.

Hermione Granger opened her eyes for the first time in four years. She was not a happy young woman.

Harry had been prepared for Hermione to react, for her to storm from the room, for her to scream at him, for her to pick up her wand and hex him or curse him, or even transfigure him into something small and unpleasant. He was completely unprepared for what she did do.

The punch was perfectly timed and perfectly placed. Harry actually heard the cartilage in his nose snap as the force of the blow knocked him backwards out of the chair. He hit the back of his head hard against the wall behind him before he slid to the ground and blood started gushing from his nostrils.

Harry blinked away the tears from his broken nose and looked up to see Hermione now standing over him, her magic flaring in her rage, the woman had her wand now and it was clearly pointed at his face. She had hit him. Actually hit him. He felt the anger swell in his chest.

"HERMIONE JANE GRANGER!" Monica Wilkins shouted. "You stop that right now young lady."

"Do you know what he did to me?" Hermione shouted.

"Oh, I've got an idea, considering you did the same thing to your father and me."

The halo around the girl faded instantly. "That wasn't the same thing at all!" She said in a small voice. "I was trying to protect you."

"And Harry was trying to protect you Hermione."

"But that was different..." Hermione hesitated. "I'm... I'm... I'm a witch."

Harry rose from the floor painfully. "Rhymes with witch anyway."

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

Harry righted the chair while still holding his nose with his left hand. He paused for a moment, seemingly shaking in anger. He sat down in the chair and ignored the horrified looks the Wilkins were giving Hermione. He fixed Hermione with a look and gestured to his face with his right hand. "Do you mind?"

"You expect me to heal you?" she spat, remembering how angry she was with him.

"I would do it myself but I am absolute pants at healing charms. You broke it, you fix it."

Hermione appeared to be torn between healing his nose and doing him even more damage. Finally after a few moments she stepped forward and gently ran her wand down the bridge of his nose while murmuring a healing charm. Then she cleaned the blood from his clothing. "Thank you." Harry said, not meeting her eyes. The Wizard dug in his satchel for a moment and pulled out a thick roll of parchment. "These are Ron's letters to you." "Ron?" The roll of parchment easily exceeded the sum total of Ron's writings the entire six years they were in school. "Ron wrote all this?"

"He wrote you every day for four years," Harry said. "He's waiting for you to write back. If you don't he knows not to bother you again." Harry again dug in his satchel and withdrew a small pile of newsprint. "This is from Luna, the Quibbler issues she managed to put out during the war, so you could catch up on what you've missed. And this," Harry produced a gold disk, four inches across, along with a money bag, "is your posthumous Order of Merlin, second class and the associated cash award."

"Posthumous?" Hermione asked.

"Oh, yes. You're dead, you see. After it became apparent that you were no longer with us, Draco Malfoy started claiming that he killed you in a duel." Harry smiled at some memory of the time. "Ron and I knew he was lying, but it added to your cover. Then Voldemort killed the ferret for 'wasting a resource to get to Potter.' According to our spy in Voldemort's people anyway."

"You had a spy?"

"Millicent Bulstrode." Harry nodded. "She came to us for her own reasons, if you want to know what they are, you'll have to ask her."

"Why? Why did you do this to me Harry?"

The Wilkins' kitchen filled with silence for a moment. "I don't know if you remember what you were like then Hermione. The guilt you felt for memory charming your parents was eating you alive. Ron and I were trying to come up with some way of comforting you, and then we saw what was happening at the Ministry. You spent most of your time in Umbridge's kangaroo court, don't forget, and didn't see what we saw. What they were doing to the Muggle born was horrible. It would have been worse for you if they caught you, because you were associated with me. You were under far worse than a simple death sentence. Far far worse."

"I suppose you think I should forgive you then." Hermione huffed as she again sat down opposite him.

Harry looked up and finally met her eyes. "Hermione, I've felt guilty for what I've done to you every day since I did it, and I've been dreading what your response was going to be. I imagined that you would rampage out of the room and never speak to me again, that you might scream at me, or pick up your wand and hex or curse me to within an inch of my life."

Harry stood up and shouldered his satchel. "But you didn't do any of those things, did you? No, your first, most honest reaction to me trying to protect you the way you tried to protect your parents was to hit me. The entire time I've known you, you've only struck one other person. Now I know that the level of esteem you hold me in is equivalent to that which you held for Draco Malfoy."

"Harry, I don't..."

"After I finally got away from Vernon Dursley, I swore to myself that I would never allow myself to be hit again, and here we are," Harry interrupted. He paused, seemed to come to a decision, and then continued. "Wendell, Monica, thank you for your help, and for your support. Without it, I don't know what I would have done." The Wizard turned to Hermione. "Good bye Hermione. Have a nice life."

Harry was suddenly gone from the room, leaving behind only a soft pop in his apparition. Hermione stood from her chair, unable to believe that he would just leave like that.

The Wilkins' exchanged looks, then Wendell rose from his chair. "Very well done. That young man would die for you and you treated him like that." He shook his head. "I'm going to bed. You need to decide if you're going to be Wendy Wilkins, the Doctor who can do magic or Hermione Granger, the Witch who knows medicine. Your mother and I have already decided to remain the Wilkins. Good night Hermione."

"Daddy?" The young Witch gasped watching her father leave the kitchen.

"Sit down Hermione." Monica said sliding a cup of tea in front of the young woman. "We need to talk a bit, I think."

"Mum, why is everyone..."

Monica Wilkins raised her hand in a clear indication that Hermione should stop speaking. "I should have been more clear. I'm going to talk. What the hell were you thinking, Hermione? How many times did you tell me that you suspected that Harry was being abused?"

"But he..."

"He and Ron did what they felt they had to do to protect you, just as you did what you felt you had to do to protect your father and me. Is it your position that your father should have broken your nose?"

"Of course not. But he..."

"He bankrupted himself to protect you and to return to your father and me the financial independence we were used to. And you hit him. Harry left a place where he is a hero, where he was celebrated and no doubt could have his choice of young women to come here and... How did he put it? Give you your life back. And you hit him." Monica shook her head. "I'm so proud to know that young man, as proud as I used to be of you, my darling daughter. I'm curious though, Hermione, what is it about your being a witch that makes your memories more important than mine?"

"That's not what I meant, Mum."

"Perhaps not, but it is what you said. It was different for you, because you are a witch."

"I don't think like that." The girl said quietly.

"But you do, Hermione. You knew better than your father and me; you protected us without even asking us what we wanted. After all, we're just Muggles, right?" Monica took a sip of her tea. "Every year you went to that school you came back a little more distant, a little more full of yourself. For the longest time I thought that was just the reactions of an intelligent young woman growing up, then you stripped our memories from us. You were eighteen I was forty two. What precisely made your judgment better than mine? Better than your father's?"

Monica rose from the table. "I'm going to bed Hermione. I think perhaps you should consider what you have done tonight. One last thought though: that young man left wishing you a 'good life'. That's not something that someone who is ever coming back does. Your anger may well have cost you getting to know him again. Good night."

Hermione watched as her mother left the room. Was she right? Had she chased Harry away forever? What had she been thinking?

With a trembling hand, she reached for Ron's letters.

Harry Potter and the Callipygian

Harry Potter hoped against hope that he wasn't too late. This was his last full day at Privet Drive, and Aunt Petunia's preparations for her 'Bridge Club' had taken so very long, and it wasn't like the lazy woman could do any of the actual work herself, no. Harry was the one who had to make the sandwiches, prepare the table for the game, vacuum, and do every other damned thing inside the house before he had to mow the lawn and weed the flower beds. Petunia couldn't have any of her friends getting the idea that someone actually LIVED at #4 Privet Drive. It was now noon, and Harry was banished from the house so that his freakishness wouldn't pollute Petunia's horribly abnormal imitation of a perfectly normal home.

This suited Harry just fine. Only mildly annoyed that Petunia's poor planning hadn't allowed him the time to prepare a lunch for himself, Harry rushed to the north side of the house, throwing his father's invisibility cloak over his shoulders as he ran. He quickly settled down on his favorite spot, pleading with the universe that he not be too late.

He wasn't. It was like a birthday present, only a day early.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Upon returning from school for the summer prior to his seventh year, Harry had immediately noticed the change in the neighborhood. Specifically he noticed the change at #6 Privet Drive, where before the lawn and flower beds were perfect, just like all the other lawns and flower beds on the block, now they were both extraordinary. The grass at #6 was greener, and far lusher than the lawns on either side, the blooms in the beds were larger, far more colorful and even at a distance, more fragrant than any in the neighborhood.

As the one who had historically done most of the work on the gardens of #4, Harry could appreciate that whoever the new owner of #6 was, he or she was quite the gardener. Upon entering the house that first day in June, Vernon had started in on what Harry had come to think of as Vernon's 'standard No-Freakishness lecture #4 with extra spittle and three different hues of red face' when Harry casually mentioned to the room that he was turning seventeen in only six weeks. Vernon colored and continued with his rant, attempting to regain the rhythm lost at Harry's interruption.

Ignoring the man, Harry turned to his Aunt and continued on in a conversational tone how seventeen was one's majority in 'his world' and that said birthday would remove all age related

restrictions on magic.

The woman paled, and then called an impromptu 'family meeting'. A very surprised and thoroughly clueless Vernon choked back his lecture at her insistence, as Petunia pulled him into the kitchen for a quick conversation while Harry took a seat on the sofa with a small smile, as Dudley stared at him in amazement from his chair in front of the telly, so shocked the three hundred pound boy actually stopped feeding himself for several moments. After a few moments the elder Dursley's reentered the sitting room and the 'family meeting' began.

After a short discussion it was agreed that Harry would help around the house with a set number of chores, mostly the yard work that frankly Harry preferred because at least it got him outside in the fresh air. He would also 'assist' his Aunt when she needed it. Dudley was also assigned a set of chores, much to the large boy's distress and over his loud objections. Other than at meals (which Petunia would prepare) the Dursleys and Harry would have almost no dealings with each other this final summer that Harry would spend with them.

All of this suited Harry just fine.

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

However, life on Privet Drive didn't truly get interesting for Harry until the following day. Harry had decided on the train ride from Scotland that he was going to get into shape. Not Quidditch playing shape, real actual honest to God good physical condition. There was a difference, even though most Quidditch players wouldn't believe it. Having discovered Dudley's abandoned weight set in the basement, Harry decided that he needed to start lifting, but the book that Dudley had on the subject (also abandoned and never read as evidenced by the intact cello wrapping) recommended 'road work'.

And that is how Harry Potter became motivated. Having decided that he was going to run a mile every morning, the very next day at six am, Harry was out in front of #4 wearing some of Dudley's old sweats and a pair of beat up trainers. Without bothering to warm up, Harry began his intended run, from #4, once around the park then back. That would be a mile, easy. The young Wizard took off at a dead run.

And made it perhaps one hundred and fifty yards before he had to slow to a walk, out of breathe

when a woman's voice came from behind.

"Passing on the left slow poke."

Harry was startled by the voice from seemingly nowhere, and then by the woman who passed him at a brisk pace. All he could make out was her bouncing blond pony tail and her lycra covered butt as she pulled away from his shambling walk. Where had she come from?

The woman passed him the next day as well. And the day after that, and after that. She passed him on the fifth day as well, but he was properly motivated by her amazing physique so he managed to keep her in sight for the entire run, amazed when she finished her run at the drive of #6 Privet Drive.

This woman was the new Mrs. #6?

-----oooOOOooo-----

After three weeks of their morning encounters Harry was on the front lawn of #4 emulating the stretches that Mrs. #6 did each morning, waiting for her to start so that he would have his motivational scenery for the run, when she jogged up to him, and stopped maintaining her pace in place.

"So, slow poke, are you going to follow me every morning, or would you like to run with me for a change?"

Harry blushed, which seemed to amuse the woman immensely.

"Well, come on then."

The pair started off at the pace the woman had been setting for them over the last three weeks. They ran in silence, the only sound in Harry's ears was the slap of his sneakers on the pavement and his breath. Mrs.#6 wasn't even breathing hard, and her strides seemed effortless with each footfall coming almost silently. They had made it to the half way point of the run when she turned to Harry smiling. "You should be warmed up by now... Ready to kick it?"

With no visible effort the woman extended her stride and almost doubled her pace pulling away from the raven haired wizard. Harry hesitated for a moment, and then attempted to match her pace. It was only the motivation of the view of her posterior that allowed him to keep pace.

-----oooOOOooo-----

The effort involved in keeping up with Mrs. #6 left Harry almost exhausted. As a consequence his yard work stretched into the afternoon, where before he had always been finished before noon.

Harry wearily pushed the ancient push mower into the front lawn and discovered he had been missing something. Something very important. His new favorite neighbor did her yard work in the heat of the afternoon wearing very little indeed.

The young wizard spent far more time than usual on manicuring the Dursley's front garden that day. The fact that he spent most of the time facing #6 Privet Drive was purely coincidental.

She was there working on her garden the next day, and the day after that. Every day, it seemed, weekends excepted, found Mrs. #6 working on her garden.

Harry found her efforts highly educational.

In truth he worried that he might be something of a pervert, lusting for a woman he didn't know, imagining things that would likely never happen. Her smiles during their early morning runs suggested that she might know something of what he was thinking, but not in his wildest dreams could Harry ever manage the courage to actually speak to the woman.

That didn't stop his fantasies from running wild each night.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Harry settled down in his spot in the shade of the elm tree and attempted to become as quiet as possible.

Mrs. #6 was on her hands and knees, working on her flowerbeds in her jogging halter and Harry's favorite bit of her wardrobe, a pair of sprayed on black bicycle shorts that molded to her body in ways that took his breath away.

Harry knew that what he shouldn't be staring at the woman from under his father's cloak, knew that some would consider what he was doing as stalking, but he didn't care.

This woman's body was perfect. She was... perfect. He just wanted to sit in the shade and watch her in her perfection and imagine the possibilities.

~ So Potter, what is it that has your feeble little mind all a twitter? ~ An all too familiar sibilant voice echoed in his head

Damn it. Not now. ~Fuck off Tom. I'm busy. ~ Harry thought back.

~ Too busy to speak with me? And after I go to all the trouble of making the connection while we're both awake. ~

~ I said fuck off Tom, unless you want another ration of what you got at the Ministry two years ago. ~ How does he manage to lisp via telepathy anyway?

~ What could possibly be focusing your mind so much Potter? ~

Harry thought for a moment, and then smirked a bit from under his invisibility cloak.

~ I've seen through your eyes, can you see through mine? ~

~ I can... ~ Riddle thought suspiciously. ~ What are you up to Potter? ~

~ Take a look Tom, and then you can piss off. I'm busy. ~

Harry felt... /something /behind his eyes. What an odd sensation.

*~ That... That... That's indecent! ~ Riddle thought. ~ Why are you staring at that... Scarlet Woman?
~*

~ Scarlet woman? You sound like an old woman Tom. ~ Harry smirked. The old man probably read romance novels. ~ You know until now I thought your whole 'take over the world' fixation was just a demented way to meet girls. I guess not huh? ~

~ Damn you Potter! ~

~ You know my feelings of love for my parents and Godfather drove you out of my mind two years ago. I wonder what a good dose of lust would do? ~ Harry focused his attention on that perfect ass, not ten feet away and let his libido run free.

Riddle's screams were horrible. They made Harry smile.

-----oooOOOooo-----

At six pm that day a non-descript black automobile pulled up in front of #4 Privet Drive. Two middle aged men emerged along with a young woman. Before they reached the front door it swung open and Harry Potter emerged pulling his trunk behind him.

"Anxious Potter?" The older of the two men asked.

"More than a little bit Mad-Eye. Hello Remus." He turned to the girl. "I didn't expect you to come Hermione."

"I insisted." She dimpled.

From the corner of his eye Harry spotted Mrs. #6. "Excuse me for a second." Harry put his trunk in the boot of the auto then crossed the lawn to #6.

The woman looked at him curiously.

"I just wanted to stop by and thank you for running with me every morning. I'm leaving tonight and probably won't be back for a while."

"Too bad." She said in that wonderfully sexy throaty voice. "I'll miss your company. Going to school?"

"Something like that. Again, thank you."

He returned to the car to find the two men smirking at him and Hermione staring at him with one raised eyebrow.

"What? We ran together every morning. I was just saying goodbye."

Hermione huffed a bit, then turned and ducked down to get into the car.

Harry's own eyebrows shot up in surprise. Why hadn't he ever notice what a great ass Hermione had before?

Call Me In The Morning

Now:

I bought a coconut.

That unto its self was odd. While I often purchased things I wanted, the things I wanted rarely required a trip to a Muggle Supermarket. Since I was already there, I also bought a small mesh bag of limes.

How convenient, I thought at the time, to have the missing components of the potion I was brewing so readily available, and at such low prices.

I paused to consider the small fuzzy spheres in a bin next to the limes labeled ‘Kiwi Fruit’. Disgusting. Muggles certainly ate some horrible things. I made my way to the check out area, and while waiting on queue, I learned many things about the Muggle world that I had never imagined.

It seemed that something called ‘the Incredible Frogboy’ had escaped again from whatever holding facility it had been confined in. There were also articles about how some people called ‘scientists’ were keeping someone named Hitler’s living brain in a jar, and evidently there were Muggle loonies who were claiming that they had sent someone to the Moon, because there were whole newspapers dedicated to debunking that absurd claim. I picked up several of the magazines and newspapers containing those stories, so that I could show my father the state of the Muggle world.

I reached the head of the queue, and my order was tallied. To my utter amazement the bored shop assistant accepted the colored bits of Muggle paper just as the Goblin had assured me that she would. I accepted the oddly shaped coins that were offered as change, then securing my purchases in to the pockets of my great coat, I left the establishment. It was a short walk to the convenient alley from which I apparated back to Hogsmeade.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Making my way back to the castle, I was soon ensconced in one of the potions labs hidden deep within the bowls of the Slytherin house Dorms, and deep into my project.

This was no time for mistakes. I had learned from my earlier lapses in judgment. I had researched ever single aspect of this potion. I knew what I needed to do, I had all of the instruments and ingredients called for in the recipe, and I had covered every possibility. I was so close, too close to risk disaster this time. I had been preparing for this night since the return from the Christmas holidays. There were only five days left before the school let out for the summer and my seventh and final year at Hogwarts was done. Tomorrow I would finally do it. Tomorrow I would wrest from Potter what I deserved.

Warily following the instructions for the fourth of Potter’s secret potions, I placed the coconut

into a shallow bowl. Carefully, so very carefully, using the charms learned at my Godfather's knee I performed the incantation and wand movements that would gently split the palm fruit and allowed the milk to drain into the bowl over a low heat. Allowing the coconut milk to warm, I set about juicing the limes. Soon. The potion would be finished soon, and then I would receive what I deserved.

The brew started to foam lightly, just as the instructions said it would. The color was perfect. Seven hours and six precise stirrings to go. I turned the timing glass over to allow it to mark the time to the next stir, and sat back to reflect on how I arrived at this point.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Despite the fall of the Dark Lord at the hand of that ass Potter the previous summer, the Malfoy family had emerged untouched, their stature in Wizarding Society the same it had always been. What I had expected to be a triumphant return to Hogwarts had turned out to be something less than satisfactory. The reason was the same it had been every year.

Potter.

Wearing his mantle of Hero and Slayer of Voldemort, Potter had quickly built himself a following among the students, including several from Slytherin house. Anytime the 7th year Gryffindor wasn't in class he was surrounded by women. Several women, and at the same time. It was disgusting. It was unnatural. It was unfair. I wanted, no needed, no, I demanded my fair share.

It had taken weeks to find out Potter's secret. The Gryffindor had been dosing himself with a potion, one that made him irresistible to women. My first clue had been when Tracey Davis had come back to the dorms following a 'date' with Potter. The normally unflappable (and unapproachable) strawberry blond had sat in the common room gushing to her friend Greengrass about her evening with Potter and saying something about coconut and limes.

That was when I realized what Potter was doing. And I knew what I needed to do.

-----oooOOOooo-----

There she was. Bloody predictable that girl. All I had to do was wait long enough outside the library and she would appear. I stepped from the shadows.

"Granger." I said in a friendly manner. I would show her that I was the bigger man, willing to make allowances for her disgusting origins.

The brunette turned to my voice. She spotted me immediately, her eyes narrowing and her hand drifting toward her wand.

"What do you want Malfoy?"

"I want what Potter's getting and I'm willing to pay for it." She had to be the source. Potter had no talent for potions, Godfather had said so repeatedly. Granger had to be the source.

"Excuse me?" she said, her cinnamon eyes almost seemed to be sparking.

“Oh don’t play innocent with me.” I said dismissively. Honestly, this girl had no business sense. I was offering top Galleon here. “I know you’re giving it to Potter, I want it too. Name your price.”

The mud... no, must not use that term anymore. The Muggle born girl stepped closer, I took this to mean that she was considering my generous offer and moving closer in order to begin confidential negotiations. Then she grasped the front of my robes and drove her knee into my groin.

The entire universe went red, and my limbs failed me, I fell to the stone floor.

“You. Listen. To. Me. You. Disgusting. Pervert.” Granger said, punctuating each word with a kick to my stomach or ribs. “I. Am. A. Nice. Girl. Take. Your. Disgusting. Offers. And. Leave. Me. Alone.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

I ended up spending twelve hours in the Hospital Wing, where I was forced explain to the Matron again and again that I had been assaulted by three, no five large ruffians, who finally managed to take me down after I had dispatched three of them.

The Matron had the temerity to suggest that the bruises on my body appeared to have been made by a size six woman’s shoe.

My father will hear of this insult. Oh yes, she will pay for insinuating that I might have been beaten by a mere girl.

After my release from her purported ‘care’ I returned to the Slytherin Common Room and carefully went over my memories of the conversation that led to Granger’s unprovoked attack upon my person, and I could find no fault. Perplexed, I approached Pansy, and explained what might have happened, hypothetically of course, hoping for insight into the female mind.

“You actually said that? You actually told her that you knew she was giving it to Potter and you wanted it too? Then you offered her money?” The silly girl started to laugh.

That struck me as an odd reaction to not understanding the actions of a mud... Muggle born.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

The timing glass chimed.

Selecting the glass rod, I dipped it into the brew and began a slow anti-clockwise stir, making one full revolution every seven seconds. With each full revolution the colors of the brew changed starting milk white and by the end of the nineteenth turning a full pink.

Removing the glass rod from the caldron, I took a three ounce ladle of the brew and raised it to my mouth, tipping the mixture into my mouth. I swished the vile liquid in my mouth for a full

count of twenty three, and then spat it back into the caldron, keying the potion to myself.

I turned the second timing glass to measure the time until the next scheduled stir, and then stumbled to the toilet to purge the remaining potion from my body. The costs of this potion were high, but the rewards promised to be... amazing.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Plan 'B' was similar to Plan 'A', only with a different target. Tracking this one down was far more difficult, between her time on the Quidditch pitch, 'dates' with various male students, even studying on occasion, it took me two weeks to find her alone.

"Good morning Weasley." I said, covertly checking that the protective charms I had cast on my groin were still in place. "Might I have a moment?"

"What do you want Malfoy?" Honestly, the way she spoke my family name was almost like an invective.

"Look Weasley," I said, in a conversational manner. "I know what Granger is doing for Potter. I want the same thing, and I'm willing to pay you for it."

-----oooOOOooo-----

"Oh for goodness sake Mr. Malfoy, the more you squirm, the harder you make this." The Matron said, no doubt smiling widely at my discomfort. "Brace yourself Mr. Malfoy."

After having tried and failed to deal with the situation myself overnight, I found myself laying face down on the hospital cot. Gathering the pillow to my face, I nodded my readiness, and then bit into the pillow. I could hear the Matron muttering about not being paid enough to do this sort of thing; I felt a wrenching pain and then blessed relief. I almost cried as the offending object was removed.

"It seems that a completely different ruffian is responsible for this incident Mr. Malfoy" The Matron said in a tone that suggested she was fighting against laughter. "It appears that this particular ruffian wears a size four woman's shoe." She said as she casually deposited the article of footwear that I had come to think of as the Mary Jane of Doom on the table beside the bed. "Although how he or she managed to wedge it that far up your..."

Once again, my letters home will make sure that my father hears of this insult. The old crone will most certainly pay for insinuating that I might have been beaten unmercifully by an even smaller girl.

In the mean time however, I needed to determine what I had been doing to so provoke these temperamental Gryffindor witches. Given her previous bout of unhelpfulness, I avoided Pansy, but I still needed a woman's insight into their behavior. Looking over my options with Pansy out of the picture, and Davis and Greengrass firmly in Potter's corner, which left only one woman in my cohort that might offer said insight.

Well, sort of a woman anyway. Larger than Goyle, crueller than Crabbe, Millicent Bulstrode was

a force to be reckoned with. She was currently dating BOTH Crabbe and Goyle, simultaneously whether they liked it or not. I don't know what she was doing to them but it must have been horrible. Two nights previous Crabbe had returned to our dorm room in tears, while Goyle sat on his bed with his massive arms pulling his bent knees to his chest, rocking in place while staring at the wall and muttering something about 'so much hair'. I decided that I really didn't want to know.

I set about tracking Millicent down ultimately finding her reading under the large elm beyond the oaf's cabin. Approaching her, I made sure to make my presence known as most of us in Slytherin House had discovered the hard way that sneaking up on Millie Bulstrode was a very bad idea.

"What do you want Malfoy?" She asked, never looking up from her book. How had she known it was me? Did she somehow have a way of detecting my innate aura of natural superiority?

"I need some advice from a woman's perspective Bulstrode." I admitted.

This caused her to look up at me. "It must have something to do with Potter," she said lifting an eyebrow. "I can't think of any other reason you would come to me for your *woman's perspective*. I know that Davis and Greengrass won't speak to you, and that Parkinson has been laughing at you, so evidently you've done something stupid and that usually means you've been trying to prove to Potter your John Thomas is bigger than his. Again."

I sputtered a bit at her accusations, then settled down and described my interactions with the two Gryffindor witches and their inexplicable reaction to my reasonable requests.

"Sweet Merlin!" she swore. "You really are a moron, aren't you?" Bulstrode marked her place in her book and set it aside. "Draco, I'm going to explain where you went wrong, and I'm going to do it in small words so that you don't hurt yourself trying to understand me. When you approached Granger you told her you wanted what she was giving Potter and you were willing to pay for it, assuming that she was supplying Potter with this supposed potion. I highly doubt that she would do such a thing, given her opinion of love potions. So she thought you believed that she and Potter were having sex and that you wanted her to do the same with you for money. You called her a whore. You then turned around and did the same thing to the Weasley chit." She smiled. "It isn't really surprising that they kicked your ass. I'd have killed you."

"How could they get that out of what I said?"

She shook her head. "Moron." Then she reached out and punched me in the shoulder. I'm not sure, but I think she broke something. "Potter's not using a potion. He's pulling witches because he's rich, powerful the savior of the Wizarding World and some witches think he's good looking." She shrugged. "Personally I don't see it; I could never go for someone so... breakable. I like a man with some meat on his bones, like Vinnie or Greg, or both of them."

Potter not on a potion? The woman was raving and she wasn't done yet.

"You on the other hand are also rich and relatively powerful, not in Potter's league in power, but you could hold your own against most Wizards, but you treat women like crap. Parkinson put up with that when you had something she wanted, but now that she has options..."

The woman was obviously delusional. I let her blather on for several more minutes before I made my excuses and left her under her tree.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Plan 'C' was similar to Plans 'A' and 'B', only with a different target and hopefully less physical trauma.

I abandoned attempting to communicate with psychotic witches all together, this time choosing a target that was far dimmer, but less likely to immediately assault my bits.

I still wanted the meeting to be private, of course, so the planning took most of a week. Finally I was ready.

I entered the unused classroom my note had suggested as a meeting place and was only slightly surprised that he was waiting for me.

"What do you want Malfoy?" He asked from where he sat, lacking even the manners to rise to his feet when his betters enter the room. "You owe my sister a new pair of shoes."

I owed her? After what she had done? I should... Calming myself, I reached to the money bag on my belt. The remains of my quarterly allowance were in the bag, something more than fifty Galleons... What did women's shoes cost anyway? No matter, the fund would be replenished in three days. I tossed the bag of coins to the red head.

"I wanted to apologize to Ginevra for the misunderstanding, but given her excitable nature, I thought it best that I wait until she calmed down a bit before I approached her again." I said in a manner that would best show I was offering an olive branch.

His eyes narrowed as he contemplated my words. "I'd wait at least a year, though five might be better. She really didn't like whatever it was you asked her."

"Look," I interrupted. "What potion is Potter on?"

"Potion?" The lummox appeared to be confused. "I don't know what you're talking about. Why would Harry be on a Potion?"

"It's obvious. Since the ride on the Express in September the witches have been all over him. I've seen him out with two or three at a time. It must be a potion, what other explanation might there be?"

"Well," Weasley temporized, counting off his reasoning on his fingers. "He's rich, he's good looking, he's rich, he's stupidly powerful, he's rich, he's the last Potter, he's rich, he's the head of two ancient and noble families, he's rich, he's a star athlete, and oh yeah, he's rich."

"I'm all those things." I scoffed.

"No, your father is the one that's rich. You're on an allowance until you inherit, and that will be

what? Ninety odd years? You aren't the head of your family, and won't be, again for about ninety years. You're about average in power Malfoy, you couldn't possibly be fooling yourself about that. And everyone knows about the way you treated Pansy over the years, and most of the witches in this castles are supremely angry about it. Hell, even I haven't managed to piss off all the witches in the school at the same time. Really, you've got a gift in that regard."

"Look Weasley," I said interrupting the buffoon. "I want the potion that Potter is on. I know it uses limes and coconuts as ingredients. I'm willing to pay top Galleon for the recipe."

"Well," the red head said grudgingly, "if there is a potion, and I'm not saying there is, he's not getting it from Hermione; she would pitch a fit if he even asked."

"Who then?" I insisted.

"Well, about the only people I can think of who might be able to pull something like that off AND would give it to Harry would be Fred and George. They are justifiably proud of their inventions, this potion wouldn't be cheap."

Price is no object!" I declared.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

The timing glass chimed for a second time.

This time the stirring was done with a rod of pure silver, and the pattern of the stir was a figure eight starting in a clockwise direction. With my left hand I turned a third timing glass set to four minutes nine seconds.

I leaned over the caldron, for this stir, I had to be in position so that the vapors from the brew would condense on my face, combining with the sweat of my body, then drip back into the caldron. A secondary keying to my person.

With each drop that fell from my face back into the brew, the color of the mixture changed, from pink, to red, to purple and finally as the timing glass chimed signaling the end of the stir, to a sky blue.

I pulled face from the heat, and restarted the first timing glass.

-----oooOOOooo-----

~ Interlude ~

Ron Weasley slowly made his way through Hogwarts Castle, thinking about what Malfoy had asked of him.

It wasn't often one was handed an opportunity like this. This could simultaneously be very profitable and extremely funny. Still, he decided, he should at least make sure that he wasn't

fooling himself.

Ron made his way to the library in search of his source of all information.

“Hey Hermione,” he said sliding onto the chair across from her normal study position.

“Evening Ron,” Hermione Granger said, never looking up from the essay she was writing. “What brings you down to the library?”

“I heard something today that didn’t make any sense, so I thought I’d ask you about it.”

“Ok?” That caught her attention. Hermione finished the thought she was jotting down, and then looked up into the eyes of the tall red head. “What did you want to know?”

“Someone tried to tell me that there was a potion that someone could take that would make other people love you. That sounded like skrewt dung to me, given what you told Harry and me about protecting ourselves from being dosed.”

A smile spread across the young woman’s face. “So you do listen to me. Ok, in answer to your question, no a potion couldn’t do that. A love potion has to be keyed person to be loved and that keying agent has to be introduced to the one affected by the potion. There is no way for a potion ingested by one person to affect others, if one were to do so it would violate several of the basic principles of Potion making, such as Blot’s Uncertainty Principle, Wallace’s Rule of Alcohol Infusion , and Becerra’s Law of Unknown Knowns.”

“Wallace's Rule of Alcohol Infusion? Isn't that the one that basically boils down to 'No matter how much you drink, you're the only one it'll get drunk'?” Ron interrupted.

Hermione was a bit shocked that Ron even remembered that obscure bit of trivia. “Well, that’s a very basic gist of Wallace’s work, but the actually theory and proofs are among the most brilliant and well thought out in the business. I’m surprised you remember it.”

“Hermione, the man writes in a Scots dialect, he’s bloody hard to forget.” Ron shook his head. “Harry and I had to go to McGonagall to get her to translate some of the words.”

“Language Ron!” Hermione huffed. “Geniuses like Wallace tend to be a bit eccentric, and his phonetic spelling of his own speech patterns in his scholarly work is a bit... odd, but the quality of his proofs is beyond dispute. The man proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that...”

Ron nodded as he usually did whenever Hermione went into lecture mode. So he had his answer, just as he suspected Malfoy was wrong. While his best female friend droned on, Ron completed his plan, checking through each step to see if it could possibly be made either more profitable or funnier. After another fifteen minutes of Hermione’s in-depth explanation, he excused himself and headed for the dorms.

On his way there Ron was surprised to find Harry backed in to a corner by a pair of determined witches.

“Need any help there Mate?”

Harry looked out from the darkened space, with his hair messier than normal and his glasses askew. “No Ron, doing fine.” The Savior of the Wizarding world snaked his arms around the waists of Sue Bones and Hannah Abbott with a very silly grin on his face. “Doing great here. No worries.”

“Ok.” Ron started to back away. “Oh Harry, could I borrow Hedwig?”

“Sure Mate,” Harry called back before he disappeared behind the girls.

Entering the Gryffindor common room, Ron found Ginny sitting at one of the tables working on an essay. Ron stopped at her table, and laid the money bag he had been given in front of her. “Malfoy sent this to pay for the shoe you lost.”

Ginny’s brow furrowed at the thought of receiving anything from Draco Malfoy. After shaking the coins from the pouch, she looked up at her brother in shock. “Ron, there’s fifty eight Galleons here.”

“Not enough?”

“Ron,” she sighed. “I could replace almost my entire wardrobe with fifty eight Galleons.”

“Oh. Well, consider the excess a penalty for how upset he got you.”

Leaving Ginny to her studies, Ron made his way to his dorm and was happy to find Hedwig resting on her perch. The redhead pulled a sheet of parchment from his trunk and sat on his bed to write.

Dear Fred and George.

An opportunity presents itself and I thought I’d cut you two in for half...

~ End of Interlude ~

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

The timing glass chimed for a third time.

This iteration of the stir was easy. All that was required was two quick clockwise rotations while adding three strands of my hair.

The color of the brew deepened to a dark midnight blue. Perfect.

I restarted the timing glass.

-----oooOOOooo-----

The wait had been agonizing. Weasley reported that his brothers had refused to help and that he would have to raid their files to find out what the Weasley twins were doing for Potter.

In the mean time, Potter moved on from the pair of Hufflepuffs he had been dallying with to Daphne Greengrass. The girl was forever returning to the dorms smelling of coconut and giggling like a first year.

Then came the day that when passing in the halls between classes, Weasley gave me our agreed upon signal, a nod. Did the buffoon actually understand security? I was amazed.

I entered the unused classroom we had used before following the evening meal and had to wait only a few moments before he entered the room.

“Well, it wasn’t easy.” He said, obviously starting the negotiating. “The Twins refused to tell me what they were doing for Harry, but this last Hogsmeade weekend I snuck out of town and visited them at their shop in Diagon Alley telling them I was looking for a weekend shift at their shop to pickup a little pocket money.”

“So you’ve got it?” I asked wondering why anyone would need to ‘pick up a little pocket money.’

“Well, I’ve got THEM.” He said pulling a small roll of parchment from his robes. “I dug through their files and found an entire file dedicated to Harry and projects for Harry. I found three potions that have limes and coconut as ingredients, but what they do isn’t defined.” He unrolled the parchments and flattened them on the table between us. “They don’t even have names, just ‘Harry 1 through 3’.”

Three potions? Well, it couldn’t be helped. I’d have to try them until I found Potter’s secret. “Let’s have them then.”

“I don’t think so. I took a bit of a risk getting these.”

I closed my eyes and sighed. “How much?”

A grin crept across the buffoon’s lips. “150 Galleons.”

“That’s a bit stiff for three unknown potions.”

“It is.” Weasley agreed. “But this is sort of a seller’s market isn’t it? After all, you want to buy them a bit more than I want to sell them.”

Why had I told him that price was no object? “Fine,” I said counting out the coins.

Weasley would pay for this once I had what I wanted. Perhaps I’d add his sister to my harem. Wouldn’t that bring a smile to the red headed clown’s face?

-----oooOOOooo-----

I spent a week studying the three potions recipes. Leave it to those idiot twins to have potion recipes unlabeled as to what they did. Lacking any other method of determining which to try first

I simply picked the one labeled #1 and set to collecting ingredients.

The brewing of the first potion was time consuming, but not overly complex. It took six days to produce a translucent fluid that filled the air with exactly the same scent that Greengrass had been reeking with. I smiled to myself. Perfect.

It seemed odd that the recipe produced so much of the potion. Where a normal brew would produce enough of a potion to deliver three doses in a standard #2 vial (call it six fluid ounces) this recipe produced a full quart of fluid.

Another flaw with the potion was there were no dosing instructions. None at all.

Still, as father has always said, no gall no galleons. I measured out a standard dose, and tipped it back, swallowing the malodorous concoction in a single gulp.

I then ruined my shoes and trousers by vomiting all over them. For several minutes. I purged my last meal, and from the evidence presented, several prior to it. My last conscious thought before I fell to the floor was that despite the evidence before me I didn't recall having eaten corn in the last week.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Once I came to, I signaled for a House Elf to clean up the mess, secured my lab, and hauled myself to the shower. It was under the hot needle spray that I started to think through where I had gone wrong.

I could think of no reason that Potter or the Twin gingers would want such a powerful purgative. I knew that I had followed the recipe to the letter, which meant that there was a problem with the dosing.

I hated to admit it, even to myself, but I needed help. I needed someone who knew more about potions than I. My godfather was right out. If he even imagined that I was attempting to use potions to emulate Potter he would emasculate me on the spot.

That left one person. Merlin help me.

-----oooOOOooo-----

I found her in the Library. Of course, where else would she be?

“Good afternoon Granger.” I said sitting down across from her.

“Malfoy!” she hissed moving for her wand.

“Pax Granger,” I said raising both my hands to show that they were empty and trying to calm the all too excitable Head Girl. “I want to apologize for my actions last time we spoke, it was explained to me how I had insulted you, and I want to assure you that I didn't mean what it sounded like.”

She just stared at me, seemingly in judgment of me and my continued existence. “Alright Malfoy, what do you want?”

“I need some help with a potions project,” I explained, pushing a hand copied version of the recipe across the table to her. “I found this recipe in an old text, but I can’t figure out the dosing.”

She suspiciously accepted the parchment from me, and then her brown eyes scanned down the page. “How odd,” she temporized. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen a combination like this before.”

“I know what you mean,” I agreed.

“Well, this potion is obviously applied topically, I mean the inclusion of Nogtail bile alone would...”

“No need to state the obvious Granger,” I said dismissively. How had I missed that?

“And the fire slug slime... A person would see what he ate last week.”

“At least,” I agreed, wishing she’d get on with it.

“Well,” she said shaking her head. “The inclusion of limes and coconut milk is odd, but it seems to be dosed as needed.” She looked me in the eye. “What’s this for anyway?”

“Just a little something I’m working on for NEWT extra credit.” I said rolling up the sheet of parchment, knowing that wasn’t what she asked. She was sharp. Perhaps I would add her to my harem, in a secondary role of course, just to annoy Potter.

-----oooOOOooo-----

My preparations were complete. Tonight I would take my rightful place in society as a master of women. Removing my shirt, I slathered generous amounts of the potion all over my chest and arms. If a little worked for Potter, then what would a lot do for me? I had to admit while the potion might taste vile, it had a soothing scent, and the tingle it imparted to my flesh was exciting in its own right.

I donned my robes, forsaking the shirt. No sense putting an additional layer of clothing between the women of Hogwarts and what they would desire beyond all else. I exited the dungeons in search of my prey.

There they were, two helpless Hufflepuff lambs coming to the Malfoy Slaughter. Hannah Abbott and Susan Bones, both fresh from throwing themselves at Potter. How perfect it would be to bend them to my will.

“Ladies,” I said shrugging my robes off. “To night I will grace you with my body.”

The two shared a look, and then gazed upon me. Their nostrils flared as the potion reached them, and I could see a deep burning need in their eyes. Perfect! “Abbott, on your knees, you may service me. Bones, lose the blouse, I want to play with those wonderful breasts!”

They again shared a look, and then as one, they rushed to my side. I spread my arms wide to welcome them to the altar that is my body. Long may they worship me.

-----oooOOOooo-----

“I believe I’ve solved the mystery Mr. Malfoy.” The matron said as she treated the multitude of wounds that covered my body. “It seems that the ruffian who keeps attacking you is somewhat malformed.”

“What do you mean?” I asked my teeth clinched through the pain.

“Well the bruising on your left side appears to have been caused by a size four woman’s shoe, while the bruising on your right comes from a size six. Obviously your assailant has feet of different sizes.”

Oh laugh it up woman. I thought as the Skelgrow rebuilt my rib cage. You’ll pay, oh yes you’ll pay.

It was all I could do not to scream. Who knew that a pair of Hufflepuffs would react so violently? Bones in particular seemed to know many many things that caused pain. She probably learned them from her aunt.

Beyond the pain, though I was worried. If the potion wasn’t an aphrodisiac, what did it do?

As if on cue Potter entered the Hospital wing half carrying half supporting one of the Gryffindor chasers.

“Madam Pomfrey?” He called. “Bludger accident.”

The matron rushed to the injured student’s side. “You young fools and your dangerous sports!” She ran her wand over the girl. “You’ve got a concussion and a cracked scapula Miss Dougal. You’ll be my guest tonight.”

“Don’t worry about it Moira.” Potter said. “Madam Pomfrey runs a first class infirmary. You’ll be right as rain in the morning. I always was.”

“That’s ok Harry.” The third year said. “I’m not... What’s that smell?”

“Just Mr. Malfoy’s cologne,” the nurse sniffed. “I believe he bathed in it.”

By this time the potions I had been given were kicking in, and I felt myself drifting off to sleep, but not before I heard Potter’s final comment.

“That’s just weird. He smells just like the Sun Tan lotion the twins whipped up for me.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

The timing glass chimed for a fourth time.

For the fourth stir the instrument required was my wand. Twelve clockwise rotations followed by nine anti-clockwise stirs bound my magical essence to the brew.

On the twelfth turn clockwise the potion turned blood red, and following the ninth anti-clockwise stir the color changed to an iridescent chromium yellow. then drip back into the caldron. I was over half way done now, without a single misstep.

I turned the timing glass again, having set it for the longest time of the brew, four hours. I settled back in my chair to reread the next step again, and to prepare mentally for producing the next agent used to bind the potion to me.

Where had I put that copy of *Playwizard*?

-----oooOOOooo-----

~ Interlude 2 ~

Hermione Granger was in the Gryffindor Heads Suite relaxing after a day of classes. Her method of relaxation would have shocked most of her classmates, as she was laying on a foam mat of the Heads Common room arching her back with her arms swept back in the full locust pose.

After Harry had finished Riddle, He and Hermione had spent the rest of the summer at her parent's home attempting to decompress from the stresses of their lives. Her mother had dragged her along to a yoga class. It had taken twenty minutes for Hermione to stop feeling stupid and awkward and begin to enjoy herself.

Hermione moved into the bow pose when Harry's distinctive knock sounded at the door.

"Come in Harry." She called continuing with her session. Harry had seen her doing her yoga for a few months now and wouldn't be shocked.

"Hey 'Mione." Harry said as he entered the room, taking a seat on the sofa facing her.

"Good Evening Harry," the brunette said, still holding the bow pose. "Missed you at dinner."

"Ah, I took Daphne on a picnic on the beach in the Room of Requirements. Then we went swimming and she did some sunbathing."

"You know, the room won't do that for anyone but you." Hermione rose up onto her knees, leaning back until her head touched the mat achieving the fixed firm pose. "Flitwick and McGonagall are both going spare trying to figure out how you do that."

Harry shrugged. "I just ask. Nothing special about it."

"Mum wrote," Hermione said holding her pose feeling the muscles in her back stretch. "She wants me to invite you to the house for the Christmas hols."

“That would be nice.” Harry said as his best friend lifted her upper body back up into a sitting on her knees position, then leaning forward to rest her forehead on the mat in the half tortoise pose. “Hermione, I was wondering...”

“No Harry. We talked about this and I was very clear on how I felt. Just no.”

“But I don’t...”

“Too bad. My mind is made up.” Silence filled the room for half a minute, then she continued. “Do you have any idea where Ron is? He missed dinner too.”

“I think he’s involved in some project with the twins. Wouldn’t tell me what, just that he’d let me know when something funny was about to happen.”

~ End of Interlude 2 ~

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

It was another week before I found the time for another attempt, this time with Potion #2. This one seemed to be far simpler than the first, with none of the more esoteric ingredients that might bring about such extreme physical reactions.

This one WAS intended to be taken internally. Try as I might though, I couldn’t determine what this one did. The Brew itself was simple, taking only five minutes. Two ounces of a Muggle concoction called Rum, half an ounce of sugar, three quarters of an ounce of lime juice, one third ounce of coconut milk. Following the instructions I poured resulting mixture into a metal container half filled with ice, covered the container with its lid and shook well, and then strained the result into a glass.

I held my breath for a moment, and then tipped the resulting potion back.

How... odd. This potion tasted... good.

I waited a few seconds. Nothing seemed to be happening. So I brewed another dose. Then another. And another.

This was a good potion, that’s for sure. I was feeling a general euphoria. Surely this was a side effect of the ...

I had a moment of clarity. I had been going about this all wrong, allowing the psychotic witches of this castle to run roughshod over my magnificent body. They had been overcoming my protective charms, but I had an alternative available to me.

When Father had taken Mother on an extended tour of Europe following Potter’s victory over the Dark Lord, I had elected to remain behind. During this time I explored my ancestral home.

It was in my parent’s chambers I found the oddest things. I’d never seen mother wearing leather, but she seemed to have quite a few outfits made of the stuff, and father seemed to have a huge collection of red rubber balls mounted on leather straps.

But the oddest thing I found in my explorations resided in my father's underwear drawer. I found several sets of odd metal underpants that, for some inexplicable reason closed with a lock. I had borrowed a pair to investigate their uses. Surely this was what they were for, protection from insane witches.

I quickly donned the protective knickers and secured them in place with the padlock. I was safe, fore and aft. I confirmed this by rapping my knuckles on the front and rear of the garment.

I giggled at my adventurousness. I then mixed two more doses of the potion and consumed them.

Good stuff.

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

There she was. On top of my protections I had decided to choose one of the least violent of the witches in the castle for my first conquest.

Luna Lovegood. Sure she was a distant cousin, sure she was borderline insane, but she was attractive and she was here. When I found her she, as she of often seemed to be, was in a staring contest with one of the portraits. I carefully eased up behind her and snatched her wand from where she stored it, behind her ear.

Now she was mine.

The girl turned to face me, a curious expression on her face.

"Did you need something Cousin Draco?"

I told her exactly what I wanted and in graphic detail.

Her eyes, which normally gave the impression that she was perpetually surprised, went even wider, and she appeared to be getting angry. I've never seen Lovegood angry, and I should know; I've done my fair share of tormenting her. Potion #2 didn't seem to be Potter's secret either. Maybe Millie was right?

"You take that back, you...you...you...Nancy boy!" she sputtered. How pathetic, she couldn't even curse well.

I smiled. It didn't matter how mad she got, I was safe. Then, suddenly, she looked behind me, and said, "He made a very naughty proposition to me. It hurt my feelings very much."

Merlin, please don't let it be Potter, I thought. I had forgotten that she and Potter were friends. But there had been no one in the corridor when I approached her. There hadn't been time for someone to approach. I turned, expecting it all to be a trick.

When I saw what was behind me, I soiled myself. "Sweet Merlin on a stick! What in the nine hells is that?"

All traces of anger were out of Lovegood's voice as she answered. "That's Phil the Crumpled Horned Snorkack. He's my friend. And you aren't."

-----oooOOOooo-----

I came to in the Hospital Wing to find a house elf attempting to cut the mangled lock off the equally mangled metal knickers. I could hear the matron in her office laughing. When my father hears about this!

Dangerous creatures in the corridors! There was going to be a magical creature execution, let me tell you!

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

The timing glass chimed for a fifth time.

I lifted the oak spoon, and gently dipped it into the brew. One turn clockwise, one turn anti-clockwise. Repeat. And again. After the third iteration but before the fourth, I tipped the vial containing my... essence into the cauldron. This bound the potion to my sexual appetites.

I repeated the clockwise/anti-clockwise stirs twenty more time, as soon as I lifted the wooden spoon from the brew it shifted to a silver liquid, looking like a cauldron of quick silver. Just another hour, just sixty minutes and I would have what I deserved.

Trying to contain my glee, I reached across the table and turned the timing glass for the last time.

-----oooOOOooo-----

The third potion was... different. There were eight ingredients, all Muggle in origin. This was exceedingly odd.

Still, there was no denying that the potion worked. In the last week Potter had had an amicable break up with Daphne Greengrass and had moved on to a relationship with the Ravenclaw half of the Patil twins.

Coming up with the ingredients had taken some time. Any time it takes a House Elf two weeks to come up with eight items, you know that they are rare indeed. But finally I had the 8 cloves finely chopped garlic, 2 tablespoons lime juice, 1 tablespoon macadamia oil, 4 teaspoons Green Curry Paste, a half teaspoon of coarsely crushed black pepper, a pinch sea salt, 14 ounces of coconut milk, and 6 sprigs of fresh coriander leaves. Following the instructions I combined the mixture in a glass bowl and then set them to chill for 45 minutes at 34 degrees via a cooling charm.

The timing couldn't be any better. I dose myself tonight and I will have my pick of the witches on the Express as it took us home for the Christmas Hols. I waited impatiently for the chilling time to pass.

Again the instructions held no dosing guides. Still, I wanted it to be working for the train ride, so

as soon as the wait was over, I lifted the entire mixing bowl to my lips and drank the entire mixture down.

The potion was a bit... spicy, but nothing seemed to happen. Telling myself that a potion this powerful would just take time to work, I settled down to sleep.

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

I woke at 3 am to gut clenching agony, my sheets soaked in sweat. What was happening to me?

My thrashing about woke the others in the room.

“Draco?” Vinnie Crabbe called from outside the drapes that surrounded my bed. “Are you ok?”

“No.” I managed to grind out through the pain.

“Should we call the nurse?” Ted Knot asked.

There is no way in hell I was going to subject myself to that woman again. “NO!” I shouted. “Get Snape.”

I could hear them scamper away, only to return a lifetime or possibly a few minutes later.

“What seems to be the problem Mr. Malfoy?” I heard my godfather ask. Then the drapes were yanked open revealing me to the room.

“Stomach hurts.” I gasped.

“I see. Did you eat or drink anything unusual?”

“Potion.” I gasped.

Suddenly Godfather wasn't quite so amused at my plight. “A potion? Where did you get it?”

“Weasley twins.”

“You took a potion developed by the Weasleys? Just how stupid are you Mr. Malfoy? Let me see this potion.”

I found the recipe where I had stashed it under my pillow and extended it to my Godfather with a trembling hand.

“Professor, please, isn't there anything I can take?” I said, “Professor, to relieve this belly ache?”

Severus Snape tore his eyes from the parchment and... were my eyes deceiving me? Was he smiling?

“Now let me get this straight;” he said. “You put the lime in the coconut, you drank them both up. You called your professor, woke me up, and said, Professor, isn't there anything I can take to

relieve this belly ache?"

I nodded from where I lay in my bed.

"Idiot boy." Snape smirked. "This isn't a potion. It's a marinade. It's for cooking. You've got gas."

"But Professor, what should I do?"

"Call me in the morning." Godfather started laughing and left the dorm room. Once outside the door he started... singing? "Doctor, is there anything I can take. I said Doctor!"

I missed the train the next day due to 'gas'.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Now:

The timing glass chimed for a sixth time.

The sixth and final stir was the step that would bind the potion to me in its entirety. Taking a silver knife I cut a deep gash into the palm of my right hand and plunged my arm into the potion to the elbow.

The pain was incredible, both from the heat and from the reaction between the potion and the open wound on my hand. With gritted teeth I spread the fingers of the hand, held them for a three count, and then made a fist, holding that for a three count. This pattern was repeated six times, before I could pull my arm from the bubbling viscous silver liquid.

I stumbled to a small basin and opened the tap on full to wash the potion from my arm before casting left handed healing and cooling charms in it. While I was involved doing this, the cauldron foamed and bubbled reducing the volume of the potion to a single three ounce dose.

I carefully ladled the resulting dose into a crystal vial before I started to laugh.

-----oooOOOooo-----

~ Interlude 3 ~

The night was crystal clear; from where the pair stood on the hill overlooking the town below, the stars appeared like diamonds just out of reach.

"I love this time of year," The young man said as he squeezed the young woman's hand through both of their gloves. "It feels like anything can happen."

The girl smiled. Inviting Harry home for her family's solstice celebration had been one of her better ideas. The fact that Parvati was insanely jealous was just icing on the cake. Score one for 'the smart twin'. "I'm glad you could come over Harry." The Ravenclaw witch gave a gently pull on Harry's arm that had him walking along side her on the winding path that led back to her

family's home. "We've been going out for a month now; can you tell me what you're looking for Harry?"

That question seemed to startle him. "Excuse me?"

"You seem to be looking for something. A month after you got out of St. Mungos you were dating Luna Lovegood. Three weeks later, you were with Katie Bell. Then school started you were suddenly dating Tracey Davis, a month later Sue Bones and Hannah Abbott at the same time. Then you spent most of November with Daphne Greengrass, and now you're with me."

"Damn Ravenclaws." The wizard said in a tone that told her he didn't mind her question. "Every single one of you analyze everything half to death don't you?"

"And those are just the longer term relationships; you've had single dates with just about every girl in 6th and 7th year that isn't in a relationship with someone else, except the Gryffindors."

"Really? I hadn't noticed."

"Haven't noticed." She scoffed.

"Ok, you caught me. I haven't been dating Gryffs because if I screw it up, I'd still have to see them every day. When I broke it off with Ginny after Dumbledore was killed, I still ended up seeing her every single day, and even though it was me who broke it off, it still hurt a bit, you know?"

"I guess I can see that." Padma allowed. The pair walked in silence for a moment. "Won't dating me be more or less the same problem? I mean, if we end badly you'll still see Parvati every day."

"I don't understand."

"You said that it hurt to see Ginny every day after your breakup. If we broke up, you'd see Parvati every day."

"How is that a problem? You two aren't anything alike."

"We're twins Harry."

"So?"

Padma reflected that Harry seemed to have acquired a knack for saying exactly the right thing sometime in the last year. There were few things more 'right' to say to a twin than to tell her that she was an individual. She got back to her point. "Ok, you've explained the lack of Gryffindors in your social calendar, what about the rest of us? Are we just practice for when you meet the right girl?"

"Of course you are." Harry laughed. "That's what dating is for isn't it? Practice. I practice with you, you practice with me. At some point, with the right person, it stops being practice and starts being life."

“That makes sense, I guess.” She stopped at the base of a large walnut tree. “This is the tree Parvati and I built our tree fort in.”

“Really?” Harry peered up into the branches. “I always wanted a tree fort. Is it still there?”

“Of course!” Padma huffed. “As if my father wouldn’t have placed preservation charms on our tree fort.”

“He also disillusioned it from what I can see. Great! Let’s go see it,” Harry said starting up the ladder made of planks of wood fastened to the trunk of the old walnut.

“Harry! It’s dark.”

“Yeah. Come on, It’ll be great!” Harry climbed up the trunk of the tree until he encountered the entrance to the fort. Suddenly able to see what he was climbing into he pulled himself up into the structure. It wasn’t very large, basically a box six foot by six foot and four feet tall. Harry cast a few lighting and warming charms on the space.

“Harry!” Padma said as she entered the structure to find him leaning against the far wall under the shuttered window. “You nutter. There could have been animals in here.”

Harry extended his hand to help her the rest of the way up into the fort. “If your dad went to the trouble to preserve the fort, he also would have protected it from animals. This is great.”

“Well this is it. Our ‘Siege Perilous. I can’t tell you the number of times Parvati and I saved the world from this very spot” Padma removed her cloak in the face of the now warm tree fort. “Parvati and I spent hours here having adventures before we started at Hogwarts.”

Harry looked about the room spotting a few books in one corner. “And after as well from the looks of things.”

“It’s a quiet place to study when Parvati has Lavender over.” She watched as Harry also removed his cloak. “What did you want to do now?”

“Well,” he said taking her hand. “We could always practice.”

The Witch bit her lower lip. “It is important to practice, I suppose.” She lay down on their cloaks, pulling Harry down on top of her.

~ End of Interlude 3 ~

-----oooOOOooo-----

I waited until the after the welcoming feast that marked the beginning of the post Christmas term to confront Weasley. He had sold me worthless potions recipes and was going to pay for that.

I found the fool while he was making his Prefect patrol, alone for once.

“Weasley. Those potions you sold me were useless.”

“What are you talking about Malfoy?” the dupe asked. “They were unlabeled, you knew that before you bought them, they could be anything, and I told you from the beginning that I doubted that Harry was on any potion to pull birds. You got what you paid for.”

Rage filled my mind. I grabbed the front of his robes and pushed him roughly against the wall causing many things to spill from his pockets. “Damn you.”

“Malfoy,” he said as he grabbed hold of me and slammed me against the same wall. “I ought to take you apart for that. You don’t seem to have your body guards anymore and I don’t have to take your crap.” He stooped to gather his things. “Since I had an excellent Christmas, I won’t beat you to a pulp, hell, I won’t even take points for your being an idiot. Just stay away from me, don’t come to me or my family for anything ever again.” With that, he turned his back on me and stalked away.

This was when I noticed that he had missed a roll of parchment. I scooped it up, intending to destroy it before the buffoon returned for it, but then I noticed the word ‘Veela’ in the title on the page. I unrolled the page completely to read it.

H.E. Essence of Veela. It said, the page then detailed a long list of ingredients and instructions along with a hand written note.

Ron: This is the potion you’re looking for. I don’t care how much he offers you; DON’T SELL THIS ONE TO MALFOY. – George

P.S. Don’t let Fred know I let you have this one, he’s get all pissy. Enjoy little brother. I’d use it myself if Angelina wasn’t so possessive.

Merlin. I thought. I have it. This is Potter’s potion.

I rolled the page and secreted it in the inner pocket of my robes. This was going to merit study. No mistakes this time.

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

Researching then verifying this new potion took weeks. In deed I had purchased most of the ingredients before I discovered that I had missed an important detail annotated in a small precise script on the fourth page of the recipe.

All magic involved with the potion, from the harvesting of the ingredients to the actual brewing must be done by the individual that would be drinking the potion. This meant that everything I had done to this point was worse than useless.

January became February as I finished my research and I threw myself into Herbology. I’m sure Sprout was as amazed as I was when I started spending every spare second in the greenhouses, helping where ever I could so that I could harvest samples of the 134 different magical plants I needed for my H.E. Essence of Veela potion.

At some point in February Potter had broken it off with the Ravenclaw Patil and taken up with

Millicent Bulstrode. I'd heard the rumors, but never believed it until I spotted the pair strolling around the lake hand in massive paw on one of those rare sunny days of February. I walked away shaking my head trying very hard not to imagine them together.

March found me trying to make amends with the oaf Hagrid. After much fuss, he 'allowed' me to assist him in the harvesting of animal based potions ingredients, while I obtained the samples I needed for my project. I learned more about animal excretions and offal than any man should know during the 27 days it took to gather the sixty three different animal based ingredients.

April and May were devoted to preparing the ingredients. Some of the plant based ingredients had to be chopped, others shredded, and some blanched and others dried. Both plant and animal ingredients needed pickling. All in all it was an amazing amount of work.

April saw Potter taking up with Su Li from Ravenclaw, and in May I saw him with Lisa Turpin. I found myself smiling. Enjoy it while you can Potter, I thought. Lets see how many of them will give you a second glance when your potion enhances my natural beauty.

The end of May brought NEWTs, and while I did my normal exemplary job on them, I must say I surprised myself with my knowledge of the Herbology and Care of Magical Creatures sections of the tests.

The last of the NEWTs were finally history and I lacked only the Muggle limes and coconuts from my ingredients list, which leads us to where I started this story.

I bought a coconut.

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

Now:

The meal at the Farewell Feast was sumptuous, as usual. I just couldn't stop smiling knowing that my goal was finally within my grasp.

The celebration was raucous, good cheer abounded. The Gryffs won the House cup (again) as well as the Quidditch cup. McGonagall had just awarded Potter some stupid plaque for 'Special Service to the School', when I stood atop the Slytherin table and cast Sonorus on myself.

"Let me tell you about your Hero, Hogwarts. He's a fraud. We've all seen him with every witch in seventh year and most of those in sixth; he's been using a potion to have his way with them."

"Oh Bullocks!" Susan Bones stood up from the Hufflepuff table. "Harry was nothing but a gentleman. Damn it. Malfoy, you're just a jealous."

"Sit down Draco." Millie Bulstrode said from where she sat between Greg and Vinnie, "you're making a bigger fool of yourself than normal."

I looked to the Head table, where everyone was looking to my Godfather. Professor Snape was looking at me as if he was wondering what I might do next, and if he might be amused by it.

“Excuse me, Headmistress?” Potter’s voice came from the Gryffindor table.

“Yes Mr. Potter?” The crone responded.

“Am I correct in assuming that the Seventh Year have all now officially finished with school?”

“Yes you are Mr. Potter.” McGonagall answered.

“Thank you Headmistress. I would like to say this to the entire school.” Potter held out his wand. “I swear on my life and magic that I have not knowingly taken any potion or potions intended to be used in the seduction of any witch or any woman at any time.” A pulse of blinding white light filled the room.

“Well,” Potter said. “I seem to still be breathing. Lumos!” the tip of his wand lit up. “And the magic works too. So I guess I can just say ‘Fuck you, Draco’ to sum up my feelings about that accusation.”

I felt my mouth go dry. He wasn’t? But he... No, he must be lying. I felt the potion vial in my pocket. I palmed the vial and thumbed the stopper off.

“You might fool the sheep with your light show Potter, but I know better. I know better because I found the potion you’re using, and I’ve brewed it better, stronger. You don’t deserve the women Potter, but I do!”

I tipped the vial back and poured its contents down my throat. I dimly recall hearing Godfather scream for me to stop, but I was focused on the power of the potion as it built inside of my body, built with an intensity that I still cannot believe, and then it released in a single unstoppable pulse of magic that issued from my body like the ripples in a pond. From my perspective I saw the very stone of the castle ripple as the magic washed over it.

I slumped forward; just barely managing to remain standing, my hands upon my knees as I panted with my eyes closed trying to regain my composure. The Great Hall was deathly quiet and I felt someone wrap themselves around my left leg, then someone else around my right.

I smiled, still with my eyes closed as I tried to guess just who the first of my love slaves would be. I stood straight as befits a Malfoy, straightened my robes and opened my eyes, looking down to greet my new lovers.

I ended up looking directly into the eyes of an elf.

A male elf.

A male elf that was busily humping my left leg.

Another male elf was on my right leg.

A sudden pop had another male elf on my right arm. Humping.

Pop! Another on my left arm. Pop! Pop! On one either side of my torso.

Pop! Another suddenly on the back of my head, humping.

The first elf finished with a squeak, and fell away from me leaving behind a wet sticky mess. He was immediately replaced by another elf. Humping.

A dark realization came to me. H.E. Essence of Veela. H.E. HOUSE ELF!

I'm not sure but I believe I screamed as the weight of dozens of randy humping elves pulled me down from the table to the floor.

-----oooOOOooo-----

~ Interlude 4 ~

"I swear I had nothing to do with Malfoy's little stunt tonight"

Hermione gave Harry a gimlet eye. "Hmm." The Head girl continued with her packing.

"I'm not saying it wasn't funny and that I didn't laugh," the raven haired wizard continued. "It was and I did, but even if I could manage to come up with a potion like that, I would never have done it. I like elves; I wouldn't torture them like that."

Hermione permitted herself a smile. "Alright, fine. Nothing to do with you. I think Ron had something to do with it. He wasn't laughing hard enough." She smirked a bit. "Well, at least he got lucky. Where is he anyway?"

"Lucius showed up about an hour after dinner and took Draco home. I think I overheard something about using wards against elves."

"Well that's good." Hermione moved to the next drawer in her packing. "Shouldn't you be packing?"

"All packed. Been that way for a couple of days. The only things not in my trunk are what I'm wearing tomorrow, my night clothes and this." He plucked at the clothing he was wearing.

"Are you feeling alright Harry? It's not like you to be so organized." Hermione laughed. "Well why are you here? Don't you have a girlfriend to romance tonight?"

"No, Lisa and I ended it after lunch today. Her parents are giving her an around the world trip for finishing school and she didn't want to be tied down." Harry shrugged. "It was about time to move on anyway."

"So, who's next then Cassanova?"

"No one."

"What? You've gone from girl to girl this year, what's wrong?"

“Nothing’s wrong, I’m just done.

“I don’t understand.” Hermione chewed her bottom lip, the way she did when she was confused by something.

Harry shrugged again. “When I went over to Padma’s over the Christmas break she asked me what I was looking for. I never answered her question, not really. All I really did was tell her that my theory about dating being about practicing for the person you spend your life with. She told me that she liked to practice.”

“You’ve frustrated a fair number of witches this year Harry.” She smiled at the look on his face. “What? Did you think that only boys talk about sex?”

“I didn’t do anything Hermione.”

“I know that Harry. That’s what they were complaining about. Somehow they expected you to be more aggressive.”

“I guess I’m just old fashioned.” Harry seemed to want to say more, but stood and started for the door. “Good night Hermione.”

“Wait!” the Head Girl called. “What is it Harry? What did you want to say?”

Harry developed a sudden interest in his shoes. ‘I... Nothing.’

“Harry.”

“Alright. When I asked you if we could be together last summer you told me that you wouldn’t let me just settle for you, that I didn’t have enough experience to know if I really wanted to be with you or not.”

Hermione brought her hand to her mouth. “Harry?”

“I did what you suggested. I’ve dated almost every girl in the class and a fair number of sixth years as well. I threw myself into it. I gave it every effort and I had fun, really I did, more than I can ever remember having before, but it wasn’t enough.”

“What do you mean?” Hermione asked.

“They weren’t you. Maybe we’ve never dated Hermione, but we’ve been together almost constantly for years. The girls I’ve dated have only seen me at my best. You’ve seen me at my worst and stuck around. You’ve seen me be sad, and happy, and drunk and scared, and angry and hurt too badly to move, and you stuck around.”

“I’m not asking you to marry me. I’m not asking you to sleep with me. I’m asking you to date me. I’m asking you to settle for me. At least for a while.”

“Harry?”

“Yeah?” He couldn’t meet her eyes.

“My parents have asked me to invite you to go to Greece with us next month for a two week holiday. Would you like to come?”

Slowly he looked up into her eyes. “Your parents asked?”

“Yes. And so do I.”

“I guess that it would be rude to turn them down, after all your parents have done for me.”

“You know, I’m riding the Express to London tomorrow.”

Harry nodded. “Head Girl stuff.”

“Most of the 7th years aren’t riding the train. Would you like to keep me company?”

“Yeah, alright.”

“Good.” Hermione dimpled. “You can show me what you’ve learned this year.”

~ End of Interlude 4 ~

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

~ Epilogue ~

George and Fred Weasley were returning to their shop following a most fruitful business lunch where they had finalized the deal to buy out Zonkos. The brothers were walking together along the cobblestone street of Diagon Alley congratulating each other for their masterful business sense.

To Fred’s immediate left (for he was walking on the outside of the pair) there was suddenly a flash of light, the light pulsed once, twice, three times then with a thunderous roar what appeared to be a rather large Muggle motorcycle, painted black and stripped to the bare bones, appeared in full forward motion. The pair watched in open mouthed awe at the machine that was hurtling down the cobblestones like a bat out of hell.

“Is that Sirius’s bike?” Fred asked.

“I don’t think so. That’s not Harry on it.” George said. “We need one of those.”

“We need two of those.” Fred corrected. “Bloody hell, he’s parking at our shop.”

The two broke into a run, but the mysterious biker entered their shop before they got to the door.

“He’s inside.” Fred said.

“Bloody Hell.” George opined staring open mouthed at the bike. “Can you imagine what we

could do with one of these?”

“Two of these. Come on, you can drool later.” Fred pulled his brother into the shop.

“I told yeh I want tae see tha bludy Weasleys, lass! I dinnae want tae talk at yeh, I want tae talk tae Fred and George Weasley!”

The biker, a stout fellow about six foot tall, entirely dressed in battered black leathers, and possessed of a substantial amount of beard and hair, was speaking to the Weasley’s shop assistant Verity.

“Do you recognize him?” George asked Fred via what the pair thought of as their private channel. They had always been able to communicate without being overheard.

“No.” Fred answered the same way. “I can’t think of anyone we’ve seriously pissed off outside of Malfoy.”

“That’s no Malfoy. Ah well, what’s the worst he can do?”

George stepped forward. “Thank you Verity, we’ve got this.” He extended his hand with a smile. “Good afternoon sir, I’m George Weasley, and this is my brother Fred.”

“Calum Wallace.” The man said, ignoring George’s hand, “an’ yair tha bludy bastits that disproved ma rule o’ Alcohol Infusion. Now whit am I supposed tae do?”

“What?” Fred gasped. This was Calum Wallace? While their OWL scored didn’t reflect it, the twins knew their potions. “How did we disprove your rule?”

“That bludy House Elf Veela potion yeh sneaky wee buggers inflicted on yon bludy Sassenach bastit Malfoy. Yeh gave him a potion that disproved ma rule.”

“Bloody Hell.” Fred breathed. “He drank and the elves got drunk.”

“Aye, an’ that’s why I’m here.”

“What are you going to do?” George asked.

“First yair goin’ tae explain tae me how yeh did it. They yair goin’ tae go o’er yair notes on tha potion line by line, an’ then,” the man smiled, though it was difficult to see with his beard getting in the way, “We’re goin’ tae write a book.”

“Write a book?” Fred asked.

“Aye lad. That’s how this genius game works, ken? Just bein’ bludy clever disnae put innie gold in yair vault. Yeh hae tae write a book, an’ iff’n ye

The Cure

Pansy Parkinson clung to her lover, shuddering from the final stages of what was possibly the most intense orgasm of her life. "Bloody Hell!" she gasped. "That was amazing."

"Thank you Pansy." In the dim light of the room that the two had found for their meetings she could see his slightly crooked grin. "You've taught me well. You saved me, you know, you really saved me."

It was Pansy's turn to smile; the three weeks since she had taken pity on the boy had been the most fulfilling of her life. "You just needed a little guidance, you stupid Gryffindor."

"Again?" he asked hopefully.

Pansy noticed that he hadn't lost his erection since her orgasm. "That would be nice."

"Something special?" He asked in the same hopeful tone.

Pansy nibbled at the point where his neck met his shoulders. "I thought we were supposed to be breaking you from that proclivity..."

"I like to think of it as refocusing me on my target. Besides you like it when I'm in you, touching you, playing with your breasts and kissing your neck all at the same time."

"Well..." she said considering the possibilities. Truth be told she had first done it to prove to him he could enjoy a woman, but she had discovered she enjoyed it as much as her lover did. She rose onto her knees, and then turned away from him before going to her hands and wiggling her bum at him. "Come on Lover, show me what you can do," She said looking back at him with an expression of pure lust.

-----oooOOOooo-----

"You're looking pleased with yourself Pansy." Padma Patil said as the seventh year Slytherin took her place at the table.

"Why wouldn't I?" The girl asked. "I saved a life today, and I did it right under Granger's nose."

The room went quiet as the assembled witches took that jibe in. One of the rules of the coven was that they left the insanity of the idiot males outside during the meetings. That included all that Slytherin/Gryffindor nonsense.

"And what do you mean by that /Pansy/?" Hermione Granger asked from her seat at the table. "And are you truly the one to be mentioning anyone's nose?" The seventh year Gryffindor asked sweetly, subtly reminding everyone in the room of how Pansy's nose had looked before she had grown into her face.

"I saved a Gryffindor from the hatred and prejudice of the Muggle World /Hermione/. I wonder why you never did anything about that."

"Alright, you've got my interest Pansy." Hannah Abbott said. "What did you save the Griffy from? My mum's family are Muggles, and they aren't perfect, but I don't know of anything that would require anyone being saved from them."

"I'm not naming names, Merlin only knows how /some people/would react," Pansy temporized.

"So don't name names," Hannah shrugged. "Just explain what you're talking about so that we can carry on with the meeting."

"Three weeks ago I found a Gryffindor who shall not be named out by the lake, sobbing his poor

heart out. Despite his disgusting heritage, he was just so pitiful I had to at least try to console him a bit, so I sat with him and he told me his story."

"Which was?" Hermione asked impatiently.

"He was attracted to other boys. Oh he claimed he wasn't but it was clear to anyone who looked. It was also obvious that he was dreading the treatment he would receive when he returned to the Muggle world. I've heard of the intolerance and outright hatred the Muggles holds for his proclivities."

Around the table, almost every witch was suddenly intensely interested in this story, though only Luna Lovegood noticed the particular interest of the majority of the 6th and 7th years.

"What... What did you do Pansy?" Padma Patil asked hesitantly.

"I took him to bed of course, I showed him that he could find pleasure with and be attracted to a woman," the Slytherin witch said with a smile. "And it turns out I'm a very good teacher. I may keep him."

"Colin Creevey." Susan Bones said.

"What?" Pansy appeared flustered. "How did you know?"

"The little bastard used the same line on me," the redhead said. "And I cured him as well."

"And me." Padma Patil said in a cold fury.

"I fell for his line as well." Daphne Greengrass spat. "Evidently we've got a serial slimeball preying on our sympathies and vanities. Who here didn't fall for his line of crap?"

Luna raised her hand, followed shortly by Millicent Bulstrode.

"I didn't find his claims believable," Luna said simply. "I mean, he told me repeatedly that he wasn't gay, but he showed clear signs of having a Gwionbach familiar, and everyone knows that Gwionbach's have a preference for the company of men who prefer men over women. Besides," she said with a grin, "I like wizards who wear glasses."

Everyone around the table stared speechless at Luna over her pronouncement, while the ethereal blond suddenly developed an intense interest in grain of the tabletop.

"Yes, well, the little sod never as much as spoke with me," Millie said, breaking the uncomfortable silence. "I don't know if I'm more insulted by that than what he might have gotten away with if he had tried..."

"Colin Creevey must die."

Every eye in the room turned to a furious Hermione Granger, her rage causing her magic to bloom into a visual aura.

"You too Hermione?" Lavender Brown asked in amazement.

"Piss off Lavender!" Hermione said hotly. "I'm calling for an all house, all member truce. We need to deal with Colin, and we don't need any distractions until we do."

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

In the Great Hall, Sunday Brunch was being served. A mixture of all classes were present enjoying the meal, but as per usual the only sixth and seventh years attending were the males.

"Hey Harry." Colin Creevey said as he settled into a seat. "Hey Ron, Neville." The eldest of the Creevey boys placed his beloved camera on the table top next to his plate.

Potter looked across the table blurry eyed. It had been a rough night and he hadn't had his tea yet. "Colin, I swear to god, if you flash that thing in my eyes this morning, I will shove that camera up your ass."

"Oh Harry," Colin said with a smile. "You make the best suggestions, but shouldn't you buy me dinner first?"

That got a grunt from Harry and choked laughter from Ron and Neville. Harry held his mug of tea in both hands taking long pulls from it. Slowly his mood mellowed as the much needed caffeine made its way into his bloodstream.

"Oh bloody hell." Ron said pointing.

Harry turned his attention in the direction that Ron had indicated to find every witch above fifth year storming in his direction with wands drawn and looks of fury on their faces.

"Oh Hell!" Harry and Colin said in unison. Harry shelved wondering what that was about while he pondered what it was he might have done to piss off that many witches all at once.

"Ladies!" Harry said with his best 'Chosen One' smile, "How can we help you."

"Shut up Potter." Hermione growled. "Creevey, you're going to die."

Harry felt momentary relief as he realized that all this wasn't about him. Then he felt more than a little confusion, how could it not be all about him? It was always all about him.

"What seems to be the problem?" Colin asked while calculating his chances of getting out of the Great Hall uninjured.

"You got us all in bed under false pretenses you lying bastard!" Sue Bones screamed.

The Great Hall went deathly silent as everyone in the room digested that bit of information. Ultimately the silence was broken by Ron Weasley's laughter.

"Good one Sue! Colin got you all in bed!"

"What's so funny Weasley?" Hannah Abbott asked in an obvious fury.

"Well, you mean besides the fact that Colin's a Wizard's Wizard?" Dean Thomas suggested.

"I'm not gay." Colin said. "And I never said I was."

"What do you mean you aren't gay, what was all that with you following Harry around with your camera?" Neville asked.

Colin turned to Ron, "At first, back in first year, it was honest hero worship. I mean I found out about magic the previous summer, then read all the books I could get my hands on, and hey there's the guy all those books were about." The younger Gryffindor shrugged. "Harry's a hero; I admired him then, and still do."

"But... We threw you out of the showers last year when we caught you trying to take a picture of Harry in the shower." Ron exclaimed, forgetting for the moment that Harry had never known about that.

"As I was saying, at first it was hero worship. After about three weeks I was approached by members of the Harry Potter fan club for pictures."

Harry paled. "Fan club?" He immediately looked at Ginny. "Who?"

"Sue, then Padma." Colin said simply. "They both approached me for photos of you, Harry, and they paid me, so I kept at it. Hell, its good money. I was going to save this for the last day of the year, but here." Colin passed Harry what everyone recognized as a Gringotts key.

"What's this?" Harry asked.

"Your half of the proceeds." Colin shrugged. "It's only fair."

"How much? Harry asked looking at the key.

"Last count, 2,319 galleons not including this month's deposits. We've made good money Harry. Hell that picture I got of you in the shower last year paid for Dennis and my tuition through 7th year."

"Who bought naked pictures of me?" Harry asked in a strained voice.

"Oh, most of these ladies. Sue bought two and so did Hermione. Pansy's gone through three of them and Ginny's on her fifth."

"Ginny!" Ron shouted in a scandalized manner.

Harry's mouth opened and closed, with no sound coming out.

Nice bit of distraction there Creevey!" Tracey Davis said. "What about way you used us?"

"Used you? How did I do that Tracey?" Colin asked. "I didn't come on to you; you came on to me, each and every one of you. Hell Tracey, I specifically told you I wasn't gay, and you said 'of course you're not', and then took me to bed to 'cure' me. I finally decided that if it made you happy to 'cure' me, it made me happy to be cured."

"Everyone knew you were gay Colin," Susan protested.

"Everyone was wrong. Do you remember what you said when I told you I was straight? 'Oh Colin, we'll make that true.'"

To the amazement of the men the angry witches started lowering their wands, except for one.

"Colin Creevey!" Hannah said, "I don't know why you did this to us."

"Did it to you? Hannah, you were the worst of all." The eldest Creevey turned to the men at the table. "It was last year, in January. I got a 'dear John' letter from my girlfriend back home, she said she didn't like the separation. I was up on the Astronomy Tower feeling sorry for myself, and Hannah showed up on her prefect rounds."

"Where was I?" Ernie asked.

"Skiving off as usual." Hannah said as a blush started on her face.

"Hannah asked what I was doing, I explained I was depressed about a breakup. The next thing I know, we're in a broom cupboard and she's on top of me." He turned back to the blushing Hufflepuff. "It was great, really it was, but you were too busy 'making me a man' to listen to a

single word I was saying."

"That's enough." A very angry Hermione Granger pushed her way to the front of the crowd of women and leveled her wand at Colin, "Less talk, more dying."

Colin paled staring cross-eyed at the wand in front of his face.

"Hermione..." a very embarrassed Tracey Davis interrupted. "Did he lie to you?"

"No."

"Did he come on to you?" Parvati Patil asked.

"No." Hermione's wand started to waiver.

"Did you listen to him when he told you he wasn't gay?" Ginny asked.

"No." Hermione lowered her wand.

There was silence for a moment.

"Well, I guess we couldn't have been much more public in embarrassing ourselves, could we?" Daphne Greengrass asked the room.

"Maybe we should all just go and think about our actions." Padma suggested.

Pansy Parkinson came to the front of the crowd. "I don't think I'm done with you yet Mudblood."

"Really Pansy? You're so inbred it's amazing you've still got thumbs."

Pansy took hold of his collar and pulled him to his feet. "Our room. Fifteen minutes." Then the Slytherin flounced away.

Colin turned to face the other men. "Ok, wow."

The assembled sixth and seventh years stared in disbelief. "You unspeakably lucky Bastard." Neville observed.

"You nailed ALL of them and got away with it?" Dean shook his head. "That's just not right, it's just not right."

"Uh, yeah." Colin said eyeing the exit from the Great Hall that Pansy was disappearing through. "I gotta go."

"Just a minute Colin." Harry Potter said, still not really believing that this hadn't been all about him, that just seemed somehow wrong. "You wait too Hermione."

The bushy haired Gryffindor paused, clearly wishing she could slink away with the other embarrassed women. "What is it Harry?"

"I was distracted there for a while, but I think I almost missed something important."

"That I sort of molested Colin?" Hermione asked hanging her head in shame.

"What? No. That you've got naked pictures of me."

"Oh." Hermione hung her head.

"You've been perving over a picture of me naked. That means I get a picture of you naked."

Hermione looked up startled, then seemed to think about what he asked for. "Well, alright then. Meet me in my suite in half an hour, bring a camera." She then turned on her heel and exited the Great Hall.

Harry's eyes went wide. That worked? "Colin, I need your camera."

"My camera, but Harry..."

"Colin, you took naked pictures of me without my knowledge and sold them." Harry twirled his wand between the fingers of his right hand. "You know, I could kill you, and there isn't a single thing you could do about it."

Colin handed over the camera. "You know Harry when you make sense, you make sense. I gotta go."

The younger Gryffindor took three steps away, then turned back. "Harry? Hermione's really sensitive when you..."

"Colin, remember what I said about killing you?"

"Sorry Harry, gotta go."

Harry turned to the other men. "Anyone else got anything to say?"

"Not us Harry" Neville said.

"Make a copy of the picture for me Harry." Ron asked. Then immediately wondered why the others were hitting him.

Harry turned on his heel and exited the Great Hall. This was better. It was all about him again. Once again, all was right in the world.

The Fast and The Furious

The Hogwarts library was deathly silent, with only the occasional whisper of a turned page or the scratch of a quill against parchment giving any sign of life until a gasp rang out catching the attention of everyone in the stacks.

"What is it?" Padma Patil said as she slid next to her bushy haired classmate.

"I've found the spell we need." Hermione said pointing at the text she had found, while holding down the pages that kept trying to turn themselves.

"Sweet Merlin." The Indian witch breathed as she scanned the spell, paying special attention to the power indexes. "Hermione, look at the formulas. This isn't a charm, it's a curse. It feeds off the targets magic."

Hermione nodded, while making notes on the parchment in front of her.

Padma read deeper into the text. "You can't be thinking about casting this on Vo-Voldemort," The girl stumbled over the Dark Lord's name. Harry was insistent that his friends speak the name of the dark wizard. At first the Ravenclaw had resisted this, but after a Death Eater attack on Diagon alley had resulted in the deaths of her twin and their mother, she recognized that there was little more the evil man could do to her. "Casting this on the Dark Lord would curse him certainly, but he would still be insanely dangerous until he burnt himself out."

"That's why we're not going to cast it on Voldemort." Hermione said as she canceled the copyright spells on the book in preparation to copy it. "The target will be Harry."

"You're going to cast this on Harry?"

"If I can make it work and he agrees, yes."

There was a pause while Padma absorbed that though. "You're working through the first formula? I'll get started on the second."

"We'll need rock solid proofs." The brunette said absently, her attention on the parchment where she was starting to construct the complex arithmagical model for the first part of the curse. "I'm not taking chances with Harry."

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

Three months later:

Harry Potter convulsed on the ground as his screamed rent the air.

The pain ceased, Harry fought to regain control of his body.

"You were doomed from the begging Harry." Voldemort's sibilant voice reached the boy. "But you put up a valiant fight. I honor you with a quick death."

"Damn you Tom."

"Don't worry about your friends Harry. The young men will be joining you shortly, the young women will be entertaining my Death Eaters tonight." A body fell to the ground next to Harry. He forced his eyes open to find Hermione shivering on the ground next to him. "Especially this presumptuous young lady. Lucius' son has made a special request for her favors."

The approximation of a man began to laugh, and he was joined by his assembled Death Eaters. "Good bye Harry Potter." The Dark Lord flourished his wand. "Avada..."

"VELOS MERKARI!" Hermione Granger called having pulled her backup wand from the folds of her tattered robes. A bright blue burst of magic arced through the air to the fallen Harry Potter and the Boy Who Lived... vanished.

Voldemort's eyes went wide, and then the Dark Lord gestured pulling Hermione to his outstretched hand, her wand slipping from her fingers. He grasped the front of her robes and hissed. "What have you done Mudblood?"

The brunette smiled through her pain. "I've killed you, you arrogant son of a bitch."

-----oooOOOooo-----

Harry blinked as everyone and everything around him seemed to... stop.

The world was absolutely silent, he glanced about seeing the pockets where the fighting was still going on, spell fire was actually frozen in the air.

"Son of a BITCH!" He screamed as he forced himself to his feet, fighting through the residual pain of Voldemort's cruciatus. Ok Potter, think. Hermione did it, she wasn't sure that it would work, but it obviously did. Harry had never doubted that it would, but had hoped against hope that it wouldn't be necessary. The first thing he needed to do is kill Nagini. Snake first, then bloody Tom. Harry hobbled over to where he had seen the snake

There it was. Harry raised his wand and cast a cutting curse. Only to see it freeze in the air as soon as it left his wand. Damn it. Harry pocketed his wand and bent down to pick up a tree branch severed by an errant reducto. It moved just fine. Ok, he could move himself and anything connected to him.

Harry spotted Draco standing a few paces away. Assigned to guard the snake? What ever. Harry smiled and approached the blond Pureblood ponce and delivered his very best cricket swing between the Slytherin's legs. The impact accelerated the blond to Harry's frame of reference for a split second, leaving him suspended in mid air as the tree limb shattered.

That was fun. Harry reflected on what he had learned. His frame of reference was running thousands of times faster than the world around him. Touching things and people caused them to enter into that frame for as long as he was in contact.

Was it feasible to kill a snake that large by beating it with a club? Maybe. A sword would be better, but he didn't have...

Where was Lucius Malfoy? There, standing over Neville's prone form. Harry rushed over to the elder Malfoy. There had to be a reason for that stupid pimp cane the man carried. It couldn't be for hiding his wand; the blood bigot used his wand far too often to think that it was hidden in his cane.

Harry rushed to the Slytherin and pried the cane from the man's hands. He pulled the snake headed handle straight out. Nothing. He twisted the handle clockwise until it clicked and then he pulled, removing the wand. Ok. Harry reinserted the wand to the cane, and returned it to the original position. Then he twisted the handle anti-clockwise. Another click. Pulling the handle revealed a blade almost thirty inches long.

Very cool.

-----oooOOOooo-----

The brunette smiled through her pain. "I've killed you, you arrogant son of a bitch."

Voldemort's attention was diverted from the woman by a cutting curse suddenly appearing next to Nagini, Draco Malfoy suddenly being lifted into the air, screaming in pain, and Lucius Malfoy falling over dead when blood suddenly sprayed from a wound that suddenly appeared in his chest.

"Kill the prisoners!" Voldemort screamed. The Death Eaters raised their wands, then stared in amazement as their arms fell to the ground clutching broken wands. The Dark Lord's blood red eyes

went wide as he watched his familiar liquefy before his eyes, breaking the connection to his last horcrux.

"What did you do?" he again hissed at the girl in his grip before he felt a sharp pain bloom in the back of his neck, and stared in amazement when he found himself staring up at his suddenly headless body.

Hermione stumbled back when the dead man released her. Holding her throat, she reared back and kicked the still blinking head across the battlefield. "I told you, you arrogant son of a bitch, I killed you."

The bushy haired witch tried to calm herself as the rest of the defenders of Hogwarts realized that their fortunes had turned. Many of the surviving Death Eaters somehow died. Padma Patil rushed up to her friend.

"Harry?" she asked hopefully.

"He should be trying to slow down. We practiced the exercises that should let him do it, but..."

And Harry Potter faded back into reality. He doubled over with his hands on his knees panting as if he had run a marathon. "That sucked." He said. "It took hours to calm down enough to..." and he was gone.

Then he was back. "Damn It!" the raven haired wizard swore. "Ok. I think I've got it this time."

Hermione wrapped her arms around Harry, crushing him to her body. "Harry?"

"Yeah?"

"What we talked about last night?"

"Yeah?"

"Right now."

"Yeah?" Harry turned to the crowd that was slowly assembling around the pair. "Everyone, it's over. We can talk about it tomorrow. Now's the time for celebration." He scooped Hermione up in his arms. "Don't look for us; you're on your own."

And the pair was gone.

-----oooOOOooo-----

The party lasted through the night, but several people did wander into the Great Hall for breakfast where they found a very happy Harry Potter and a somewhat less than happy Hermione Granger. As soon as Hermione spotted Padma Patil enter the Great Hall, she excused herself and made her way to speak with the Ravenclaw.

"Padma, we need to start researching this stupid spell. I need to counter it, and I need to counter it now."

"But Hermione, Harry's in control of it."

"He's not. When he gets excited he speeds up, not all the way like at the battle, but fast, really fast."

"But that's a good thing isn't it?" Padma asked.

Hermione took on an expression of intense frustration. "Believe me Padma, faster isn't always better."

Forever is an Exceedingly Long Time

“It’s over Tom.”

Tom Marvolo Riddle, also known as The Dark Lord, Lord Voldemort, You-Know-Who, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, Lord Thingy, and Snickerdoodle (the last only during pillow talk between himself and the recently late and largely unlamented Bellatrix LeStrange) looked up into the blazing emerald green eyes of the man who defeated him.

“You think you’ve won, but you haven’t Potter!”

Harry Potter’s wand tip continued to pulse with a bright purple light as it leeches the magic from Riddle’s core. “Yeah, yeah. I know Tom, you cannot be defeated, you are invincible, and you will crush me, have me driven before you and enjoy the lament of my women. Blah blah blah.”

“I cannot die, I am immortal!”

“Believe me, I know.” Potter said in a conversational tone. “Trying to find your horcruxes was a major pain let me tell you. It was lucky that Lucius Malfoy delivered your diary to us when I was twelve so that I could destroy it and find out about your little keepsakes, Dumbledore found Salazar’s ring and destroyed it, Regulus Black stole Salazar’s Locket from your hiding place by the sea and hid it in his ancestral home, and I asked the Hogwarts House Elves to search the school for any items related to the founders that you might have hidden, they found Ravenclaw’s Diadem in the Room of Requirements, imagine that? I destroyed the Diadem and the Locket with the Sword of Gryffindor just yesterday. You just saw Nagini die.”

“Fool!” Riddle gasped, “that’s just five. I made six”

“Actually,” the blond witch in the Ravenclaw robes said as she came up alongside Potter and wrapped her arm around his waist. “You made seven Horcruxes.”

“Rather sloppy of you to have missed that,” the brunette witch in Gryffindor robes continued. “I can’t imagine how one could manage to create a horcrux and not notice, but you did. Harry’s scar.”

The blond continued, “It cost several thousand Galleons and a front page ad in the Quibbler, but Mambo Laveau of New Orleans removed your soul fragment from Harry’s forehead and placed it in this doll.”

The brunette took the small figure from the Ravenclaw and held it in the palm of her hand. The figure began to flail before it burst in to flame and was reduced to ash almost instantly. A dark mist issued from the ash and a faint scream was heard as the soul fragment died. “Oops.”

“Then there was Hufflepuff’s cup. You actually got sneaky with that one.” The large boy in the Gryffindor robes said. “I had to track down and kill Bellatrix so that I could go the Goblins and claim her vault by right of conquest. I mean, I was going to kill her anyway, but still it’s the principle of the thing when I went to all that trouble and the only thing in her vault was a booby-trapped replica of the cup.”

“Once we figured out that you had dropped the stupid teacup somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean things got a lot easier.” The tall redhead boy in Gryffindor robes continued. “That meant we couldn’t just kill you.” An evil grin spread across his face. “So, we had to get creative.”

“You’ll never find it. I’ve won!” Riddle gloated from the ground where he laid. “Time is on my side Potter, sooner or later your attention will waiver and I will be free.”

“We’re not even going to look for it Tom.” The redheaded girl said. “I mean, why bother? As long as your body is intact you can’t do the spectral spirit walk thing again, so, we just keep you alive and confined.”

“You can’t hold me you fools. I’ll escape then you will all die.”

“That’s sort of the plan Tom, only you’ve got the order backwards.” Potter said smiling, finally lifting his wand, Riddle’s core having drained completely. “We will all die, and then you’ll escape.”

“Then I hunt down your children and their children until your lines are extinct.”

“Ah, Tom.” The brunette said shaking her head. “That was always your problem, you think too small.” She pulled a vial from an inside pocket of her robes. The young woman knelt next to Riddle’s exhausted form and poured the liquid into Riddle’s mouth.

A look of horror crossed Riddle’s snake-like features. He recognized the scent of the potion as it took effect. The Draught of the Living Death!

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

Riddle jerked awake. What was happening? Everything was shaking. A deep rumble filled the air. Where was he? Was this an earthquake?

Riddle dimly recalled what you were supposed to do in an earthquake from his time in Persia on his first search for power. He tried to sit up, but found that he could barely move. Riddle struggled against his body’s weakness. The walls actually shifted and a jagged hole appeared in the wall to his immediate left. Red tinged sunlight beamed into the darkness of the room.

The shaking stopped, along with the rumble. Riddle lay where he was panting from the effort of trying to move. Suddenly a rune generated image filled the room.

“Hello Tom.” The image coalesced to show a much older Harry Potter. “How are you feeling?”

“Potter...” a raspy whisper escaped from Riddle’s lips, sounding odd even to his own ears. What had Potter done to him?

“Relax Tom. It will be a while before you can move. Your magic has been powering a stasis charm for a very long time now, and apparating this chamber from the bottom of a played out coal mine to the surface probably drained you dry. It will take your core a bit a while to fill to the point where you will regain muscle control.” The image of Potter smiled. “A whole lot of thought went into your incarceration Tom, you should be honored, really you should. My wife and several of my friends spent

the better part of fifty years on making sure you could have your immortality and choke on it. Consider this our gift to you.”

“The fact that this recording is being played shows that it all worked. If it hadn’t other recordings would be played.” The image shrugged. “Even with magic how well our gift works if pretty much a crap shoot. There are just too many variables to consider. What if there comes a point where your magic no longer regenerates? What if someone finds you?” Again the image shrugged.

“I don’t know how much Muggle Science you remember from your primary school days Tom, but as I’m recording this they estimate the Earth to be just over four and a half billion years old, and project another five billion years until it is swallowed by the sun as it becomes a red giant.” Potter smiled. “Cool huh? I wish you could have seen what the Muggles have done Tom, permanent bases on the Moon, two missions to Mars, one on the way to Ganymede, a robot probe to the closest star. Really cool stuff.”

“Anyway, if this all worked, and everyone did their jobs correctly you should be waking up to the Earth two and a half billion years into the future from my point of view. Once core of the planet has cooled to the point that it can’t maintain the Earth’s magnetic field any longer, and once that field collapses completely, a process they tell me might happen overnight or take centuries, all kinds of interesting radiation will be hitting the planet, slowly eroding the atmosphere and irradiating the hell out of you, assuming of course that the current science is correct. The first beginning of the collapse of the magnetic field will open your crypt, again, assuming that your magic lasts that long.”

The image of Potter smirked at him. “Humanity as you knew it is almost certainly gone, while there may be life, you undoubtedly won’t recognize any of it. I would be careful how you got about treating the natives where you find yourself Tom; they may well be capable of making your immortality unpleasant.”

Riddle struggled to move, to speak, and to do anything that would allow him to prove to himself if to no one else that Potter was lying. Doing so exhausted the Dark Lord to the point that oblivion claimed him.

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Once Riddle woke he found his muscles screaming in pain at their lack of use, he brought a trembling hand to his face to wipe... something from it. It was then he noticed the cord wrapped around his wrist and trailing off the bed.”

“You’re awake then?” Potters image smiled at him. “Just a few more thoughts and I’ll let you get on with your immortality. I’ve left you your wand. I couldn’t just send you off into eternity unarmed could I? My friend Hermione, you remember Hermione don’t you Tom? The Muggle born Witch you took such an interest in via Draco Malfoy? Hermione suggested that even with the stasis charm, your wand might not survive the long sleep you’ve enjoyed. So I preserved it.”

Riddle managed to sit up. He began to pull on the cord that ran from his wrist over the side of the bed.

“Your wand is connected to the cord around your right wrist Tom, sealed in a block of a Muggle substance called Lexan.”

Riddle pulled a clear block onto his lap. In the dim light that came through the crack in the wall he saw his wand suspended in the center of the hard transparent substance four inches on a side and eighteen inches long. His wand. So close, yet he could not touch it.

“We secured it to your wrist so that you wouldn’t lose it. Of course, you might have a bit of trouble getting it out of the Lexan. Well, good luck Tom, enjoy your immortality, such as it is. Assuming you can survive the radiation, you’ve got two and half a billion years or so until the Earth is destroyed. Good luck with that.” The man in the image grinned one last time. “I wonder what will happen to your soul wraith when the sun consumes the planet?” Potter’s laughter rang out before the image faded out.

-----oooOOOooo-----

It took hours before Riddle deemed himself ready to try to exit his crypt. Hesitant exploration found that lights came on in the room as soon as he stood from the bed. Once he had lights beyond the red glow that came in from the hole in the wall Riddle found a water cask under heavy preservation and the preserved makings of three meals.

Riddle ate and drank, and then he noticed that the red light coming in from the hole in the wall had faded. That suggested that it was now night time. Did he dare leaving the relative safety of this... crypt to explore in the dark?

No. Best to remain here until the light returned.

The darkness had always been his friend, hadn’t it? The darkness had hidden him from the older boys in the orphanage, and then the darkness provided a safe place from which to exact his revenge on the powerless. The Dark had allowed him to explore Hogwarts Castle finding even Salazar’s near mythical Chamber of Secrets, hidden for centuries from the small minded fools that had filled the school since the banishment of the greatest of the four founders. He would remain in this chamber until light.

Riddle spent several hours trying to remove his wand from the block of Muggle material. He beat the block against the platform he had woken upon; he swung it by the cord that connected the block to his wrist, slamming it against the chamber’s walls repeatedly. His frustration rose when after all that he hadn’t even managed to chip the transparent material.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Riddle crested the hill hoping against hope that he would finally see some indication of food or drinkable water. He didn’t. Just more the same leg killing hills that covered the landscape clear to the horizon in every direction.

More than Five years. The minute scratches that he had made on the tree branch that he had fashioned into a walking staff to assist in his travels came to a count of 1913. One for each ‘day’.

That was something else that had changed. A ‘day’ was longer, a lot longer, than it used to be, he wasn’t sure why, but it was. Of course he had no way of actually telling time. The sun, huge and swollen in the sky seemed to slowly crawl across the sky, and the nights went on forever, with nightly auroras that dwarfed the displays he had seen while on a trip to Norway early in his first rise to power. But this endless land, wherever he was, had to be further south as hot and humid as it always was. But he couldn’t even estimate his latitude, given that on the rare night the sky cleared of clouds and the auroras

cleared enough to let him see the stars, he didn't recognize any of them, look as he might, there was not a single familiar constellation in the sky.

Then there was the absence of the moon.

Where was the moon? He had pondered that many of the insanely long nights over the last five years. Potter had said that the Muggles had bases on it, whatever they were. Surely they couldn't move the moon... could they?

Movement caught his eye. Yes, there. It had been two days since he had eaten, and these small burrowing creatures were the only animals larger than insects he had managed to get close to in the entire five years he had been awakened to the so very changed world.

Carefully Riddle started his stalking of the creature, cursing for the hundredth time that day the transparent prison his wand remained stored in. The creatures were... odd. Slightly larger than a European brown rat but utterly without fur. They had toothless beaks and an odd leathery texture to their skin, they were not mammals as he knew them, nor birds, nor reptiles.

And they tasted horrible. There was only one way to make the beasts taste any worse and that was to cook the meat, as Riddle had learned through experience when he had caught and cooked the first one. He had been deathly ill for three days.

Of course taste wasn't all that important really. Riddle raised the squirming creature to his mouth, and using the snake aspect of his homunculus body, unhinged his jaw and set about the slow process of swallowing the beast whole.

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Riddle crouched in the back of the shallow cave he had found, thankful for it as he peered past the small fire he had started for the night at the torrential rains outside. Despite the discomfort, the rain was a gift from the heavens. Riddle hadn't found water in four days. The small bowls he had fashioned from some particularly waterproof leaves had already filled. Riddle drank his fill before setting the bowls back out to refill.

He dug into the pouch he had made from the putrid carcass of some unidentifiable beast. What ever it had been, it was huge. In all his travels Riddle hadn't even seen one of these mountains of meat live, but had found several dead, but never soon enough to supplement his diet. He used what was left of the beasts to make himself clothing, including shoes of a sort, three times now. From the light of the fire he inspected his foot wear. Hopefully he would find another soon. Ah, there. From the pouch he drew out the sharpened stone he had found his second day out of the chamber Potter had left him in. Carefully he etched a small line into his walking staff. 1914 days since he had become the absolute master of this world.

Absolute master. Riddle began to laugh. Potter had been right, the immortal reflected through his laughter. Potter had given him his immortality so that he could choke on it. The world was almost devoid of life, and life was the source of magic. Where before Riddle had celebrated his power, now he hardly had enough magic available to him to start the fire in front of him. His wand, that might have made a difference was still sealed in the block of Muggle material and connected to his right wrist, though in reflection of five years of his effort with the sharp stone, one surface of the block was scored

and pitted, to a depth of perhaps a eighth of an inch.

The laughing man shook his head. When Potter hated, he did it in style. Riddle was a wizard with almost no magic. Riddle was a ruler without followers. Riddle was a sadist with no one to torture. All thanks to Potter and his followers.

Riddle sat back trying to ignore his hunger. Just when was it that immortality had lost its attraction?

This would be his new base. From here, he would hunt the burrowing creatures until he depleted the local population, just as he had so many times before. A week, perhaps two, then he would have to move on. He would likely always be moving on.

After all, forever was an exceedingly long time.

Plotting with Potions

The hardest part had been setting up the potions lab. For obvious reasons they couldn't use Snape's labs or his ingredients. Now that it was setup, and the ingredients ordered via Owl post via the twins, the pair hovered over their cauldrons in anticipation of the completed brew.

He was rubbish at potions, his participation limited to preparing the ingredients under her watchful eye and handing them to the girl as she asked for them. Her potions skills were top notch, impressing even Snape, a skill she attributed to her mother.

Not trusting the Twin's Wonder Witch line due to the ready availability of antidotes, they had elected to brew their own. The Frozen Ashwinder eggs, which were only the most volatile of the ingredients, had just been added to the two cauldrons. Exactly on schedule the potions went from milky white to the shimmering mother of pearl the texts spoke of. Then they each added a vial of their own blood, the keying agent. All it would take was a single taste...

Perfect.

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It had been Fourth year when he had decided he wanted her, right after he missed his chance with her for the Yule ball. He had spent the dance staring at her from a distance, hating every moment she was in the other man's arms. Deciding it a lost cause, he had tried to date others, but it always came back to her.

For the young woman, it had been the trio's fifth year when her crush blossomed into full-blown lust and an all-consuming need. The smell of his body when he came off the Quidditch pitch soaked in sweat, glances shared during meals before they separated to go to their classes. Night after night, she called his name as she touched herself, her secret only kept by the silencing charms on the drapery of her four-poster bed.

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

Everything was ready. They had planned their trap so very carefully coinciding with a Hogsmeade weekend. Her mouth went dry when she caught sight of his unruly hair as he entered the Three Broomsticks. It was all she could do to keep from rising to her feet and leaping into his arms. Too soon, too soon. Be calm, she told herself, you've waited this long. A little longer.

He rose to his feet and greeted his best friend and the target of his desire. As they had planned, he put the proper bottle of butterbeer into his friend's hand. He ignored the guilt he felt at doing so. It was for the best. Really it was. He smiled as he saw the proper bottle being raised to her lips, the lips he dreamed of. The lips that would belong to him, finally.

It took only four minutes for their plot to reach its completion, when her man reached across the table and hesitantly took her hand. It worked. He was hers.

Choke on that Lavender.

“Oh Harry” she breathed in his ear, as he allowed his hands to roam in the darkened corner of the pub. Their lips met in the darkness, and he imagined he could taste the potion.

He looked up catching Hermione’s eye as she broke the kiss with Ron. She winked, signaling success on her end as well.

It worked. Both of them had what they wanted. No longer would they be outsiders looking in, now they would be part of a pure blood clan, with the partners they wanted.

Perfect.

Harry Potter and the Accountant's Gravel

CHAPTER ONE

The Boy Who Scammed

Vernon and Petunia Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, would have been proud to say that they were good people if they were the kind of people who spoke of themselves in such a way, which they were not, thank you very much. The neighbors all knew that the Dursleys were the last people you would expect to be involved in anything conventional or mundane, because they held themselves to higher standards.

Vernon Dursley was the executive director of an international charity called Touchstone, which did good works and helped people. He was a tall, thin man with long auburn hair that he tied in the back into a ponytail, calloused hands from pitching in whenever anyone needed any help and he held the absolute certainty that he was everyone's friend. Petunia Dursley was shapely and blonde and had the kind of face that caused other people to stop and stare with awe. For several years prior to meeting the love of her life, Petunia had worked in high fashion as a model. Though she loved what she did and appreciated the platform her fame had offered her for her good works, she had given it all up without a second thought when she became pregnant. So, two became three when the happy Dursleys welcomed their small son who they named Dudley to this world. Sixteen months later and the two loving parents were confident in their opinion there was no finer boy anywhere.

The Dursleys knew they were leading charmed lives, and that they had everything they wanted, but they also had a secret sorrow, and their greatest fear was it would never be resolved. They did not think they could bear it if anyone found out about the Potters. Mrs. Potter was Petunia's sister, but they had not met for several years; in fact, Lily Potter pretended she did not have a sister, because Petunia and Vernon were as unPotterish as it was possible to be. The Dursleys wept when they thought about how the Potters thought of them. The Dursleys knew that the Potters had a small son, too, but they had never even seen him. This boy was another reason that kept the Potters away; they did not want their son mixing with a child like Dudley.

When Mr. and Petunia woke up on the bright sunny Tuesday our story starts, there was nothing about the crystal clear blue sky outside to suggest that strange and mysterious things would soon be happening all over the country. Vernon hummed as he picked out his favorite cardigan for work, and Petunia sang a happy song as she lifted a giggling Dudley into his high chair.

None of them noticed a large, tawny owl flutter past the window.

At half past eight, Vernon picked up his hand made satchel, kissed Petunia in that passionate way that always left her breathless, and lifted his only son for a hug, that the smiling boy enthusiastically returned.

"Little tyke," chortled Vernon as he left the house, making his way to the bus stop where he began the first part of the chain of public transportation that took him to work each day in the most

environmentally responsible way possible.

It was on the corner of the street that he noticed the first sign of something peculiar... a cat that appeared to be reading the map on the bus stop enclosure. For a second, Vernon didn't realize what he had seen... then he turned to look again. There was a tabby cat standing on the corner of Privet Drive, staring at the bus stop enclosure, but surely, it wasn't actually reading the map was it? Vernon Dursley laughed at himself. What could he have been thinking of? It must have been a trick of the light. Vernon blinked and stared at the cat. It stared back. As Vernon boarded the bus and it drove around the corner and up the road, he watched the cat through the bus window. It now appeared to be reading the street sign that said Privet Drive... no, it was just looking at the sign; cats could not read maps or signs. Vernon laughed at himself again and put the cat out of his mind. As the bus drove toward town, he thought of nothing except a large shipment of order of relief supplies he was hoping would be delivered to the survivors of that horrible earthquake today.

However, on the edge of town, the earthquake survivors were driven out of his mind by something else. As he sat in the usual morning traffic jam, he could not help noticing that there seemed to be many strangely dressed people about. People in cloaks. Vernon felt a tingle of excitement at the sight of people who dressed to suit themselves. You could always count on young people to try new and exciting things! He supposed this was some new fashion.

Vernon hummed to himself and as the bus stopped at a traffic light his eyes fell on a huddle of these free thinkers standing quite close by. They were whispering excitedly together. Vernon was excited to see that a couple of them were not young at all; why, that man had to be older than Vernon was, and wearing an emerald-green cloak! Vernon silently cheered the man on. It was always inspiring to see a man going his own way in life, conventions be damned. Then it occurred to Vernon that this was probably some sort of stunt... this many people were obviously associated somehow... Possibly somehow connected to a movie or something. Vernon shook his head sadly ... yes, that would be it. Once again, the Hollywood elites were pretending to care about things to sell tickets to another of their movies. The traffic moved on and a few minutes later, Vernon arrived at the Touchstone offices, his mind back on the plight of earthquake survivors.

Vernon always sat with his back to the window in his office on the ninth floor. If he had not, he might have found it harder to concentrate on the perils of the world that morning. He did not see the owls swooping past in broad daylight, though people down in the street did; they pointed and gazed open-mouthed as owl after owl sped overhead. Most of them had never seen an owl even at nighttime. Vernon, however, had a perfectly normal, owl-free morning. He wrote letters of recommendation for five different people. He made several important telephone calls and arranged to feed thousands. He was in a very good mood until lunchtime, when he thought he would stretch his legs and walk across the road to buy treats for his office staff from the organic bakery.

He'd forgotten all about the people in cloaks until he passed a group of them next to the bakery.

He eyed them excitedly as he passed. He did not know why, but they aroused his curiosity. This bunch was whispering excitedly, too, and he could not see any indication as to what movie they were advertizing. It was on his way back to his office past them, clutching a large bag of whole-wheat bagels for the office that he caught a few words of what they were saying.

"The Potters, that's right, that's what I heard ..."

“...yes, their son, Harry...”

Vernon stopped dead. Concern flooded his mind. He looked back at the whisperers as if he wanted to say something to them, but thought better of it. Surely not...

He dashed back across the road, hurried up to his office, gave his executive secretary the baked goods to distribute and asked that he not be disturbed for the next quarter hour. Vernon picked up his telephone, and had almost finished dialing his home number when he changed his mind. He put the receiver back down and stroked his chin, thinking... no, he was being silly. Potter was not an unusual name in the slightest. He was sure there were many people called Potter who had a son called Harry.

Come to think of it, he wasn't even sure his nephew was called Harry. He had never even seen the boy. It might have been Harvey. Or Harold. There was no point in worrying Petunia; she always got so upset at any mention of her sister. He did not blame her — if he had had a sister who wanted nothing to do with him... but all the same, those people in cloaks...

He found it a lot harder to concentrate on arranging for the delivery of relief supplies that afternoon and when he left the building at seven o'clock, he was still so worried that he walked straight into someone just outside the door.

“Oh, so sorry,” Vernon effused, as the tiny old man stumbled and almost fell. It was a few seconds before Vernon realized that the man was wearing a violet cloak. He did not seem at all upset at being almost knocked to the ground. On the contrary, his face split into a wide smile and he said in a squeaky voice that made passersby stare, “Don't be sorry, my dear sir, for nothing could upset me today! Rejoice, for You-Know-What has happened at last! Even Muggles like you should be celebrating, this happy, happy day!”

And the old man hugged Vernon around the middle and walked off.

Vernon stood rooted to the spot. He felt the warmth that came from having been hugged by a complete stranger. He also thought he had been called a Muggle, a term that seemed faintly familiar. Slightly bemused by the happenings of the day, Vernon hurried to his bus and set off for home, wondering if he was imagining things, which on reflection caused him to smile. It was good that he still had to wonder if his imagination was running away with him, so many of the suits in this world had lost the knack and Vernon suspected that they did not really approve of imagination.

Walking up the street to his lovely home and family, the first thing Vernon saw was the tabby cat he had spotted that very morning. It was now sitting on his garden wall. Vernon was sure it was the same cat; it had the same markings around its eyes.

“Hello Puss.” said Vernon kindly. “Keeping an eye on things are we?”

The cat did not move. It just gave him a stern look. Vernon smiled. That was what he loved about cats, they did what they did for their own reasons and, as a group, they didn't give a damn about what anyone thought about it. Thinking about his loving family, Vernon let himself into the house. He was still determined not to mention that he had heard anything about someone named Harry Potter, he did not want to upset his lovely wife.

Petunia Dursley had had a wonderful day. She told him over dinner all about the proceeds garnered at

the church Jumble Sale, of the dedication of the new Dialysis ward at the hospital, and how Dudley had learned a new word (“Please?”). Following Petunia’s wonderful meal, Vernon washed the dishes at the sink, and then read Dudley his favorite bedtime story (Hamster Huey and the Gooley Kabloolie) complete with the funny voices that always made the tyke giggle uncontrollably. After Dudley had settled into his normal blissful sleep, Vernon went into the living room in time to cuddle on the sofa with his loving wife and catch the last report on the evening news:

“And finally, bird-watchers everywhere have reported that the nation’s owls have been behaving very unusually today. Although owls normally hunt at night and are hardly ever seen in daylight, there have been hundreds of sightings of these birds flying in every direction since sunrise. Experts are unable to explain why the owls have suddenly changed their sleeping pattern.” The newscaster allowed himself a grin. “Most mysterious. And now, over to Jim McGuffin with the weather. Going to be any more showers of owls tonight, Jim?”

“Owls,” Petunia sighed in that way that told Vernon that she was once again mourning the loss of her relationship with her sister.

“Well, Ted,” said the weatherman from his place before the map on the telly, “I don’t know about that, but it’s not only the owls that have been acting oddly today. Viewers as far apart as Kent, Yorkshire, and Dundee have been phoning in to tell me that instead of the rain I promised yesterday, they’ve had a downpour of shooting stars! Perhaps people have been celebrating Bonfire Night early — it’s not until next week, folks! But I can promise a wet night tonight.”

Vernon sat frozen in place on the sofa. Shooting stars all over Britain? Owls flying by daylight? Mysterious people in cloaks all over the place? And a whisper, a whisper about the Potters...

This was no good. Vernon knew he would have to say something to Petunia about his suspicions. He cleared his throat nervously. “Er... Petunia, luv... you haven’t heard from your sister lately, have you?”

As he had expected, Petunia looked sad and more than a little wistful. After all, it was her dream that someday her younger sister would come back to her life.

“No,” she sighed. “Why?”

“Odd things in the news,” Vernon mumbled. “Owls... shooting stars... and there were a quite a few people wearing cloaks in town today...”

“Ah.” Petunia said understandingly.

“Well, I just thought... maybe... it was something to do with... you know... her crowd.” Vernon continued.

Petunia sipped her wine quietly. Vernon wondered whether he dared tell her he had heard the name “Potter.” He decided he would not risk upsetting her more. Instead, he said, as casually as he could, “Their son — he’d be about Dudley’s age now, wouldn’t he?”

“Yes, about a month younger.” said Petunia wistfully.

“What’s his name again? Howard, isn’t it?”

“Harry.” Petunia murmured. “A nice unpretentious name wouldn’t you say?”

“Oh, yes,” said Vernon, his heart sinking. “Yes, I quite agree.”

Vernon did not say another word on the subject as they went upstairs to bed. While Petunia was in the bathroom, Vernon crept to the bedroom window and peered down into the front garden. The cat was still there. It was staring down Privet Drive as though it were waiting for something.

Vernon laughed at himself for imagining things. After all, how could this have anything to do with the Potters?

The Dursleys got into bed, Petunia falling asleep quickly but Vernon lay awake, turning it all over in his mind. His last, comforting thought before he fell asleep was that if the Potters were involved, then perhaps, just perhaps, Lily and Petunia could rebuild their relationship. Again, Vernon laughed at himself. He knew very well what James and Lily Potter thought of him... He hoped that Petunia would not get hurt again by whatever might be going on... Vernon yawned and turned over... it could not affect them...

How very wrong he was.

Vernon Dursley might have been drifting into sleep, but the cat on the wall outside was showing no sign of sleepiness. It was sitting as still as a statue, its eyes fixed unblinkingly on the far corner of Privet Drive. It did not as much as quiver when a car door slammed on the next street, or when two owls swooped overhead. In fact, it was nearly midnight before the cat moved at all.

A man appeared on the corner the cat had been watching, appeared so suddenly and silently you would have thought he had just fallen out of the sky. The cat’s tail twitched and its eyes narrowed.

Nothing like this man had ever been seen on Privet Drive. He was tall, thin, and very, very drunk. An old man, judging by the silver of his hair and beard, which were both long enough to tuck into his belt. He was wearing long electric blue robes, a purple cloak that swept the ground, and high-heeled, buckled boots. His blue eyes were dull, bloodshot, and mostly closed behind half-moon spectacles and his nose was red, very long, and crooked, as though it had been broken at least twice. This man’s name was Albus Dumbledore.

Dumbledore did not seem to realize much of anything. Not that he had just arrived in a street where everything from his name to his boots were quite remarkable, not that he was slightly older than dirt, not that he had just trod in the residue from someone’s uncurbed dog. He was busy rummaging in his pockets, apparently looking for something. However, he did seem to realize he was being watched, because he looked up suddenly at the cat, which was still staring at him from the other end of the street. For some reason, the sight of the cat seemed to anger him. He glared and muttered, “Damned cat! Staring at me like that. Why I oughta...”

Dumbledore found what he was looking for in his inside pocket. It seemed to be a reddish rectangular prism. He hefted it, held it up in the air, and flung it through the nearest street lamp. As soon as the street lamp’s bulb went out with a crash, the reddish item returned the old man’s hand. Again he hurled the device... and the next lamp imploded into darkness and a shower of glass. Twelve times he threw

the half brick, until the only lights left on the whole street were two tiny pinpricks in the distance, which were the eyes of the cat watching him. If anyone looked out of their window now, even a curious Vernon Dursley, they would not be able to see anything that was happening down on the pavement. Dumbledore slipped the half brick back inside his cloak and set off down the street toward number four, where he sat down on the wall next to the cat. He did not look at it, but after a moment, he spoke to the feline.

“Can’t I go anywhere without you staring at me disapprovingly, Professor McGonagall?”

He turned to leer at the cat, but it had gone. Instead, he was wagging his eyebrows at a rather severe-looking woman who was wearing square glasses exactly the shape of the markings the cat had had around its eyes. She, too, was wearing a cloak, a tartan one. Her black hair was drawn into a tight bun. She looked distinctly ruffled.

“How did you know it was me?” she asked.

“My dear Professor, when is it ever not you?”

“It’s not as if I have been with you all day while you worked your way through your normal case of scotch.” said Professor McGonagall.

“All day? I assure you Madam; I waited until after 2pm before I began my libations. I am surprised you have not been tying one on. I must have passed a dozen feasts and parties on my way here.”

Professor McGonagall sniffed angrily.

“Oh yes, everyone’s celebrating, all right,” she said impatiently. “You’d think they’d be a bit more careful, but no... even the Muggles have noticed something’s going on. It was on their news.” She jerked her head back at the Dursleys’ dark living-room window. “I heard it. Flocks of owls... shooting stars... Well, they are not completely stupid. They were bound to notice something. Shooting stars down in Kent — I will bet that was Dedalus Diggle. He never had much sense.”

“You can’t blame them,” Dumbledore slurred drunkenly. “It’s just the sort of thing you celebrate.”

“I know that,” said Professor McGonagall irritably. “But that’s no reason to lose our heads. People are being downright careless, out on the streets in broad daylight, not even dressed in Muggle clothes, swapping rumors.” She threw a sharp, sideways glance at Dumbledore here, as though hoping he was going to tell her something, but he did not, so she went on. “A fine thing it would be if, on the very day James and Lily won the Lottery, the Muggles found out about us all. Do you suppose they’re really has gone, Albus?”

“It certainly seems so,” said Dumbledore. “They have much to be thankful for. Would you care for Sex on the beach?”

“What?”

“Sex on the Beach.” The old drunk said pulling a large flask out of his robes. “It’s a kind of Muggle mixed drink I’m rather fond of.” The old drunk said, carefully not mentioning his kickbacks from the Rotfang Conspiracy.

“No, thank you,” said Professor McGonagall coldly, as though she did not think this was the moment for the man to get even more soused... “As I say, even if You-Know-What has been won...”

“My dear Professor, surely a sensible person like you can call the game by its name? All this ‘You-Know-What’ nonsense... for eleven years I have been trying to persuade people to call it by its proper name: Gallons of Galleons.” Professor McGonagall flinched, but Dumbledore, who was adding scotch to his Sex on the Beach, seemed not to notice. “It all gets so confusing if we keep saying ‘You-Know-What.’ I have never seen any reason to be frightened of saying the game’s name.”

“I know you haven’t,” said Professor McGonagall, sounding half exasperated, half admiring. “But you’re different. Everyone knows you’re the only one who has ever won You-Know- oh, all right, the game.”

“You flatter me,” said Dumbledore slurred. “The Game’s current jackpot had come to amounts of cash that I will never have.”

“Only because you drink so much of it away.”

“It’s lucky it’s dark,” The old drunk said after a rumbling belch. “I haven’t blushed so much since Madam Malkin measured my inseam and got a little grabby.”

Professor McGonagall shot a sharp look at Dumbledore and said, “The owls are nothing next to the rumors that are flying around. You know what they are saying? About why they left him behind? About what they did with him?”

It seemed that Professor McGonagall had finally reached the point she was most anxious to discuss, the real reason she had been waiting on a cold, hard wall all day, for as a cat nor as a woman had she fixed Dumbledore with such a piercing stare as she did now. It was plain that whatever “everyone” was saying, she was not going to believe it until Dumbledore told her it was true. Dumbledore, however, was taking another hit on his flask and did not answer.

“What they’re saying,” She pressed on, “is that last night after the Potters were told that they had won the game, they immediately set out on a world tour and that when they found out that they couldn’t ‘check’ young Harry, and they left him at the airport. The rumor say that Lily and James Potter abandoned little Harry.”

Dumbledore bowed his head. Professor McGonagall gasped.

“Lily and James... I cannot believe it... I did not want to believe it... Oh, Albus...”

Dumbledore reached out and patted her on the shoulder. “I know... I know...” he said heavily.

Professor McGonagall’s voice trembled as she went on. “That’s not all. They are saying the Potters backed over little Tommy Riddle after he had delivered the cash in non-sequential unmarked small denomination bills. No one knows why, or how, but they’re saying that when he couldn’t stand up, Riddle’s body somehow broke... and that’s why he’s gone.”

Dumbledore nodded glumly.

“It’s... its true?” faltered Professor McGonagall. “After all he’s done... all the people made deliveries to... he couldn’t get out of the way of their old banger of a car? It’s just astounding... of all the things to stop him... but what in the name of heaven will Tommy survive?”

“We can only guess,” said Dumbledore. “We may never know... I, for one don’t care.”

Professor McGonagall pulled out a tartan flannel and dabbed at her eyes beneath her spectacles. Dumbledore hacked up a great glob of mucus as he reached for his golden watch, only to remember too late that he had pawned it. Too bad. It was a very good watch. It had twelve hands that all pointed to five o’ clock, and played the theme songs of several prominent distilleries. The old drunk shook his head sadly, and then looked up. “Hagrid’s late. I suppose that’s due to my instructions to him to keep young Harry occupied for twenty four hours before bringing him here.”

“What?” Professor McGonagall asked. “Why the hell did you do that?”

Dumbledore shrugged. “It seemed like a good idea at the time. Anyway, I’ve come to bring Harry to his aunt and uncle. They’re the only family he has left now.”

“What the hell are you talking about? Harry is related to half the magical families in Britain.” The Scots Witch pointed out.

“True enough, however James owes most of those families money and the ones that don’t hold Potter debts have met the boy and know what a miserable little shit he is.”

McGonagall jumped up and down while pointing at number four. “Dumbledore — you can’t. I’ve been watching those people all day. They are a bunch of fucking hippies. You could not find two people who are less like us. In addition, they have this son... I saw him playing in the living room, and then getting up without being asked to help his mother fold the laundry. At less than a year and a half! You cannot have Harry Potter come and live here! He’d eat them alive.”

“It’s the best place for him,” said Dumbledore firmly. “His aunt and uncle will be able to explain everything to him when he’s older. I’ve written them a letter.”

“A letter?” repeated Professor McGonagall faintly, sitting down on the wall. “Really, you think you can explain all this in a letter? These people will never understand him! He’ll be a burden... a drain on their resources... a pain in the ass!”

“Exactly.” said Dumbledore, looking very seriously over the top of his half-moon glasses. “It has to be done via a letter.” The old man shook his head. “Otherwise they might say no. Think how much better it will be, with him growing up far away from us until we can’t avoid it any longer.”

“There is a chance I’ll be ready to retire before he comes to Hogwarts...” McGonagall mused. “Yes... yes, you’re right, of course. But how is the boy getting here, Dumbledore?” She eyed his cloak suspiciously as though she thought the old pervert might be hiding Harry underneath it.

“Hagrid’s bringing him.”

“You think it... wise... to trust Hagrid with something as important as this?”

“I would trust Hagrid with my life,” said Dumbledore.

“Only because he makes your booze runs for you without charging a premium. I’m not saying his heart isn’t in the right place,” said Professor McGonagall grudgingly, “but you can’t pretend he’s not dangerous. He does tend to... what was that?”

A sharp clattering had broken the silence around them. It grew steadily louder as they both looked up and down the street for some sign of the source; the clattering swelled to annoying levels as they both looked up at the sky... and a small pink bicycle with a white wicker basket hanging between the handlebars fell out of the air and landed on the road in front of them.

If the bicycle was small and effeminate, it was nothing to the man sitting astride it. He was almost a third as tall as a normal man and at least one fifth as wide. He looked simply too small to be allowed out on his own, and so refined... One look at him told you that he enjoyed fine wines, Italian shoes, and preferred the company of men. In the basket of the bicycle was a bundle of blankets.

“Hagrid,” said Dumbledore, sounding relieved. “At last. And where did you get that bicycle?”

“I liberated it, my dear Professor Dumbledore, sir,” said the tiny man, climbing gingerly off the bicycle as he spoke. “Young Angelina Johnson will discover she ‘loaned’ it to me in the morning.” The small man said with a smirk. “I’ve brought him, sir.”

“No problems, were there?”

“No, sir, I picked him up at the Lost Luggage claim at Heathrow as you asked. Then the little bastard pissed all over my Bruno Maglis. That almost cause him to ‘accidentally’ fall out of the basket as we were passing over Bristol...”

Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall bent forward over the bundle of blankets. Inside, just visible, was a baby boy, fast asleep. Under a tuft of jet-black hair over his forehead they could see a curiously shaped cut, like a bolt of lightning.

“Is that where... ?” whispered Professor McGonagall.

“Yes,” said Dumbledore. “He’ll have that scar forever.”

“Couldn’t you do something about it, Dumbledore?”

“Even if I could, I wouldn’t. Scars can come in handy. I have one myself above my left knee that is a perfect image of all the answers for the 1853 NEWT exams. Well... give him here, Hagrid. I’m starting to sober up, so we’d better get this over with.”

Dumbledore took Harry in his arms and turned toward the Dursleys’ happy home.

“Could I... could I smack him around a little, sir?” asked Hagrid, his small hands balling into fists as he advanced on the small bundle.

“Of course not!” hissed Professor McGonagall, “You can’t just beat a child out in public like this.

You'll just have to come back later and find him when he's alone. Besides, you'd wake the Muggles!"

"Sorry," Hagrid said shaking his head, "It's just James owed me fifty Galleons, and now I'll likely never see it."

"Yes, yes, it's all very sad, but get a grip on yourself, Hagrid, or we'll be found," Professor McGonagall whispered, slapping Hagrid on the back as Dumbledore stepped over the low garden wall and walked to the front door. He laid Harry gently on the doorstep, took a letter out of his cloak, tucked it inside Harry's blankets, and then came back to the other two. For a full minute the three of them stood and looked at the little bundle; Hagrid's shoulders shaking in near rage, Professor McGonagall blinked furiously calculating how much she would need to save in order to successfully retire prior to 1991, and the red glow that usually shone from Dumbledore's nose seemed to have dimmed.

"Well," said Dumbledore finally, "that's that. We have no business staying here. We may as well go and join the celebrations."

"You're buying." McGonagall said.

"Yes," said Hagrid through clenched teeth, "I best get this bike away to the pawn shop if I want to hock it before it's discovered to be missing. Good night, Professor McGonagall, Professor Dumbledore."

Wiping his stained shoes on Harry's blanket, Hagrid swung himself onto the bicycle's banana seat, and leaning back against the sissy bar, kicked the pedals into motion, starting the spokes slapping against the Dumbledore Chocolate Frog card and with a clatter he rose into the air and off into the night.

"I shall see you soon, I expect, Professor McGonagall," said Dumbledore, nodding to her. Professor McGonagall glared at him suspiciously in reply.

"Remember, you're buying."

Dumbledore turned and walked back down the street. On the corner he stopped and took out the half brick and giggle manically. In the distance, he could make out a tabby cat slinking around the corner at the other end of the street. He could just see the bundle of blankets on the step of number four.

"Good luck, Dursleys," he murmured. "You're going to need it." He turned on his heel and with a swish of his cloak, he was gone.

The Band

I found Harry sitting in the common room staring at the fire.

It had been a bad night for me. Lavender informed me in no uncertain terms that while she was willing to explore my tonsils with her tongue, she was a nice girl and didn't do anything more than that. I thought that this was patently unfair, because her reputation said quite specifically that she did do more than that, and if her reputation was a lie, then that was false advertising, wasn't it?

I of course didn't say that out loud. I mean I might not be the sharpest knife in the drawer, but I'm not stupid. Besides, the snogging was good if not fulfilling, no sense spoiling a good thing.

Anyway I found Harry in the common room staring at the fire.

"Hey," I said as I fell into the overstuffed chair next to him.

"Hmmpf," he grunted.

Now, Harry can be a moody bloke, but that's a bit much, even from him.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Bored," he answered.

Now that was unusual. Harry can be a bit much at times, I've seen him frightened, angry, happy, sappy, whiny, excited, drunk, and occasionally, as when he got to thinking about Cho (the Tornadoes loving skank) Chang last year, horny. But never bored. What the hell?

"Hermione's still angry with me over the Prince's Potions text." He continued.

"That's nothing; you should see what she tries to do to me anything we end up alone." I protested, unable to resist a bit of one upmanship with my best friend. "But Harry, there's still Quidditch."

"Don't care. I always catch the Snitch at the last second to save the game, unless Dementors show up, and I only have to worry about that at Hufflepuff games due to Dementors being rabid 'Puff fans for some reason, and we've already played the 'Puffs this year."

I sat and stared at him for a moment while trying to digest his theory that Dementors might be Hufflepuff fans before I continued. "Well, what about Malfoy and his plots, or Voldemort and his? That should get your attention," I suggested.

"Nah," he said with a dismissive hand wave. "They're not going to actually do anything until late May, that's six months away."

"How do you know that Harry?"

"Ron," he said pityingly, "all the attempts on my life or major plots come to a head in late May.

Haven't you been paying attention?"

"Well, what about Snape?"

"Snape," Harry said once again staring into the fire "is an ass. He's always been an ass, and likely always will be an ass. The only way he could possibly be worse is if I were to find out that he's been wanking off to my mother's memory, and frankly the mere thought that I could imagine such a thing is disturbing all by itself. Snape bores me."

"Ok," I thought hard trying to come up with something that Harry couldn't be bored with... Ah, I had it. "What about your special training with Dumbledore? That couldn't possibly be boring."

"You have no idea Ron," my best friend said sadly. "Dumbledore's 'special training' has consisted so far of watching home movies of Voldemort growing up, and an assignment to get a memory from Slughorn, which I won't be able to do until some specific and unspecified point in the future. God, I'm bored. I've even done all my homework for the month, that's how bored I am."

Harry's last admission took me aback. No one should ever be that bored. Surely I could come up with something that would give Harry back his interest in life. Looking around the common room I spotted a fourth year strumming a guitar surrounded by a silencing charm and a small herd of lower form girls all looking at him in worship.

"I've got it Harry! We could form a band."

"Form a band?" Harry seemed confused, though a glimmer of hope appeared in his eyes. "Why?"

"To celebrate the freedom of artistic expression and to unleash our inner muses." I explain to his vacant expression. "Nah, I'm messing with you Harry, blokes form bands because bands pull birds, and everyone knows that."

Harry's eyes glazed for a moment at the thought of forming a band... Or was it pulling birds? No matter, after a very few moments Harry began shaking his head.

"It won't work Ron, I don't play any instruments."

"Not a problem Harry, there are charms to teach you to play."

A grin spread across Harry's face. That was the moment that **Ron Weasley and the Ron Weasley Experience Starring Ron Weasley** was born.

-----oooOOOooo-----

"What are you two grinning about?"

Harry and I looked up to find Neville Longbottom staring at us suspiciously.

"We just formed a band," Harry said happily.

"A band?" Neville asked. "Why?"

“Well, obviously to celebrate the freedom of artistic expression and to unleash our inner muses,” I explained.

“And mostly to get girls,” Harry added.

“Ah,” Neville grinned. “As long as there’s a good reason.”

A thought struck me; two guys seemed a bit skimpy for a band... Oh sure there was that Muggle group Hermione liked so much called ‘**Whim**’ or something with a song about waking someone up before going somewhere twice, but it seemed to me that more guys in the band would mean more groupies.

“So, Neville, ever thought about being in a band?”

The question seemed to surprise Neville. “Well, Gran had me taking piano lessons before I started at Hogwarts, but I wasn’t very good.”

“Don’t worry about that,” I assured him. “There are charms that let you play well.”

“There are?” Neville asked in surprise. “Count me in then. What’s the band’s name?”

“**Ron Weasley and the Ron Weasley Experience Starring Ron Weasley**” I explained.

“Oh very funny.” Harry said chuckling.

“Yeah Ron, you’re a riot,” Nev agreed. “What’s the real name of the band?”

I was silent, amazed at their reaction to the best band name ever.

“You’re not kidding?” Neville finally asked.

“I for one refuse to be in a band called anyone’s experience or that stars anyone.” Harry said.

“Well, how about ‘**The Chosen Ones**’?” I suggested.

“You, know I can hurt you badly, don’t you Ron?” Harry asked in that scary way of his. He fixed me with his patented ‘I’m going to kill you and everyone who looks like you’ glare, and then spoke again. “How about we call ourselves ‘**Constant Vigilance**’?”

“Oh, I like that,” Neville agreed.

“Could it be ‘**Constant Vigilance starring Ron Weasley**’?” I asked.

“No,” the other two chorused.

Well, that was hardly fair.

“What are you two going to play?” Neville asked.

“The kazoo for me.” I said confidently.

“What?” Harry asked.

“Really?” Neville seemed shocked. “You’re really going to play the kazoo? Wicked!”

“I know,” I admitted. “Back when Bill was in a band, he played the kazoo, and he let me try a few times. Bill said I was a natural.”

“Whoa!” Neville was obviously impressed.

Harry of course couldn’t let me have my moment in the sun.

“Wait a minute. You guys are making it sound like a kazoo is a serious instrument... You’re messing with me aren’t you?”

“Harry,” Neville said with a flash the rage I felt, “never disparage the ultimate Mirliton! Doing so makes light of all we are and all we will be! The immortal kazoo is the source of all music magic!”

Harry looked back and forth between Neville and me, looking like he thought we were joking. I know, I know, he’s Muggle raised, but he’s lived in the magical world for almost six years now, he’s got to start learning our ways.

“Ok, fine, Neville on the piano and Ron on the kazoo...” He grinned as if he had decided to join in on a joke. “I guess I’ll play the triangle.”

Neville gasped, and I felt my own heart skip a beat. “Harry!” I hissed. “Don’t even joke about that. Do you want to go to Azkaban?”

“What?” he asked.

“The triangle?” Neville hissed. “The triangle is the instrument of choice of Dark Lords throughout time. It’s evil. They’re used for torture and Dark Rituals. There are rituals that would give a triangle the power to kill with a single ‘ting’. Just possession of one of the accursed things is an instant one way trip to Azkaban!”

“But we used them in primary school.” Harry protested.

“We know. That’s one of the reasons the more conservative Purebloods hate Muggle so much.” I explained.

“Because of the triangle?”

“Harry!” Neville protested.

-----oooOOOooo-----

“So, we’re a trio?” Harry asked.

Neville settled into his normal seat in the corner of the common room. “I don’t know Harry; it seems to me that most of the successful groups have at least four members.”

I sat next to Harry on the sofa. “Well, who do we know that’s cool enough to jam with us?”

Harry turned and looked at me oddly, “Cool enough to jam with us?”

Well, we don’t want anyone pulling our appeal down.” I explained.

“Well,” Neville suggested, “Ginny would probably play with us, she’s cool.”

“My sister is NOT going to be on stage with us. She’d sabotage me anytime I was making my move on a groupie.”

“Your move? As in singular? You’ve got one move?” Harry laughed.

“Well, Dean once said he played drums.” Neville said.

“What’s this about me?” Dean called from across the room.

“Dean!” Harry called, “Come on over for a minute.”

Dean closed the book he was reading and came over to join us, slumping in the chair opposite Neville. “What?”

“We’re forming a band,” Harry said, “and Neville said that you played the drums.”

“A bit,” Dean admitted, “But I’m not very good.”

“No worries,” I told him. “There are charms to let you play.”

“There are?” Dean asked. “Then why aren’t there hundreds of bands?”

Neville and I shared a look. Muggleborns... What are you going to do?

“Mostly because no one has ever thought of this before.” I explained gently.

“Wait...” Harry interrupted. “If no one has ever thought of using magic to make their music better, why are there charms to allow you to do it?”

“Ancient charms Harry, ancient charms that I have access to because my brother is a Curse Breaker.”

“Ok,” Dean said in that way he does when he doesn’t really believe what he’s been told. “So what’s the name of this band anyway? If a band is going to pull birds, it needs a cool name.”

“**Constant Vigilance.**” Neville said.

“**Starring Ron Weasley.**” I added.

“No!” Neville and Harry chorused.

“Just ‘**Constant Vigilance**,’” Harry continued, “not starring anyone.”

“Forming a band was my idea,” I pouted.

“And it was a good idea.” Neville said.

“A good idea that we’re not going to let you spoil with a stupid name.”

Before I could protest this besmirching of my great idea for a band name, the air chilled as an aura of doom and common sense moved to engulf our group.

“And what are you four up to?”

“Oh, hi Hermione,” Dean said smoothly “Not much, we’re just talking.”

“Hmm.” She hummed in a distrustful manner.

I looked up to find her staring at me in that way that told me that she was angry with me and wanted me to die slowly and painfully. In the face of this I cowered in a manly manner, all the while pleading to the gods and Merlin that she didn’t get mad enough to start with the violence again. I’d only just managed to scrub the bird crap from my hair from the last time.

“You had all best have done your homework before wasting time in conversation.” She said before she flounced off.

“Whatever it is you guys did,” Neville said quietly, “you’d best apologize soon before she does something we’ll all regret.”

“Well, yeah.” Dean said. “You know it occurs to me the Constant Vigilance will only work for a name among people who know Professor Moody. I think we’ll need a name that isn’t such an ‘in joke’.”

“Like what?” I asked.

“Well, some of the more popular Muggle bands just have nonsensical names. You know The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Wham...”

“Weird names,” I agreed. “What were you thinking of for a name?”

“Well,” Dean grinned. “‘Where’s Trevor’ has a certain ring to it.”

“Oh, I like that,” I grinned.

“Funny, funny guys I hang out with.” Neville sighed.

“No Nev, that’s a good name,” Harry laughed, “It will have people asking ‘who is Trevor?’. Something that generates interest like that has to be good.”

“Hmm,” Neville made a face. “I’ve got to get going; Professor Sprout is expecting me in Greenhouse four.”

“I’ll join you,” I said standing. “I promised Lavender that I’d meet her in the Great Hall for a walk around the lake before dinner. See you two later. Don’t worry about an instrument Harry, my dad has a Muggle instrument that you can use, I’ll get him to send it to me.”

As Neville and I passed through the doorway to the hall outside the common room a thought occurred to me. “Hey Nev, we could be ‘Where’s Trevor starring Ron Weasley’.”

“No.”

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

Three days later Harry, Neville and I were at breakfast and involved with most of our year at the table wondering what Slughorn would be covering today, when the owls made their morning entrance. Out of the corner of my eye I spotted an owl carrying a large package, turned and examined the approaching bird more closely. Yes! It was Errol with a package. It must be dad sending his Muggle instrument for Harry.

Poor old Errol misjudged his approach to the table the package hit the table directly in front of Parvati and Lavender, and slid past me, finally coming to a stop between Harry and Neville. In the process of this sliding all of the plates were knocked into the laps of the people eating from them. Meanwhile, poor Errol tumbled down the table finally coming to rest face down in a large serving platter of scrambled eggs.

“That bird is a menace.” I said reaching over the debris on the tabletop to disconnect the package from Errol’s twitching talons.

“What IS that?” Parvati asked brushing residue of her breakfast from her robes.

“Harry’s instrument.”

“Ron,” Harry said

“Instrument?” Lavender asked

“Oh yeah, we’re forming a band.” I explained. “I’m playing the kazoo.”

“Really?” Lavender asked again, wrapping her arm around mine. “You never told me you played the kazoo,” she cooed.

“Oh yeah, I’ve been playing for years.”

“Ron...” Harry repeated, tugging on the sleeve of my robe.

“Quiet Harry!” I whispered to my best friend who always gets everything and is trying to bump me out of the limelight.

“Well,” Parvati interrupted, “what instrument is Harry going to play?”

I cut the string holding the package closed with the knife from my table service, and then pulled the brown wrapping paper off revealing an ivory keyboard and leather bellows. “My pal Harry is going to be the Rhythm Accordion of the Group.”

“Rhythm Accordion?” Harry asked. “You’re expecting me to play a bloody Accordion?”

“Harry,” I said in a calming tone, “after the kazoo, the Rhythm Accordion is the most important instrument in a magical band.”

“It is?”

“Of course it is,” I said winking at Lavender and Parvati, causing them to giggle as they gathered their things to leave to prepare for their first class.

Dean slid into the seat across from me. “There you three are. I thought of something this morning in the shower while I was trying to shove soap in my ears.”

Neville’s brow furrowed. “Why were you trying to shove soap in your ears?”

“Because Ron was in the next stall singing his head off.” He looked to me apologetically, “Sorry mate, but your singing might strip paint, but it won’t pull birds.”

“Oh hell.” Harry opined. “None of us can sing.”

“And what might this oddly shaped package contain Mr. Weasley?” A much hated voice came from over my shoulder.

I turned to face Snape, his eyes boring into mine. Harry said he could look into your mind, but I never noticed anything. “It’s an accordion Professor. We’re forming a band.”

“A band.”

Neville and Dean started edging away. Bastards. I wished I could go with them. “Yes sir.”

“You and Potter?”

“Yes sir, and Neville and Dean.” Ha! That’ll teach them to try to abandon me like that.

“I see.” He seemed to hesitate for a moment. “I expect your performance to be entertaining, or I shall be docking you fifty points each for wasting everyone’s time.”

Yikes! I maintained eye contact with the great greasy git. “Yes sir.”

He started to leave, then again he hesitated. “You know, I played accordion in a band when I attended Hogwarts.”

“You did sir?”

“Yes. We were a talented quartet, with quite a following.”

“What were you called sir?” I asked despite hoping he’s just go away.

“We were **Severus Snape and the Severus Snape Experience Starring Severus Snape**. Perhaps you have heard of my band?”

“Uh... No sir.” What the hell? How did he get away with stealing my idea? “Are you mentioned in any of the books in the library? Maybe we should look your band up for inspiration.”

His eyebrows lifted. I had gone too far, the only thing worse than standing up to Snape was sucking up to Snape.

“I’m sure I wouldn’t know Mr. Weasley. Might I suggest you care for your owl before it manages to drown in the scrambled eggs?” He whirled about and stalked away doing that robe thing he does. I reached over than pulled Errol from the platter.

There was silence for a few moments then Harry began to giggle. Dean and finally Neville joined him. Before very long they were all laughing to the point they were starting to slip from their seats. “What?” I demanded.

“**The Severus Snape Experience?**” Neville gasped between fits of laughter.

“**Starring Severus Snape.**” Dean agreed.

“Are you sure your hair’s really red there Ron?” Harry added showing himself willing to kick a mate when he was mortifyingly down. “Or does Snape dye his?”

“Oh very funny.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

“OK,” Dean said as we all met in the common room after classes ended for the day. “We still need a singer.”

“I can sing.” I said.

“No, Ron, you can’t. We’ve all lived with you since first year.” Harry shook his head. “And you can’t carry a tune in a bucket.”

Since I came up with this great idea, it had been nothing but abuse and insults. I resolved right then and there that once we hit it big, I was going solo and leaving these twits who were holding me back.

“Well then, what are we going to do?” Neville asked.

“Well obviously we need to find a singer.” Harry said. “Any suggestions? How about Seamus?”

“Not unless we want to specialize in Irish ballads and drinking songs.” Dean said shaking his head. “Seamus is a mate, but his interests are somewhat narrowly focused.”

“Well, any other Gryffs who can sing? What about what’s his name that fourth year with the Guitar?”

“No, not Cowpers, Neville. He’s strictly a poser looking to score on the younger girls.” Dean said negatively.

“Uh,” Harry interrupted, “Isn’t that what we’re trying to do?”

“Well, yeah, but we’re sophisticated sixth years, not a smarmy fourth year.” Dean said decisively. “Ok. I don’t think we’ve got any singing male Gryffs.”

“Do any of the girls sing?” I asked.

“Both Lavender and Parvati sing like angels, but that’s not what we want.”

“Why not?” Harry asked.

“That’s obvious Harry,” Neville interrupted. “Girl singers would attract male fans. We don’t need or want male Groupies.”

“Other than Colin of course,” I snarked. “As long as Harry’s in the band, he’s a given.”

“Fuck you Weasley!” the elder of the Creevy brothers called from the other side of the common room.

“If Ron and Colin are quite finished with their flirting...” Dean said shaking his head. “I dug through my magazine collection trying to figure out what the common denominator was with lead singers of successful bands.”

“Your magazines have articles?” I asked incredulously.

“Not many,” Dean admitted. “But enough. It seems to show that the lead singer tends to be the ‘bad boy’ type.”

“A bad boy?” Harry asked. “So, we need a bad boy?”

“Yeah, pretty much.”

Harry sighed. “Ok. Come on Ron. Let’s go recruit a bad boy.”

Wondering what he had in mind, I dutifully stood and followed him from the common room.”

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

I followed Harry to the Great Hall wondering what he was up to. Upon entering the hall, he looked about and spotted who he was looking for.

“Malfoy!” Harry called. “A moment of your time.”

“What do you want Potty?” the Slytherin git drawled. Seriously, what’s with all the Slytherin’s drawling? The only one I’ve never heard drawling is Crabbe and I’ve never heard him speak.

“Look Draco, this year sucks. It’s the sixth time we’ve done this dance and it’s getting old.”

“What are you talking about Scarhead?”

Harry shook his head. “You’ve been disappearing for hours on end, and when you’re around, you’re panicked and full of angst. You’re not having any fun this year either.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Look Draco, we both know that what ever you’re up to you can’t do it until late May. Why not take a couple of months off and have some fun?”

I suddenly realized that Harry was right. Malfoy was looking bad.

“What are you suggesting?” Malfoy asked.

“We’ve formed a band. We need a bad boy singer for all the girls to get the screaming thigh sweats over. You’re a bad boy, all the girls watch you all the time. Look, take a break from your project, what ever it is, come join our band, we’ll all get laid, and you can try to kill me in May. What do you say?”

“Wait a minute...” I protested. “I don’t think...”

“Of course you don’t Weasley. Why try something new?” Malfoy turned his attention back to Harry. “I won’t betray my father or his master.”

“No one is asking you to. All I’m asking is that we all get together and have some fun with this band. You’ll dazzle the girls, we all get some.”

“Uh,” Greg Goyle interrupted. “Could Vinnie and me get in on that? We could be roadies.”

“Why not?” Harry shrugged. “If we don’t have anything heavy for you to carry around, we’ll make something. How about it Draco? You in?”

I could see the temptation pass across Malfoy’s face. With visible effort he fought it down. “Why would I want to align myself with you Potter?”

“Well, girls love guys in bands, especially the singers. If you take a break, and this works out we all get a little, life will be good and you can try to kill me in May when you’ll be much more relaxed. If it doesn’t work then you haven’t lost anything.”

“How many girls are we talking about?” Draco asked.

“And the Roadies get the ugly ones, right?” Goyle wanted to know.

“How ever many you charm with those looks and your singing.” Harry explained before turning to

Goyle and nodding yes.

Again Malfoy hesitated, and then visibly came to a decision.

“I’m in Potter. You want me to sing?”

“Yeah,” I explained. “Are you any good? Can you carry a tune?”

“You’ll have to wait to find out won’t you? When’s the next practice Potter?”

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

We all gathered in an unused classroom. Between Dean and Neville they had levitated a piano and a drum kit into the room, and I had showed Harry how to hold Charlie’s accordion. He made a few experimental attempts to play while I assure him that the Music charm would give him a level of expertise.

Draco made an entrance like a star, having found a pair of sun glasses from somewhere. He wore his jacket over his shoulders over a blood red shirt and shiny black leather trousers and dragon hide boots. He was closely followed by Crabbe and Goyle both in Muggle blue jeans and black tee shirts with ‘Roadie’ emblazoned across their chests.

“What the hell Malfoy?” I asked.

“Just getting into character Weasley. After all if I’m going to be carrying this so called band, I’d best look the part.”

There was a bit of generalized grumbling at the arrogant git’s words, but I decided that as the leader of the band, I needed to put my foot down.

“Alright everyone, we’re supposed to be trying to have our first rehearsal not sniping at each other. Is everyone ready?” I looked around the room and saw a general acceptance and indications that they were indeed ready. I raised my wand and cast, “Ludo Lacertosis”

A pulse of magic filled the room. It was kind of tingly, and in a good way.

“What the hell was that Weasley?” Malfoy asked.

“Just a charm to enhance our playing.” I explained. “Ready Dean? You start us off.”

Dean started a basic rhythm beat on his drum kit, after a few seconds Neville joined in on the piano, and then Harry gave Dad’s accordion a squeeze and for the first time actually produced some music as opposed to the horrific noise of his earlier practice sessions. As I raised my kazoo (that I had named ‘Ruby’) to my lips it occurred to me that we hadn’t actually agreed on what song to play, yet the other three had somehow gotten together to play my favorite song.

With the first notes from Ruby, musical nirvana was obtained. We sounded fantastic. Take that Malfoy, so you think you’re going to have to carry this group do you? I wondered if the blond git even knew the

words to the tune. He'd better, I thought, or we go looking for a new singer.

Malfoy took a deep breath and exactly on cue cut loose with the most magnificent voice I had ever heard. The song we were playing was the Weird Sister's ballad from the previous year, '**If I can't have you, I'll run naked through the Dragon Preserve covered in Bar-B-Que Sauce**' and I have to admit that Draco OWNED that song. Hell, we all owned that song, even the nine minute drum solo.

We all stood there in shocked silence after the last notes of the song were played, the quiet finally broken by Neville's "Bloody Hell!"

"Yeah," Harry agreed. "Bloody Hell." He looked at the accordion in his arms before continuing. "That's one hell of a charm Ron. We were all great."

"I know," I agreed. "Especially you Malfoy. I'd never dreamed that you would be so... talented."

Malfoy was just looking around the room with the same look of amazement that the rest of us shared. "No, it was you guys who were great. Oh man, we are gonna get so many girls."

Then a Crabbe and Goyle began clapping, the two of them looking at us reverently, and both had tears running down their cheeks. "We are not worthy of being your roadies," Crabbe gasped out between bouts of sobs. "Thank you for letting us hear that."

"**Where's Trevor** is going to be huge!" Dean exulted.

"**Where's Trevor?**" Draco asked.

"That's the name of the band." I explained.

"That sounds awfully, well, Muggle." Malfoy said.

"That's what I said." Neville said from his piano bench.

"Well," Harry asked. "What makes a good name for a Magical Band?"

"Most of them use a descriptive word, then a noun." I supplied, hoping that I could bring Ron Weasley and the Ron Weasley Experience Starring Ron Weasley back to the fore. "You know, **Weird Sisters**, **Orping Croops**, **Deciduous Forest**, and of course **the Flying Circus**."

"Didn't they cross over into Muggle entertainment?" Neville asked.

"It doesn't matter," I said trying to steer this conversation back to the Experience. "We need a name that reflects what we are."

"**Friendly Enemies?**" Harry suggested.

"**The Melted Caldrons**" came from Neville.

"**Salazar's Soldiers**." Malfoy said.

“**Beautiful Music.**” Crabbe offered with Goyle nodding enthusiastically.

“No,” Dean said, looking at Malfoy and his outfit oddly. “I know our perfect name. **Leather Trousers.**”

Harry grinned. “I like it.”

“Yeah, me too,” Neville agreed. “But it seems to be lacking something.

“Well, since Draco is the singer, and it’s fairly common among Muggle bands to have the front man’s name on the Marquee, how about **Draco and the Leather Trousers.**”

“Ok, I really like it.” Harry agreed.

“Sounds good to me.” Neville chimed in.

“How about **Draco and the Leather Trousers starring Ron Weasley?**” I asked.

“No!” everyone chorused.

Oh yeah. Just as soon as we hit it big, I was going solo so that I could get away from all this abuse! Draco freaking Malfoy gets his name in the band name, but not Ron Weasley, not that would be too much to ask...

Bastards.

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

So, the band was formed, and despite the crappy name, we were good, and with time and practice, we only got better. It was amazing to hear the music we made, it really was.

Word began seeping out; it wasn’t long before pretty much everyone in the school knew that we had formed a band. We enforced a strict ‘band members only’ rule on our practice sessions, so the new groupies had to wait until we felt we were ready to perform in public to hear our music, though that didn’t stop some of them from trying to show how appreciative they might be when given an opportunity by the appropriate ‘artist’.

It struck me odd how the others didn’t seem interested. Harry was doing his normal solitary thing, Neville and Sue Bones were ‘keeping company’ as he put it, Dean was dating Ginny, and Draco seemed more interested in Pansy than ever. Greg, Vinnie and I however took every opportunity that came our way.

Lavender just didn’t understand, unfortunately. We went our separate ways immediately following her finding me with a most affectionate Ravenclaw (whose name escapes me) that didn’t share Lavender’s concern for her reputation.

In early March Harry and I approached the Headmaster about putting on a performance in the Great Hall after dinner one Saturday night. The old man’s eyes twinkled furiously when he found out that Draco was part of the group. Amid much praise for having ‘united the houses’ we received permission

to put on our show.

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The evening of the actual performance was long in coming.

I don't think any of us ate anything that whole day, not even Draco 'I'm so cool I piss ice' Malfoy. Neville and Dean kept dropping things all day, and Harry was almost paralyzed in fear.

"I can't do this." He said. "Has anyone checked to see if Voldemort wants to fight?"

"Calm down Harry," was my advice.

Finally the evening meal was over, and the Elves had cleaned the Great Hall. All of the tables were taken somewhere and a small stage set up where the staff table normally stood. Dean was setting up his drum kit while Harry and Neville took care to transporting the piano into place. I was busy making sure that the stage was clear of anything that might trip Draco or myself (we two being the only ones who moved about while we preformed) when I was surprised by a cough.

I turned to find Hermione standing behind me looking a bit embarrassed.

"Hello Ron. I hear you're putting on a show this evening." She said.

"Yeah." I responded, wondering if she was going to sic her bird spell on me again.

"I just wanted to say Good Luck."

"Thanks Hermione." I responded. I thought for a second then asked, "So, did you want to be one of our groupies?"

Ohh. Large mistake. Her face clouded and her wand seemingly appeared out of no where pointing at my crotch.

"Is there a problem Miss Granger?" Snape asked. How did he do that? He's always just appearing out of nowhere.

"Not really Professor. I was just about to remove an offensive appendage." Hermione said never taking her eyes from mine.

"As amusing as that might be Miss Granger, I believe you should just take your seat in the audience. I have been assured that this will be a most entertaining show."

"Yes Professor." Hermione lowered her wand and exited the stage.

"Mr. Weasley, you have an extraordinary talent for annoying precisely the wrong person." Snape said as he turned to leave. Then he stopped and turned to look at me over his right shoulder. "Remember Mr. Weasley, fifty points each if your performance doesn't entertain me." Again he did that robe thing as he left. I decided that once I was a star, I would hire the greasy git to teach me how to do that.

“What did Hermione and Snape want?” Harry asked as he, Neville and Dean approached me from behind.

“Well, Hermione most specifically doesn’t want to be a groupie.”

“Merlin’s Maiden Aunt Ron, you didn’t suggest that she might did you?” Neville asked, horrified at the idea.

“Maybe a little. I was joking.”

“And of course, we all know how much Hermione appreciates a good joke at her expense.” Dean said shaking his head. “After the show, just don’t stand next to me ok? I don’t want to get caught in the splatter.”

Draco approached our group. “Everything alright?”

“Yeah. Yeah, everything’s great.” I said wondering if Hermione would actually kill me, or just make me long for death. “It’s time. Everyone ready?”

There were nods all around and everyone took their places. I raised my wand and once again cast “Ludo Lacertosus”. I then put my wand away and nodded to Greg Goyle.

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

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Staff and Students, We give you **Draco and the Leather Trousers!**” Vinnie Crabbe’s amplified voice rang out in the Great Hall, and Greg Goyle opened the curtain that separated us from the audience.

As soon as the curtain was fully open, Dean counted us in with a four count, clacking his drumsticks with each count, and we began to play. Neville’s piano and Harry’s accordion melded into a single driving pulse of music, Dean’s drums set the beat for the tune. As I raised Ruby to my lips, I noted through the glare of the lights that the audience sat staring open mouthed at what they were witnessing.

Then Draco began to sing.

Even after the months of practice, I still couldn’t believe the power behind his voice. It was all that I could do to keep playing as he wove the story as old as wizard-kind. Wizard meets Witch, Wizard loses Witch, Wizard finds Witch again under a silvery moon, only to find out that she’s now a werewolf and in the process of ripping out his throat. Draco was amazing, and he was singing my favorite song. Then it was time for my solo.

Nine and a half minutes later, we did one last round of the chorus, and the band delivered its big finish, Draco on his knees at the very lip of the stage, giving every ounce of energy his talent held.

It was done; we’d finished our very first song. As the last echoes of the last notes of our song faded, the audience was silent in amazement.

Until Hermione stood from her seat in the first row, and called out. “What the hell was that?”

Then two things started happening very quickly. First I heard something that I never dreamed I would, the laughter of Severus Snape. The Potions Master doubled over in seemingly uncontrollable laughter.

The second thing was the audience began pelting us with conjured fruit.

-----oooOOOooo-----

It took the teachers almost half an hour to restore order. Well, most of the teachers. Snape was still collapsed on the floor laughing.

The members of the band were covered in nasty rotten fruit residue, and very confused. What was the problem? We were great.

Finally most of the students were sent off to their common rooms, leaving us facing a select few.

“What did you think you were doing?” Hermione asked us.

“But...” I really didn’t understand what was wrong. “We were... we were good.”

“No Ron, you weren’t. You were really, really, terrible.” Ginny said with a smile. Something told me that I would be hearing about this for years to come.

“Terrible? How is that possible?” Harry asked. “It sounded great to me.”

“If I might interrupt.” The headmaster said softly. “Might I inquire if any charms were used to... enhance your performance?”

“Well, I’ve been casting Ludo Lacertosus on us to help us out.” I admitted.

There was silence for a second, and then Snape burst into another bout of laughter.

“Are you telling me,” Pansy Parkinson asked shaking her head, “That you four idiots let this bigger idiot cast a charm on you that you didn’t understand?”

“It’s an enhancement charm.” Draco protested.

“It’s the Delusional Musician charm.” Hermione said shaking her head. “It tricks those it’s cast on into thinking that they are playing well. And evidently singing well too.”

“Oh, Neville,” Susan sighed. “What am I going to do with you?”

“I would suggest that you all get cleaned up.” Dumbledore said. “While I assist my disabled Professor.” The Headmaster turned to assist Snape.

Snape picked himself up off the floor, still giggling. “Weasley!”

I sighed. Here it comes. “Yes Professor?”

“Fifty points to each member of your band, and your ‘roadies’ as well.” The Potions Master had

another fit of giggling as the Headmaster took his arm. "I have never been so entertained as I was tonight."

Bastard.

"Let's go Draco." Pansy said taking the blond's hand and leading him away.

"Later Draco," a suddenly upbeat Harry said. "Don't forget, you need to try to kill me in May!"

Malfoy made a rude hand gesture as he was dragged away by Parkinson. Crabbe and Goyle waved as they followed their leader out the door.

Susan took Neville's face in her hands and kissed him lightly, then let him away as well.

Hermione looked between Harry and myself for a few seconds, and then seemed to make up her mind. "Come along Harry. We need to get you cleaned up."

This left me alone on the stage, until another stepped from the shadows.

"Well, you've made a mess of things."

I sighed again. "I have."

"You seemed to have burned your bridges with both Hermione and Lavender."

"Yeah." I agreed.

"And you're not likely to live this one down."

"I know."

A sigh. "Well, it's probably for the best. Let's get you cleaned up."

"Ok."

Colin took my arm and led me from the Great Hall. I found myself wondering about his reputation.

Pain

Goodbye My Love

July 1, 1997
Amos Vale Cemetery
Bristol, UK.

Raining. Harry thought as he picked him self up from the ground following his abrupt arrival via portkey. ***How cliché.***

“Are you all right Harry?” she asked from under her umbrella.

“Not really, no. Thank you.”

She nodded understanding completely, and gestured toward a path leading into the cemetery. He followed the woman on the path that wound its way between the rows of plots. Finally they arrived. The plot was obvious, fresh sod; the stone still pristine, fresh flowers.

Padma Patil
4 January 1980- 14 June 1997
Daughter, Sister, Friend

“It was a beautiful day.” Parvati asked, her dark eyes offering the image of her twin. “The service was a mixture of Father’s traditions from India and Mother’s from England. She’s wearing the jewelry you got her. I fought with Father over that, he wanted to send it back to you. I told him that Padma would never take it off.” She hesitated as if just realizing what her words might be doing to him. “Would you like me to stay Harry?”

“There’s no need for you to stay Parvati. I think I need to be alone for a few moments.” He took the young woman’s hand. “Please, get yourself out of this rain. I’ll be alright. Thank you for showing me the way.”

“Harry...” the girl hesitated again. ***Why was this so hard?*** “Padma and I shared everything. I know it didn’t show at school, but we told each other everything. Padma told me about what the two of you had.” Her eyes swam with unshed tears. “She was so happy, so proud of you, so in love with you. Did she tell you about the dolls?”

Harry nodded.

“I made sure she had it with her. Padma has her Harry doll with her now, and forever.” The exotic Gryffindor rose onto her tiptoes to kiss Harry on the cheek, “Get the ones who did this Harry. Hurt them they way they hurt my sister.” She turned and walked away leaving Harry to his grief.

After the girl was gone Harry stood in silence staring down at the stone, the rain dripping from his hair into his eyes hiding the tears. He hadn’t thought he had anymore tears. Harry dropped to his knees, ignoring the wet squelch from the soil. With a trembling hand, he reached out and lightly traced the

lettering on her stone.

“Hey Padma,” the black haired man murmured. “I’m sorry it took so long for me to get here. Dad took me white water rafting in the Canadian Rockies. A last chance for just the two of us, he said. A last chance before I didn’t have time for him anymore. I was joking around and just goofing off when they... when they were hurting you.” His tears were flowing now, visible despite the rain. “We were in the middle of nowhere. We purposely didn’t take any method of communications with us, and we never told anyone where we were going. You were gone for ten days before Franklin found us...” His breath caught in his throat. “I’m so sorry Padma, I’m so sorry. I should have... should have...”

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

“We should go to him.” Hermione Granger moved to open the door. An impossibly strong hand stopped her.

“Leave him alone Hermione.” Franklin Richards said his eyes fixed on his kneeling best friend. “He’s hurting now. When he’s ready he’ll come back on his own.”

“I’ll have to be leaving soon. Mum and Dad have forbidden me from having anything to do with Harry or the rest of you.” Parvati said quietly.

“They’re trying to protect you.” Susan suggested.

“I know that Sue. It just makes me so angry. I don’t want safe, I want revenge. They’ve taken Padma, they’ve taken Lavender, and they’ve taken Lisa and Justin and Ernie, and Colin and Dennis. No one has done anything. The ministry put out a pamphlet telling people how to protect themselves. It boils down to keep your head down until the Aurors arrive. We’ve all seen what Harry can do, between his magic, his armor and the way his mind works... I asked him to...”

“We know.” Hannah said.

Neville fixed Franklin with a stare. “You know Harry best Franklin. What is he going to do?” The blond man’s mouth set into a firm line. He couldn’t help but know their thoughts. They were frightened for themselves, worried for Harry and mourning their lost friends. They needed to be encouraged. “He’s hurting now. In an hour he’s going to be angry.” The only son of Reed Richards leaned back in his seat, again turning his attention to his mourning friend.

“Someone should tell Lord Flight from Death that Dumbledore isn’t in charge anymore, and Hell is coming.”

If Wishes were Fishes

A Harry Potter Adventure

The last trace of steam evaporated in the autumn air. The train rounded a corner. Harry's hand was still raised in farewell.

"He'll be alright," murmured Ginny.

As Harry looked at her, he lowered his hand absentmindedly and touched the lightning scar on his forehead. "I know he will."

The scar had not pained Harry for nineteen years. All was well.

The tiny pink haired woman closed the book thoughtfully. "Well, that seemed... abrupt.

"Abrupt?" The brown haired boy wearing a pink hat asked incredulously. "That made absolutely no sense. After spending months in a tent with Hermione, he marries Ginny? He named his kid after the dink that was always picking on him? What the heck?"

"I liked Ron." Cosmo said removing his floating crown-like thing so as to scratch at his thicket of green hair. "He seemed so balanced and smart."

Wanda and Timmy just shared a look and shrugged.

"And Hermione married Ron? The nose to the grindstone bookworm married to the king of the slackers? That's insane, that would be like Trixie Tang marrying... Marrying..."

"You?" Cosmo suggested helpfully.

"Well, that's the way the story goes Sport." Wanda sighed, sharing the feeling of let down that the final book had inspired. "Want to read Goblet of Fire again; we all really liked that one."

"No. I want to stop Harry from being so stupid."

"He did the best he could Timmy." Cosmo noted as he floated by the bed again. "I mean, he's no Ron..."

"Timmy," Wanda said in her 'I'm very concerned about you and about to explain why you're being stupid' voice. "The magic of the Harry Potter world is very different than ours, much more limited, and..."

"Don't care." The youngest Turner said. "I wish I had a wand that would let me do magic"

"Ok, done!" Cosmos said waving his wand.

A Timmy sized wand appeared in the boy's hand, ten inches long balsa wood with a snail snot core, terminating in a three inch sparkling five pointed star.. Stiff and good for anything the user decided he

wanted to do.

“Timmy!” Wanda pleaded for a bit of sanity, “Why don’t we go help the Crimson Chin again? That’s always fun.”

“No!” the boy in the pink hat proclaimed. “I wish I was being sorted into Gryffindor for Harry’s first year!”

Cosmo cluelessly raised his wand, while Wanda sighed and raised hers as well.

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

Vickie, the world’s most evil babysitter was standing outside Timmy’s room trying to decide which of the horrible tortures she had devised to use on Timmy next. There were four distinct options, any of which would have the boy a sobbing wreck in seconds. She shook her head as herself. It was obvious, do all four simultaneously. The evil teen kicked the door open only to find herself looking at a huge roiling mass of smoke inside the room.

The smoke seemed to be forming the words ‘Copyright Violation’... That was odd, she thought as she found herself pulled into the vortex the smoke concealed.

Luna's Plan

Part One – A plan is hatched.

Luna Lovegood was an upset young lady.

You could tell by the pout. Lovegoods in general were renowned for being prodigious pouters, and when Luna combined the Lovegood pout with the lower lip quiver of the Malfoy family that she had inherited from her mother, Luna's pout contravened several Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties. However since the Lovegood family were not signatories to any of those treaties, Luna's father was rather unfairly immune to her pouts. In fact he often offered suggestions for improving her pouting action.

It was unfair. This unfairness of course caused Luna to pout even more, adding sniffles learned from Gran Ollivander to the lip quivers. This didn't work either, but it never hurt to practice one's craft.

Luna stomped her foot at her father, who cruelly ignored his only daughter, and continued to dress for his meeting. The part of Luna's mind not dedicated to the pouting, lip quivering, sniffing or foot stomping regarded her father's attire with a gimlet eye. He always dressed so conservatively and really did he have any sense of style? A red cummerbund with green camouflage cargo shorts? She shook her head ruefully. She loved her father dearly but all of his taste was in his mouth. Everyone knew that Purple was the color to wear with camo. And seriously, wearing white socks with his calf high Doc Martins? Seriously? At least his shirt was nicely pressed.

Oh, he was wearing the shotgun shell cufflinks she had gotten him for his birthday. How lovely.

Her father had absolutely no sense of style, but he was sweet about it.

Wait. She was mad at him, and he deviously distracted her with his lack of fashion sense. The Beast.

"I don't understand why I can't go." She whined attempting to achieve a new level of pout.

"You know full well why you can't go, my pretty moon girl." Xeno Lovegood said, checking his fine self in the mirror, while contemplating if his top hat would make a more forceful statement than his trademark pith helmet. No, definitely the helmet... "You sealed your own fate last year at the International Conference for Newspapers Without Fact Checkers. You committed the cardinal sin of the business."

"But Daddy, it wasn't my idea."

"None the less, you sat down and joined in on the most important discussion of the entire two week conference, and then you committed the most unforgivable act this conference has seen."

"I didn't mean to Daddy." She said piteously.

"I know Kumquat, I know. But you did it."

She nodded sadly her eyes downcast.

“Going all in with a pair of twos showing.” Xeno shook his head. “You bet the Quibbler.”

Luna hung her head even lower. “I know Daddy, I’m sorry.”

Xeno shook his head. “The Pot was almost fifteen and a half million US Dollars.”

“I know.”

“Three other papers had been thrown into the pot, as well as that silly twenty four hour Cable News Channel.” Xeno went on. “And then you did the unforgivable.”

“It wasn’t my fault.” Luna whispered. “I was distracted. I was light headed from the cigar smoke. I never even looked at my hole cards.”

“I’ve told you repeatedly not to smoke cigars when you gamble.” Xeno said shaking his head dismissively. “You turned over the both the other twos. Do you remember the problems I had getting the Sun and the News of the World and the Inquirer up the Quibbler Standards? And Rupert, well, he still breaks into tears when ever he sees me.”

“He should have known better than to try to draw to that inside straight.” Luna pouted. “Besides what was he thinking when he named his news network after a fox?”

“Yes he should have, and I really don’t know.” Xeno admitted. “Personally I’m just happy that Bill was outside trying to scrape up the 500,000 dollar buy in from the change holders of his car. I have absolutely no idea what I would have done with a small soft company that makes windows of all things.”

“Daddy, I know how a company can be small, but how could it be soft?”

“That hardly matters Luna.” Xeno said, not willing to admit that he had wondered much the same things since last years Conference. “What matters is that you were banned from the conference for all time, plus five years.”

“Meanies.” Luna said sadly, forgetting to pout.

“Quite.” Xeno agreed. “So I’m going to the conference and try to lose those albatrosses back to their original owners, and you can either stay in the room or go to the mall.”

“Going to the mall isn’t going to get Harry Potter to notice me.” Luna huffed.

“If he hasn’t noticed you then he is an idiot, my sweet moon girl.” He leaned over to kiss his only child’s forehead. “And no idiot is good enough for my little girl. I probably won’t be back until late. You’ve got money, enjoy yourself.”

“Yes Daddy.” The blonde said as she watched the door close. Then she stomped her foot again. It was oddly satisfying, but didn’t really do anything useful. Just to be sure she stomped the other foot with similar results.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Luna spent perhaps an hour exploring the halls of the hotel, checking each ice machine for clarity and flavor. After puzzling over what appeared to be a Muggle version of a Wizarding portrait in the lobby that displayed only a fireplace for another hour, she returned to the Lovegood's suite.

Another twenty minutes was spent exploring the closet in her room. After an exhaustive search she confirmed that it was indeed empty other than the courtesy iron and ironing board. Just as she suspected, which only made sense, considering that she hadn't actually unpacked yet.

Someone left a book in the table beside her bed. She wondered for a moment just who this Gideon was and why he left his book behind. She opened the book to the first page. "In the beginning..." Well, duh, of course it's the beginning; it's the first page of the story. Sheesh, some writers.

Next to the odd clock on the table (no hands, just lighted numbers. She wondered how it did that) she found a small plastic device with odd symbols and numbers on it.

Hesitating she pressed the button marked 'On'.

The large plastic and glass box on the wall across from the bed suddenly lit up and started making sounds.

Luna bounced on the bed clapping in celebration for several moments. This must be the teevee thing daddy was always talking about since she had won that 'Cable News Network' (What ever that was.). She scrambled over to her trunk to get some parchment and a quill so as to record what she had discovered for an article for the Quibbler.

Experimenting found that pressing the up arrow labeled 'volume' caused the box to be louder and the down arrow made it quieter. The arrows labeled chan caused the box to show different things. How interesting.

"Ok Chan, show me what you have to say."

She pushed the arrows for several minutes before settling on a single presentation. The first thing she learned from this presentation is that the proper spelling for the box was TV, and evidently it had a land somewhere. The second thing she learned was that every half hour or so the presentation changed, and this change was accompanied by some very interesting music and shorter programs that seem to be dedicated to commerce..

It was half way through the second half hour of watching the Land of TV that a very interesting idea dawned on the young woman. The more she thought about it the more she liked the idea. She abandoned the roll of parchment that held the notes for her article and began another roll with notes for a far more interesting project.

It was all she could do to contain her evil cackles. So she didn't and cackled for the rest of the afternoon.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Part Two – Luna Junction.

The Howarts Express pulled slowly into Hogsmeade station. Harry was returning from the Loo where he had changed into his school robes to find Hermione and Ginny crowded around the carriage window in open mouthed amazement.

“What’s going on?” Harry asked.

“Has there ever been a water tower for the Express before?” Hermione asked

“A water tower?” Ron asked as he entered the compartment. “What’s a water tower?”

“It’s a structure that Muggle steam locomotives used to top off their water tanks.” Hermione said, still staring out the window. “But the Express has a magical engine, it doesn’t use water.”

“Well, I’ve never seen a water tower here.” Harry said peering out the window himself. “For that matter, I’ve never seen a water tower anywhere. What’s that on the tank?”

“It looks like a set of school robes.” Ron said joining Harry at the window.”

“It does.” Harry agreed, “Is that... Luna?”

“What?” Hermione demanded elbowing Ron out of the way. “She’s swimming in the water tank?”

“That girl can be strange sometimes.” Ginny said shaking her head.

“I don’t know why,” Hermione said sitting back down, “but that seems somehow familiar.”

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

Part Three – I dream of Luna.

Harry Potter climbed the stairs to his dorm room reflecting on what an ass the Gryffindor Quidditch Captain was this year.

“You’re looking rough mate.” Ron Weasley said from where he was dressing after his shower. Drills with the reserve Seeker run long?”

“Too right.” The raven haired wizard said, pulling his sweat soaked jersey over his head. “You know what a control freak perfectionist the Captain is this year.”

“Harry, mate,” Ron said quietly. “You’re the captain this year.”

“Yeah.” Harry agreed, trying to remove the singlet he wore under the jersey without raising his aching arms over his head. “What’s your point?”

That was when he saw it.

A garish glass bottle lay on his pillow. Harry picked the bottle up with his brow furrowed. "What's this?" he asked the room.

"Looks like a bottle." Ron said helpfully.

"Thanks Ron." Harry replied, sarcasm dripping from his voice. "I don't know how I'd get along without you."

"I've often thought that myself Mate." Ron said with a grin. "What's in it?"

Harry held the bottle to the light. "Seems to be empty."

"Nothing sadder than an empty bottle." Seamus opined.

"I'll take your word for that Seamus." Harry said turning the bottle over in his hands. "Wait, what's this?"

"What?" Neville asked giving up on his Herbology homework until the conversation died down. He had observed years before that the more of his roommates that joined into a conversation the less intelligent the conversation seemed to be.

"Writing molded into the bottle." Harry explained. He held the bottle up to the light again, this time reading the small writing. "Rub the bottle."

"What?" Ron asked. "That's an odd thing to say. Is that another of your Muggle sayings?"

"No Ron, it's what is written on the bottle. 'Rub the bottle.'"

"Oh." The youngest male Weasley said. "What are you going to do?"

"Well," Harry said pulling his handkerchief from his back pocket. "I guess I'm going to rub the bottle." The-Man-Who-Defeated-He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named said as he set to polishing the aforementioned bottle.

Smoke began pouring from the mouth of the container.

"Bloody hell!" Ron said as a haze filled the room. Haze of a consistency that the dorm hadn't seen since that horrible evening when the House Elves made the unwise decision to try a burrito night in the Great Hall. The effect of an even dozen of those aforementioned burritos on the digestive system of Ron Weasley was noted in amazing detail in not one but three medical journals. The result was that any further 'Burrito nights' were forbidden for all time, and Dean Thomas, the young man whose bed had been closest to Ron's that horrible night still burst into tears whenever he saw shredded cheddar cheese.

All light was lost to the dorm room for several moments until it cleared and revealed a scantily clad Luna Lovegood standing next to Harry. She wrapped herself around his left arm and rubbed her cheek against Harry's bare chest cooing.

"How can I serve you Master?"

“Luna?” Harry gasped.

“Bloody Hell!” his four dorm mates chorused, their eyes bulging upon seeing her outfit.

“Call me Jeanie, Master.” The blond purred.

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

Part Four – Leave it to Luna.

Three days later Harry returned to the dorm following a rather unpleasant day of school. The new Potions Mistress, while not as bad as Snape still hated everyone and everything about the school. The only real difference was with Professor Bastich, the Slytherins also ended up with detentions

Harry trudged up the stairs cursing for the thirtieth time this year that having to climb seven stories for to the dorm sucked, and that the 7th years should get the first level of dorm rooms, leaving the upper floors for the youngsters with all the energy.

He turned the knob on the door and opened it to find Colin and Dennis Creevey in the dorm, both dressed in Muggle jeans and T-shirts. Dennis was also wearing a Muggle baseball cap and Colin a blue cardigan with a large capital M on the lower left side. Each of the brothers held a roll of parchment unrolled in his hand.

“Gosh Wally,” Dennis said to his brother Colin. “Dad’s gonna be sore isn’t he Wally?”

“Well sure Beav.” Colin said reading from his parchment, which Harry suddenly realized was a script. “Dad always gets sore when we foul up.”

“You’re right Wally. We fouled up.”

“Boys.” Harry looked for the new speaker. “Go get washed up for dinner while I speak with your father.”

“Ok Mom.” Colin said guiding Dennis past Harry out of the 7th year dorm room.

“Gosh Wally,” Dennis said as the door closed, though the rest of his next line was lost when the door sealed.

Harry then found himself alone in the dorm with... Luna? The blond had her hair piled high on her head; she was wearing some sort of Muggle dress, high heels and a pearl necklace.

“Luna?” Harry asked, the memory of her insisting that he call her ‘Jeanie’ and her calling him ‘Master’ still fresh in his mind. “Luna, what’s going on?”

“June, Harry, call me June. How was your day?” she asked pressing a highball glass into his hand.

Harry examined the drink in his hand, wondering what the hell was going on. “All right I suppose. How about yours?”

“The boys have been up to their usual mischief today, so I’ve got a favor to ask.”

“What is it Luna?”

The blond witch came up close and kissed him on the cheek. “I was hoping tonight, you might find it in your heart to...”

“Yes Luna?” Harry was concerned about his friend.

“I was hoping that just this once, tonight, perhaps you could...”

“Yes?” he asked.

“Maybe tonight, you could be really hard on the Beaver.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

Part Five – Married with Luna.

After barely escaping from Luna with his virtue intact Harry had taken to avoiding situations where she might find him. Identification charms preceded him into any room he might want to enter, a liberal use of his invisibility cloak and Harry’s recruiting of Hermione to run interference for him had kept him Luna free for most of a week.

Harry had ducked out on the Hogsmeade weekend, because, well, frankly the sleepy little town was boring. Upon entering the common room Harry felt compelled to stop and hang his jacket in a small closet that he was absolutely positive had never been there before.

As soon as this odd task was completed he turned to find that the common room was emptied of its furnishings, excepting one sofa and two of the smaller plush chairs. Lying on the sofa in a pair of disturbing mix of skin tight leopard print spandex and polyester was Luna; her hair was piled high upon her head, and red, but not a red that occurred in nature, nor even the drunken imaginings of Nymphadora Tonks.

“Hello Harry.” Luna said as she popped what appeared to be a chocolate bon bon into her mouth. “Hard day?”

“Um, no, not really.”

“Don’t care. Let’s go out Harry. Take me to dinner, and then make love to me the way that only you can. I mean the full thirty seconds baby!”

“Luna,” Harry began.

“Peggy.” Luna corrected. “I’m Peggy today.”

Harry shrugged. “Ok, fine. Peggy, what the hell is going on?”

“I just thought that we might have a little fun before the kids get home Harry.”

“Kids?”

“Come on Harry, do me like only you can, then you can tell me about the time you scored four times in a single game.”

“What?”

“Harry?” Ron called as he entered the common room. “Are you sure you don’t want to...” He sputtered to a stop when he spotted Luna in her outfit.

“Hello Ronald,” the Ravenclaw sighed getting up off the sofa.

“Luna, how do you keep getting into our common room?” Ron asked.

“Oh, I just ask the nice lady on your portrait.” Luna smiled. “She always lets me in after I talk to her for a while. I’d best be going. Bye Harry!”

“Bye Luna.” Harry said as he watched the younger girl skip out of the common room. When the portrait closed with Luna on the outside, Harry turned to Ron. “Have you got the slightest why she’s doing this?”

“Don’t look at me.”

-----oooOOOooo-----

Part Six – Luna’s Heroes

“I’ve got somethin’ special fer yeh today.”

There was a low moan from the class. Even Harry joined in. He liked Hagrid, Liked him a whole lot, but if the half Giant described a creature as ‘something special’ that pretty much ensured that it would be huge, covered with poisonous spikes and would have a mouth full of teeth designed to eviscerate your average Hogwarts student.

Hagrid led the class back behind the Hogwarts stables to an outdoor enclosure. There in the middle of a corral like structure was a tall man like creature with huge batlike wings. Hagrid entered the corral and casually strolled up to the inhuman demon.

“This class is a Balrog. As yeh can see, they are taller than most people... not me o’ course. They have the ability to shroud ’emselves in fire, darkness, an’ shadow. They frequently appear armed with fiery whips o’ many thongs, an’ occasionally use long swords. Its said tha’ they cannot not be killed. Only dragons rival their capacity fer friskiness an’ tomfoolery.”

The class was absolutely silent while nervously edging away from the corral and the demon it contained.

“Oh come on,” Hagrid called. “Yeh can’t possibly be a feared o’ this cute little feller. I mean look at him!”

The demon manifested its firewhip and moved to attack the Care of Magical Creatures Professor. The half giant scooped the demon up from the ground and cuddled him like a small child. “Look at him. Ain’t he cute? Wantin’ to play he does.”

Placing the writhing demon back onto its feet, Hagrid made his way out of the corral. “Alright, who wants to be first to pet the Balrog? Harry?”

Harry backed away from the enclosure shaking his head as he moved away.

“Psst! Harry!”

Harry stopped his retreat and began to look about trying to figure out who had called his name. Not ten paces away was a tree stump that Harry was absolutely positive hadn’t been there a few moments before. The top of the stump opened on a hidden hinge and Luna looked out.

“Hello Harry,” the blonde Ravenclaw whispered from the faux stump. “Don’t be afraid of the Balrog... Compared with a Flaming Tree Tipper, a Balrog is nothing to worry about.”

That being said, Luna reached up and pulled the top of the faux stump closed.

Harry stared open mouthed for a moment before trading looks with Hagrid.

The Half Giant shook his head. “I saw nothing! I heard nothing!”

-----oooOOOooo-----

Part Seven – Hot and Spicy Luna.

Harry carefully worked the handle on the door to his dormitory, and then cautiously pushed the door open with his foot. No sign of any weirdness. Carefully he peeked into the room. No one was there. Finally.

Harry had remained at Hogwarts for the Christmas Break and was the only Gryffindor in residence, and despite that Luna had been ambushing him the entire week.

Harry entered the dorm and cast several locking charms on the door.

Safe at last. He grinned at himself. Voldemort had never had him this nervous.

Harry moved to his bed. The elves had delivered his clean laundry, and he spent a few moments putting everything away before he was interrupted by a knock at his door.

Harry froze. Terror gripping his soul for a moment... then he started laughing at himself again. “Who is it?”

“Pizza delivery!”

Harry knew that this was probably just Luna’s latest insanity. Pizza delivery. As if.... Still, he was

hungry, and he did like pizza.

Oh, what the hell.

Harry opened the door to find Luna. She was dressed in neon green hotpants and an international orange tank top. On top of her head was a ball cap bearing the legend 'Pizza'

"Hello Mister, Pizza delivery." The blonde said with a dazzling smile.

The scent of hot pizza assaulted Harry's nose. "How much?"

"Fifteen Dollars Mister."

Thinking that fifteen dollars seemed to be an odd thing for Luna to ask for Harry shook his head. "I haven't got any dollars, only Galleons."

Suddenly from everywhere around him a guitar riff sounded

BOW CHIKKA BOW BOW!

"No money? Well, maybe there's another way you can pay me..."

BOW CHIKKA BOW BOW!

Luna handed Harry the box with the pie inside, then took hold of the front of her tank top and pulled it over her head, then reached out and took hold of the front of Harry's shirt. "Come on Mister, you've got to pay me for the pizza."

BOW CHIKKA BOW BOW!

Some time later... Actually several times later Harry and Luna were cuddled together in post coital bliss, eating pizza that was something less than hot, but still pretty good, and Harry breached a subject that had been bothering him since the first of the year.

"Luna?"

"Yes Harry?" she asked cuddling.

"I was just wondering, if this is what you wanted why didn't you just deliver some pizza to start with?"

"Oh, I'd done quite a bit of research on Muggle romance, since you were Muggle raised. So I found out all about the land of TV, and have been working my way through the various mating rituals."

"So, everything you've been doing comes from a Television program?"

"Oh yes Harry, TV was just so educational. But none of the normal mating rituals seemed to get through to you. It's fortunate that I quit pushing the Chan button and pushed the PPV button instead. That taught me all about the Pizza Delivery ritual."

BOW CHIKKA BOW BOW!

“And the sound track?”

Luna shrugged, causing her breasts to rub against his chest. “It’s a catchy tune.”

Cast for the Round Robin: (At least the ones I remember)

Lightning Man: Harry Potter

The Librarian: Hermione Granger

Stacks the Girl Wonder: Susan Bones (The wonder is how she can stand up with Double Gs)

Viper: Daphne Greengrass

Not-Ron the Weasel Boy: Ron Weasley

The Ferret: Draco Malfoy

Ermine: Astoria Malfoy

Mink: Narcissa Malfoy

Captain Fire Crotch: Ginny Weasley

Attack of the Lightning Man

A hero needs a theme song, so here's a little ditty I stole from Meet the Mummy's classic "Attack of the Wiener man" which when I think about it, would fit unmodified....

He's coming for ya

He's gonna get ya

Attack of the Lightning-Man

He's coming for ya

He's gonna get ya

Attack of the Lightning-Man

Verse 1:

Late at night, when the pub's are closing

The criminals take their toll and

The ladies need their favorite defender

(A tasty treat of Sausage Splendor)

Big man behind the mask

The Aurors all need him, 'cause he's on task

The smell of fear and a big right cross

(Mild mannered Harry's got the perfect cover)

He's coming for ya

He's gonna get ya

Attack of the Lightning-Man

He's coming for ya

He's gonna get ya

Attack of the Lightning-Man

Verse 2:

He fighting crime out in the street

All the honeys want to sample the meat

He can't help but relish the fact

(The Foot Long Keeps them coming back)

When the Ferret's feeling safe and cool

That's when the Lightning-Man pummels the fool

Mm-m-Mm-M-M-M-M-M

(Mink and Ermine can't scream when their mouths are full)

He's coming for ya

He's gonna get ya

Attack of the Lightning-Man

He's coming for ya

He's gonna get ya

Attack of the Lightning-Man

Every hero needs an origin, here's Lightning Man's

Created: Lightning-Man.

The explosion in front of Gringotts immediately had everyone running, at least those not rendered immune to such things by the Voldemort wars. Hermione Granger's wand was suddenly in her hand as she and her companions, Susan Bones, Ron and Ginny Weasley, rushed toward the sudden detonation to see if they could render assistance. (or in Ron's case to see if there was anything edible)

They found an amazing sight upon arriving at the bank. Seven wizards, all wearing the black cloaks and white masks of the departed and largely unlamented Dark Lord Voldemort, stood in a semi-circle around a single man who stood between them and the shattered entrance to the Wizards Bank.

Hermione raised her wand to start hexing the unrepentant Death Eaters when she took in just who it was holding them off... And what he was wearing?

"What the hell?" she asked the air around her. The wizard facing off against the Death Eaters was none other than Harry Potter. Her friend was dressed in a form fitting unitard in Gryffindor red with gold trim and cape. Emblazoned across his chest was a pentagram with the letters 'LM' centered across it. His head was bare, except for his glasses and a slim domino mask he wore under them.

"Surrender Evil doers!" Harry's amplified voice echoed throughout the alley. "For you face Lightning-Man, I am your bane, defy me at your risk!"

"Oh, my!" a female voice exclaimed to Hermione's left, "Who knew what he had under those robes..." This drew the female member of the Golden Trio's attention away from the rather form fitting portion of the costume Harry was wearing (especially form fitting just below the waist) to the speaker. Daphne Greengrass was staring at Harry's new costume, with her eyes paying just a little too much attention to the portion of said costume just a bit below the beltline in Hermione's opinion.

In the time since the fall of Voldemort and leaving Hogwarts, Daphne had made a name for herself as an heiress and Party girl about town.

Any further exposition on the Greengrass girl was driven from Hermione's mind when the Death

Eaters all attempted to raise their wands and attack the badly disguised Harry. The man in the outrageous costume just laughed when the hexes started flying, then raised his hands. The Death Eaters fell to the ground in agony from the lightning bolts that flew from Harry's outstretched hands.

"I knew we shouldn't have taken him to that movie." Susan hissed in Hermione's ear.

"We never could have predicted he would do this after seeing Return of the Jedi Sue." Hermione whispered back. "Have you seen how Daphne is looking at Harry?"

"Daphne? Have you seen the Widow Malfoy and Daphne's sister?" Sue asked pointing at the two blondes standing across the street.

Hermione's eyes narrowed when she saw Narcissa Malfoy absently stroking her breasts through the Décolletage of her designer robes. She still remembered when the evil woman spent hours interrogating Harry during the war in that horrible private chamber on the Malfoy estate. The only reason she wasn't in Azkaban now was that Harry refused to press charges afterward. Indeed he seemed to get a mysterious smile whenever he was asked about the event.

At long last a single Auror ran up to the scene.

"Ah, Auror!" Harry's amplified voice boomed out. "Just in time." Harry put an arm around the shoulders of the peacekeeper. "You know Auror, they say that confession is good for the soul..." The man in red and gold gestured toward the seven fallen Death Eaters. "After you dose them with Veritaserum, I'd listen to these men."

Turning on the spot Harry vanished in a soft crack of apparition.

The gathered crowd was silent for several seconds before Ron Weasley's voice broke the quiet.

"Who was that Masked Man?"

"Ron," Hermione said patiently, "that was Harry."

"Harry? Don't be silly Hermione." Ginny Weasley said, "He was wearing a mask. Harry doesn't wear a mask."

"Yeah Herms," Ron agreed, "I don't know where you come up with this stuff."

- I don't know why I do this to the Weasleys, I really don't.

The Weasley Chronicles:

All was ready. Arthur Weasley said to himself as he regarded the ultimate fusion of magical and Muggle crime fighting technology. It had taken the appearance of the mysterious hero Lightning-Man to give Arthur's imagination the push it needed to conceive of this marvel of modern magic and technology, but now he was ready.

He sealed the suit of armor that he had so painstakingly modified. Servo motors hummed as he began the startup sequences. Rune clusters glowed as they generated the power needed to push other clusters into form impenetrable shields. With a thought the twenty wands of his Gatling gauntlet began to spin around the Armor's bracer assembly, giving him the casting power of a score of mages.

He was ready, evil doers everywhere would shudder at the mere mention of the name Armour Mage! He took a step, and another, and another. And then pitched forward onto his face as the suit of armor lost all power.

As he lay there trapped within his creation because he was unable to override the electrical locks, Arthur reflected that he probably should have used a longer electrical lead. The six feet of wire that connected him to his plug didn't really seem to be enough.

WWW

Bill sighed.

Fleur was gone, and likely as not, never coming back.

It had been going so well too. Then one innocent suggestion of a threesome with her hot hot hottie Veela Mum, and Fleur stormed out in a huff, with streams of French invectives ringing in his ears.

How was Bill supposed to know that she would react like that? What if she had only been waiting for him to ask? If he hadn't asked he never would have known, and might have missed out on a good thing.

Oh, well. Bill picked up the Daily Profit, and examined the photo on the front page. 'Lightning-Man' eh? Looked like a bit of a poof to the eldest of the Weasley Brothers, though the face was familiar... but no. Bill didn't know anyone who wore a mask.

Bill stood and pulled on his trademark Dragon Skin jacket, making sure that his pony tail wasn't caught in the collar. Look out ladies: Captain Cool is on the prowl.

WWW

Charlie Weasley wiped at the mirror to clear away the fog on its surface so that he might shave. The news from home was, well, weird, but at least it was goofy weird and not deadly dangerous weird.

He lathered his face and began the first cut with the razor, while reflecting on the news of the costumed idiot dedicated to 'fighting crime, and the other costumed idiots his being there seemed to spawn. Weirdo adrenalin junkies who lacked the stones to take on a really dangerous job like his.

Charlie was just glad that his family was well and truly out of it for this bit of silliness. After everything that happened with that Dark Lord dink and the family's association with Harry

Potter it had been close for a while. And then when Harry and Ginny had dated for a month or so...

Charlie just thanked Merlin that all of that was over. He inspected his face in the mirror. Nice. With practiced ease Charlie splashed on a healthy dose of the Muggle cologne his father had given him at Christmas the previous year, dimly wondering just what 'Hai Karate' might mean.

Whatever, his girl liked it. There was something about the scent that drove her wild.

Charlie pulled on his leather singlet, admiring how the garment exposed his muscular arms. Leather Trousers and boot completed his outfit, and he set out to find his love.

He set out across the Dragon preserve in search of Kiska. He was two thirds of the way to the breeding pens before he spotted her where she was lounging with a drink as she watched a trio of yearling drakes playing aerial tag against the sapphire blue Romanian sky.

Carefully he approached her in silence. This was a game they started when the pair had met three years before. The first to spot the other always attempted to sneak up on the other. Charlie quickly covered her eyes with his hands, only to have her press back against him. Evidently he hadn't been as stealthy as he had hoped.

Kiska turned to face Charlie, and took in his scent. The cologne had her nipping at his arm as her excitement grew. The pair gazed deeply into each other's eyes and no words were necessary.

For only a second Charlie's thoughts drifted back to the idiot who dressed up in his underwear to fight crime in Diagon Alley.

Idiot, he thought. If that fool wanted excitement, he should try to live a day in Charlie Weasley's shoes.

Charlie Weasley, the man famous worldwide undid his belt and allowed his trousers to pool at his boots.

No matter where you went in the world you would find Dragon Keepers congregating, glasses would be raised to Charlie Weasley, the only man to ever stump break a dragon.

Kiska looked back at him over her shoulder with those soft brown eyes and lifted her tail.

WWW

So, Percy Weasley thought as he read through the newspaper. It finally happened.

There was finally a second superhero fighting for what was right, for what was good and for what was British in Magical Britain.

For so long Percy had been alone in his fight. For so long he had feared that it would always be just him. Now that there was another, perhaps this help would allow Percy the time it would take to regain the love of Penny... She had never understood that Percy was driven to live this double life. She had always been jealous of Percy's mistress, the woman called Justice.

But Percy was honest enough with himself to know that there was more than enough wrong with the world to occupy even two such as himself twenty four hours a day. Still, it was good to know one wasn't quite so alone in the fight.

His attention once again returned to the parchment work on his desk, his 20 minute lunch hour over for another day. Wait? What's this? Someone was attempting to roll back the progress that Percy had made in pursuit of uniform cauldron bottoms over the last five years?

This Lightning-man character could keep his showy battle against crime in the streets; this was a job for Magical Britain's first Super Hero. This was a job for Captain Conformity!

WWW

"Poor Harry."

"Right you are George. The poor boy needs to learn something about subtlety." Fred agreed.

"Imagine that he actually thought that that silly costume would fool us." George said shaking his head in amusement.

"As if we couldn't see through his disguise."

"Not after Hermione pointed out that Lightning-Man was Harry five or six times." George agreed.

"Or that time we spotted him changing behind our shop and took pictures." Fred laughed.

"And when we found the Lightning-Man costume in Harry's laundry." George giggled.

"And there were 'Property of Harry Potter' tags sown into each piece of the outfit." Fred summarized.

When we considered all those subtle hints, it was pretty obvious that Harry and Lightning-Man are more than 'just good friends'" George said making air quotes with his fingers.

We'll keep his secret." Fred swore.

"Right! Harry's a big boy and his sex life is his own business."

Fred smacked George on the back of his head. "Not that secret you wally!"

George rubbed the back of his head while staring suspiciously at his traitorous brother. "Right, the other thing." The prettier of the two identical twins suddenly had a revelation. "We must join Harry in his fight!"

"What?" the smarter twin asked, wondering if he would be looking back on this moment as the moment the plan suddenly started to go seriously wrong.

“We,” George said, starting to monologue shamelessly “must join Harry in his fight for Truth, Justice, and the Magical British Way!”

“You want us to ignore things and hope they go away?” Fred asked confused.

“No you fool!” George said delivering a dope slap of his own. “We must become Super Heroes!”

WWW

It was a normal quiet day in the Alley, since the fall of Voldemort and his Death Eaters, and the rise of the Hero known as Lightning-Man, peace, serenity and most important profitable commerce had returned to Diagon Alley with a vengeance.

Of course where ever there are people with money to spend, there are those who would separate the haves from their money, by force if necessary.

Dennis Thibold had been a minor Death Eater. Very minor. In fact he had been one of forty seven accountants in the Dark Lord’s employ, charged with keeping the Dark Books for the Dark organization.

Thibold had been the second chair accountant on the Dark Payroll, ensuring that the Dark Paycheques were issued on time, with the Dark withholdings withheld. (Not even a dark organization went against the Inland Revenue. Voldemort might have been evil, but he wasn’t stupid)

Voldemort hadn’t even bothered to mark his accountants, so the guys in the pool would take turns drawing the accounting Dark Mark on each other’s arms using a Muggle felt tip pen that smelled pretty bad at first, but much better later.

Once the Dark Lord fell to that Prat Potter, all the guys in the Accounting squad waited patiently for the Aurors to show up and take them away.

After three months of waiting, the forty seven dark accountants all looked at each other and shrugged while muttering about people having no understanding of how important it was to balance the books. They rose as one and presented themselves to the local Auror’s station for arrest.

Only to be told that they probably ought to go home, as they weren’t wanted for any crimes, and frankly they weren’t interesting enough for anyone to bother looking into.

That, and the fact that Dennis insisted on putting ‘Dark accountant responsible for the payroll of a 2000 person dark organization’ on his curriculum vitae caused Dennis to be fairly unemployable.

This is why Dennis was on the first day of his newest career choice, that being a cutpurse in Diagon Alley. In fact Dennis had just made his first professional theft, having cut the coin purse from the belt of the well dressed Wizard when his victim hollered “Stop Thief!”

And Dennis Thibold's day suddenly took a turn for the worse.

"Halt Citizen!" the figure that suddenly appeared in front of the fleeing cutpurse said in a booming baritone.

Dennis stopped to look at the man who had stopped him. He appeared to be covered head to toe in Muggle aluminum foil, leaving only his face bare to the world.

"Yes Evil-Doer!" the man boomed in his oddly amplified voice. "You face Professor Chaos! I and my sidekick Binky the Wonder Clone have sworn to keep Diagon Alley safe, free, happy, and several other unquantifiable conditions."

"Wait a minute!" To Dennis' amazement another man dressed identically to the man who identified himself as 'Professor Chaos'. "What do you mean calling me the clone? I'm not the clone, you're the clone."

"Nonsense Binky!" the original loon in foil boomed. "I am Professor Chaos, so you are Binky. The clone." He said slowly as if to a child.

"You're the clone!" 'Binky' said pushing 'Chaos' again.

"Bullshit!" Chaos countered intelligently. "You're the clone!"

"You take that back. You're the clone!"

For the next twenty minutes the two foil avengers rolled around on the cobbles of Diagon Alley doing each other damage.

Dennis found the man he had stolen the purse from and returned it. He then left the Alley and never returned. It had gotten entirely too weird.

This was the first, last and only time Fred and George attempted to become Super Heroes. After that day they contented themselves with being the Weaponers of Super Villains, who always passed the shutdown codes for their weapons to Harry Potter.

Harry never understood why they were giving him the pieces of paper and out of concern and a general distrust of anything the Twins might hand him always threw the shutdown codes away.

- Heroines need origins too...

The Secret Origin of The Librarian and Stacks the Wonder Girl:

"Hermione?" Susan asked.

"Oooh. That man!" the bushy haired witch ranted.

Susan entered her friend's room to find her surrounded by newspapers whose headlines told the

story of Harry's alter ego's laying waste to crime and criminals everywhere. "What has Harry done this time?"

"He's still running around in that stupid costume, and now he's sucked Hedwig into it. Look at this!"

Susan took the offered photograph from her friend. "He's got Hedwig wearing a mask? How do you get an owl to wear a mask?"

"That's not Hedwig, that's Thunder-Owl if you listen to Ron. And still no one believes me when I point out that Harry is Lightning-Man."

"Well, the Weasleys don't believe you. I think pretty much everyone with the slightest bit of common sense has made the connection. His disguise isn't very good." The pretty redhead pointed out.

"And worse yet, now Daphne and Fleur have gotten into the act. There is suddenly a pair of costumed jewel thieves who is constantly being thwarted by Lightning-Man. Those sluts are just trying to get their claws into Harry!"

"Those skanky bitches!" Susan exclaimed as she examined the newspaper photo of the leather clad criminal. "We can't let them do that to our Harry!"

"Our Harry?"

"Oh," Susan blushed. "Was that out loud?"

Hermione raised an eyebrow.

"Ok, so I think he's hot. But you're his best friend, that means you get first shot." The redhead smile. "And since you're my best friend, I was sure you'd be willing to share."

It was Hermione's turn to blush. "I suppose I could see my way clear for that... But what do you propose we do? Dress up like loons in outlandish costumes and commit crimes to that Harry will come to fight us, and we can capture him in inescapable death traps and have our way with him?"

Susan gave Hermione an odd look, noticing how her rate of breathing had increased, her eyes dilated and a perky set of nipples seemed to be attempting to push their way out of Hermione's blouse. That was hot as hell. "You seem to have put quite a bit of thought into this idea already."

"Well, I review hypothetical situations all the time, you see..."

"Yeah, right." Susan grabbed a sheet of paper and a pen off Hermione's desk and sat down on one of the room's comfy chairs. "I was thinking about us going out as Heroes, actually," she began to sketch out some ideas. "We could use that subterranean research library the 7th year Ravensclaws built for you as repayment for all that NEWT review you gave them back in our fourth year as our headquarters. "

“Headquarters?”

“The Librarian will need a safe refuge from where to plan her defense of ancient artifacts.” Susan said matter of factly.

“The Librarian?” Hermione asked. “That’s a dumb name for a villain.”

“Not a villain,” Susan said shaking her head. “A Heroine. THE Heroine. Heroes may dally with the bad girls, but they stay with the good girls... as long as the good girls know when to be naughty.” The redhead passed over a sheet of the parchment she had been doodling on. “Here’s what I was thinking of for your costume.”

Hermione brought her hand to her mouth. “Oh my.” She looked up to Susan’s eyes. “And this other figure?”

“Oh, that’s your loyal side kick, Stacks.”

“Stacks?”

“Yep. Keeping with the Librarian motif.” Susan explained patiently.

“Hmm. This drawing has me wearing glasses. I don’t wear glasses.”

Susan shrugged. “It’s part of your disguise. What do the Weasleys and the other dullards all say to you when you try and tell them that Harry is Lightning-Man? ‘Lightning-Man wears a mask, and Harry never wears a mask, so he can’t be Lightning-Man’ right? Well, Hermione Granger never wears glasses, so...”

“So she can’t be the Librarian.” Hermione concluded. “That would probably work, and that makes me more than a little sad.”

“I haven’t figured out what kind of mask I should wear... A simple domino mask like Harry’s or maybe a full faced helmet.”

“You won’t need a mask.” Hermione said absently.

“What do you mean?”

“Face it Sue,” Hermione grinned. “If you’re wearing something like the outfit you’ve drawn here, with those Double Gs of yours out on display, no one will ever be looking at your face. Hell, any male villains who show up probably won’t be able to run away.”

- This was my original offering to the Round Robin

In a quiet suburb of a major metropolitan city was a house. It wasn’t just any house; it was the home of not one but two British dentists. This information alone was enough to cause most right thinking people to hesitate before coming onto their block.

But as is often the case, the true danger of this upscale home was hidden, for one of the residents of the house was a witch.

And not just for three to five days each month either. She was a full fledged, wand waving, pointy hat wearing (though in all truth, only on formal occasions), having a cat familiar, broom riding (only when no other option was available, given her fear of heights), certified fully qualified by the Ministry of Magic, witch.

The young woman in question was in her bedroom in her parent's home, working. The only sound in the room was the scratch of quill on parchment and the contented purr of her familiar, Crookshanks. She was composing a report on a rather esoteric branch of magical thought, her mind was a raging torrent, flooded with rivulets of thought cascading into a waterfall of creative alternatives, when she suddenly stopped, her quill poised a fraction of an inch above the parchment.

"Harry senses... tingling." She said to the room. Crookshanks looked up from his morning grooming to regard his principle provider of tasty things and tummy rubs in a manner which said 'yeah, so?'

"He's being... stupid." Her chestnut brown eyes narrowed. "He's being stupid with that skank Daphne! To the Research Library!"

Carefully placing her quill into its storage holder, she stood from her desk, moving quickly to the bust of Madeleine L'Engle, the librarian and Writer in Residence of New York City's the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. With a deft move, she tilted back the head of her favorite author, and pressed the hidden button that was revealed. Immediately two of the room's massive bookshelves silently moved out from the wall, and then split apart revealing a hidden chamber containing a fireman's pole labeled with a sign inscribed 'Hermione'.

The young witch crossed the room to the pole, and then paused. "Duty calls Crookshanks! Hold down the fort!" With that she leapt to the pole and slid downward, disappearing from sight.

Crookshanks watched with supreme disinterest as the book shelves returned to their original configuration and yawned. He idly wondered if this meant that lunch would be late. Horrible ideas like that required much reflection and thought. He resolved to sleep on it.

Hermione slid down the pole, anticipating the last 900 feet of the ride, where the pole was no longer smooth and carefully lubricated, rather it was ridged and very carefully lubricated, designed in such a way as to ensure... that she paid an inordinate amount of attention to holding on tight.

Arriving at the bottom of the pole (that she had nick named 'Harry' for no particular reason) out of breath, she held herself upright by clinging to that magnificent vertical structural member panting slightly, her legs trembling as they became used to bearing her weight once more. She released the pole, pausing only to lightly kiss it.

The charms at the half way point of her slide down had transfigured her street clothing into the uniform of The Librarian, a starched white blouse, neatly tucked into dark black pleated skirt, black stocking and sensible shoes. Her hair was neatly styled into a bun, a black velvet cameo choker at her throat, and to protect her secret identity (from wizards anyway), a pair of gold rimmed glasses framed her eyes.

“Good ride Librarian?” a happy voice spoke breaking the silence of her inner sanctum, the Research Library.

“Indeed it was Stacks.” The Librarian said having caught her breath and smiled at her Sidekick Stacks who in real life was Hermione’s youthful ward Susan Bones.

None of that was actually true. Susan wasn’t really Hermione’s ward. Following the death of Susan’s Aunt Amelia, the young redhead had bounced around looking for a place to call home. It was an invitation to visit the Granger home over one summer that had cemented their relationship. As Susan told the story, she simply never left.

As far as youthful goes, Susan was all of seven days younger than Hermione. And Susan was not Hermione’s sidekick. They’re relationship was best explained as ‘Co-Equal Partners joined together to prevent any of those horny money grubbing skanks from getting their claws into Harry’.

After seeing what the women of the Magical world were doing to try and capture Harry’s heart in the post-Voldemort world by joining in on his somewhat insane quest to be a superhero, Hermione and Susan had established their own secret identities in an attempt to show him how silly he was being.

Susan’s code name ‘Stacks’... well that one was true, because the buxom Redhead was... well, stacked.

“I know I like it.” Stacks said, referring to the pole ride. “I do it six or seven times a day.”

“Yes, well...” a flustered Librarian said not willing to admit to her seven times a day average. “What are the Harry detectors telling us?”

“21.59 centimeters erect.”

“No, I mean... Really?”

“Oh yeah.” The redhead said wistfully.

“Ok, saving that bit of vital information for later, I meant WHERE is he?”

Stacks manipulated a few controls on the Library Computer. “He’s in the Viper’s Hide Out #6. The Passion Pit.”

“Damn.” The Librarian swore. “We’ve got to rescue him from himself. To the Bookmobile!”

- One of the running gags of the Round Robin was that Draco is a furry (if you don't know what that is, consider yourself lucky) and has dragged his wife and mother into this as unwilling sidekicks. Despite of this, he develops a most unhealthy attraction to the Librarian. This was my explanation for their first meeting.

How the Librarian met the Ferret.

“Take that!” the Information Scientist of Justice said as she landed a round house kick to the face of the idiot in the ferret costume. “And that!” she continued as she landed an uppercut to his groin. “And one of these!” she called as she dropped a flying elbow on the chest of the now prone evil doer.

Said prone evil doer gazed upwards at the senior member of the Dewey Decimal Duo in a dazed manner taking in the wild hair that had somehow escaped from its restraining bun, the strong legs extending from the short pleated skirt, the white knickers darkened with just a hint of moisture, the sensible shoes currently pummeling his rib cage.

He saw all the signs of another furry. It was so obvious. This was just her way of flirting. His heart was captured. His wife was nothing compared to this Goddess of Pain, the Empress of Pummeling, this Hot Momma of Testicle Crushing. To hell with that cold fish of a wife he and ended up saddled with, this was his new dream girl, who ever she was.

Of course all that might also just be his brand new concussion talking.

It was obvious what had happened. The Ferret had been researching his next attack, pretending to read a book all the while making notes of the defenses of the building when out of nowhere the Researcher of Righteousness had attacked bringing his nefarious plotting to an end. Obviously the Maid of Meticulous Note Taking had sussed out his evil preparation and taken steps to prevent him from succeeding.

The Librarian was furious. She had spotted the idiot in the white costume and suspected that he was one of the morons that Harry was always playing with, and as a consequence not worthy of her attention.

Then the idiot committed the most heinous of crimes, one that made her blood boil. Such an evil must be punished. So punished he was, in a beating he was unlikely to ever forget.

It would be a very long time before he dog-eared another page in a book!

- This one took on a darker tone than the rest of the round robin and doesn't really fit. But I still thought it was a good rip off of someone else's professional work.

Lightning-Man cautiously eased into the hallway outside the chamber where the meeting was to take place. He was a bit ashamed of himself for allowing the various women who had taken to dressing up in odd costumes lately to distract him from the reason he had put this silly costume on in the first place. He had set out to help people, not get laid.

Though, getting laid by a small crowd of the hottest witches on the planet wasn't all that bad.

Harry had heard rumors of a meeting of those Death Eaters who were still free. No more than twenty of them. His lips twitched in a barely restrained smirk. They would likely shit themselves as soon as they saw him.

Outside the door the Caped Carnalologist gathered his magic and apparated to the center of the next room with a thunderous clap.

And the Hero appeared in the middle of the carnage rarely seen outside of a bargain slaughter house. There were portions of the bodies of Death Eaters all around him, blood puddled on the floor, human viscera spread out over the entire room, and the room was filled with the smell of death. Seemingly the only part of the room not covered in gore was a raised platform against the far wall. The platform was shrouded somehow, Harry couldn't quite make out what was on it.

"It's about time you showed up." A deep gravelly voice came from behind the hero.

Lightning-Man whirled about and found himself staring at a man clad head to toe in black leather body armor, with only his blue eyes and mouth to jaw line exposed to the air.

"Who are you?" The living legend asked. "Did you do this?"

"I am pain. I am vengeance. I am the night." The unknown man answered, "And yes, I did this."

"Why?"

"Because you won't. You capture them and turn them over to the ministry, which allows them to buy their freedom again, and they kill again."

Lightning-Man's mouth set into a firm line. "I'll be arresting you then."

"No, Potter, you won't."

In spite of himself, Lightning-Man blanched. His disguise had never been very good, but so far no wizard had penetrated it. "Who?" he asked weakly.

"Don't even try with me Harry; I know all your weaknesses. You will never turn me over to the Ministry because if you do, someone will die."

"Is that a threat?"

"Not at all." The man in black answered. "It is a statement of fact. I've long known that sooner or later I would have to deal with you. I knew I couldn't match you for power, so I had to prepare a method of neutralizing you. That made your 'People saving thing' my best target. Somewhere in

the world there is an innocent with a bomb secreted upon his or her body. That bomb is triggered by your magical signature. You cast a single spell, any spell at all on me and the innocent dies messily. Even touching me will detonate the bomb.”

Lightning-Man’s passive legilimency told him that the stranger in body armor was telling the truth. “Why are you doing this?”

“As I said, because you won’t. Because you believe yourself too good to do what must be done. The surviving Death Eaters were not afraid of you; rather they respected your power. They are terrified of me. Respect wouldn’t have stopped them from following the next self appointed Dark Lord that comes along, fear however will. After all, Death Eaters and their ilk are a superstitious and cowardly lot. I stand between the innocents and those who would do them harm.” He gestured toward the shrouded raised platform. “Four Muggle girls are in that box. The youngest is thirteen, the oldest seventeen. They were intended to be party favors for these bastards. Not any longer.”

“But...” Lightning-Man said before he was interrupted by the soft chime of a warning ward.

“Excuse me a moment Harry.” The man in armor asked before fading into the shadows. There was a crack of apparition as five black robe clad wizards suddenly appeared. The newcomers all seemed to be shocked by the carnage that surrounded them.

Harry stepped back into the shadows that the wizard in black had used. He honestly didn’t know which to help, and he didn’t know if his casting anything wouldn’t trigger the bomb that the gravel voiced man had spoke of.

“You have one chance,” The gravelly voice rang out from everywhere in the chamber. “If you want to live, drop your wands and surrender.”

As one the five Death Eaters raised their wands, searching for a target.

“Thank you. Thank you so very much.” The voice said as the wizard in body armor appeared in the midst of the Death Eaters. A glittering silver sword appeared in the armored wizard’s right hand and slashed out, slicing open the belly of the closest Death Eater. Harry’s eyes widened as he recognized the Sword of Gryffindor in the other man’s hand.

A small... something impacted on the head of one of the outermost Death Eaters, and the man’s head seemed to explode. While Harry attempted to digest the impossibility of this situation the wizard with the Sword of Gryffindor did a dance of death within the circle of the surviving Death Eaters. Two more fell to his sword, while the third’s neck suddenly snapped with no evident cause. Harry blinked. What kind of magic was he using? And how did the man get the Sword of Gryffindor?

The man in black cleaned the Sword on the robes of one of the fallen Death Eaters. “You knew what they were, and you didn’t move. Oh, I know you’re justifying it to yourself because of the bomb, but even if I didn’t have one, you wouldn’t have done anything until they did something first. If things are going to be better, if children are going to be allowed to grow up with their parents, then someone has to be proactive instead of reactive.”

The man released the Sword of Gryffindor and it vanished, presumably returning to where ever it had come from in the first place. "That someone isn't going to be you. So it's going to be me Harry." The man reached into a pouch on his belt and withdrew a device that Harry couldn't identify. "Don't follow me Harry. I don't want to have to hurt you, but I will. Go back to your games with the girls; leave the evil bastards of the world to me." The man paused for a moment, and then began again. "If your games hurt Hermione or Susan, I'll kill you. Just remember that."

He pointed his device toward the skylight above their heads; a line shot out of it and flew upward. "Kung Fu Toad!" he called, "Time to go."

The small grey something Harry had seen before landed on the armored Wizard's shoulder and the pair flew upward, through the skylight and vanished from view.

Harry was struck dumb trying to figure out what was the most disturbing, the sociopathic Wizard in body armor killing Death Eaters like a Muggle, or a man-killing toad wearing a mask.

The Curse Before Christmas

The Dark Lord Voldemort felt the beginnings of a migraine starting to form behind his eyes as he asked himself just why he had gotten into the Dark Lord business in the first place. He had been a Prefect, and then Head Boy, even that cushy place keeping job for Borgin's hadn't been bad. But no, he had to try for absolute power.

"Father Christmas?" Voldemort asked again, pinching his face where his nose would have been if he still had one. "You're telling me that you have killed Father Christmas? On Christmas Eve?"

"Yes my Lord. As our gift to you, we captured the Muggle loving fool before he had started his rounds. He refused to swear allegiance to you, so I punished him." Bellatrix Lestrange explained happily. "His screams were exquisite."

"And you have no idea what you've done?" The Dark Lord asked. "You truly have no idea what you've done?"

There was a pop and a strangely dressed being appeared at Voldemort's left elbow. "Of course she doesn't. Few in the magical world know their history in any detail at all."

A feeling of dread filled what remained of Voldemort's soul. While his assembled Death Eaters whipped out their wands almost as one and brandished them at the intruder, the Dark Lord himself simply raised a hand to calm them. "And you are the Keeper of the Curse?"

"I am. I was beginning to wonder if anyone would ever be stupid enough to violate the terms of the Curse of Christmas." The small man said, smiling widely.

"I would like to make the point that I knew nothing of the plot against Father Christmas, and I most specifically did not participate in the attack on him," history's most feared Dark Wizard said hopefully.

"All very true." The Keeper of the Curse of Christmas responded. "However it was done in your name by your minions. As far as the magic of the Curse is concerned, it is as if you tortured your predecessor to death yourself."

"Of course," Voldemort sighed. "I don't know why I expected anything else." The Dark Lord wiped out his wand. "Aveda Kedavra!" he spat, pointing his wand at the Keeper of the Christmas Curse.

His hand burst into flame. Voldemort experienced several minutes of agony until he managed to douse the flames and Bellatrix cast anumbing charm on his damaged wand hand.

The Keeper simply raised an eyebrow. "Surely you didn't think that would work did you?"

"No," Voldemort admitted through clenched teeth, "but I had to try."

"With the death of your predecessor, his minions have also passed on to their rewards. Fortunately for you, you already have an ample number of minions and followers, so you won't be recruiting from scratch." The Keeper of the Curse made an idle gesture and the assembled Death Eaters found that their dark robes were suddenly transformed into green woolen outfits trimmed in white satin.

"Your minions will find the accommodations a bit cramped, the magic of the Curse of Christmas will of course modify them to fit in, as it were, but that will take decades. For now they will simply have to learn to be giant elves."

"Master!" Lucius Malfoy pleaded, his voice now high pitched as if he had been huffing helium. "You are the greatest wizard to ever live; surely you can protect us from this."

The Keeper of the Curse examined the platinum blonde giant elf closely, and then referred to a list on the clip board he carried. "Ah yes, Lucius Malfoy, definitely naughty. Thank you for reminding me." The small man gestured once again. Suddenly Narcissa and Draco were standing

on either side of Lucius, clad in identical garb and looking about in amazement. Throughout Voldemort's throne room, all of the families of the various Death Eaters appeared. "All of your families join you in your servitude to the Curse of Christmas, because after all," the Keeper smiled a most evil smile, "Christmas is all about family."

"The Dark Lord will punish you for this!" Draco Malfoy squeaked the pitch of his voice such that it caused dogs to howl in pain for miles around.

"Of course he will Draco Malfoy." The small man sighed. "Of course there is a special punishment for the one who actually slew Father Christmas."

Bellatrix, still clad in her traditional black robes backed away from this man who could so casually injure her Master.

"Your Lord will take on the brunt of the punishment required of the Curse of Christmas, but you are not going to avoid your own punishment Bellatrix Black Lestrage." The man gestured and the dark witch's robes transformed into a heavy dark green woolen dress, complete with red petticoats. "As your master is now Father Christmas, you are now Mother Christmas, with a special duty to the children of the world, be they magical or not!"

"NO!" she shrieked, before she turned to her Master.

Voldemort's transformation was complete, his robes of red and white, a white beard sprouted from his face, a nose grew and his eyes faded from red to a sparkling blue.

"No, no, no," Voldemort cried in disbelief that such a fate could befall him, "no, no, ho, ho, Ho Ho Ho!" he began laughing as his belly shook like a bowl full of jelly.

""Ho ho ho

Ho ho ho

We are Santa's elves." The assembled Giant Elves/Death Eaters sang to the music that was suddenly everywhere.

**"We are Santa's elves
Filling Santa's shelves
With a toy
For each girl and boy.**

Oh, we are Santa's elves "

Lucius and Draco Malfoy were wide eyed in panic as they drew breath for the next verse.

**"We work hard all day
But our work is play
Dolls we try out
See if they cry out.**

We are Santa's elves"

Standing between their respective fathers Greg Goyle and Vincent Crabbe were actually happy. A job they could understand, songs to sing, AND spiffy hats to wear? Their lives were looking up.

**"We've a special job each year
We don't like to brag
Christmas Eve we always
Fill Santa's bag."**

The full extent of the Christmas Curse was finally dawning on Voldemort, and the horror of what was to become of his life filled his imagination.

**"Santa knows who's good
Do the things you should
And we bet you
He won't forget you. "**

For Bellatrix's part she realized that while she would never again be in a position to cleanse the

What was odd was the unexplained gifts that each person found under the tree. Hermione received a Charm bracelet featuring twelve charms that each played one of her favorite memories when she held the individual charm between her thumb and forefinger.

Martin Granger received an antique electric train set, exactly the gift he had lusted after but hadn't received when he was ten years old.

Margot Granger received a first edition copy of Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn. She looked about the room trying to decide which of the three people looking at her had figured out what her favorite book was and had purchased this treasure for her.

Harry received a carefully wrapped knut coin and a note that read 'As if I'd give you anything you really wanted Potter! -V'

Hermione paled at that. "Harry! Could these things be from/Voldemort?"/

"I don't see how," the young man said. I feel it whenever he's near, and I've felt nothing at all since yesterday. And my scar... If Voldemort was around it wouldn't have shriveled to nothing like this."

There was a flash of light and yet another gift suddenly appeared under the tree.

The three Grangers and Harry exchanged looks.

"That's not right," Martin Granger observed.

Hermione and Margot peered at the package together. "It's for you Harry," Margot volunteered.

"This can't be safe Harry," Hermione noted.

**"There's no magic in that package Hermione," Harry said waving his wand about the box.
"Better to open it than sit here worrying about it."**

The Boy Who Lived gingerly took the colorfully wrapped package and carefully opened it. Inside was a glass sphere the size of a cricket ball. As soon as he lifted the sphere he was immersed in what he somehow knew was his mother's love.

Gasping, Harry pulled the glass ball to his chest to hold it tight, never noticing the tears that were running down his face.

"Harry?" Hermione asked, more than a little alarmed at her friend's reaction. "Harry, there's a note."

Harry nodded and wiped at his eyes as he set the sphere down and reached for the note.

'Damn you Potter! - Father Christmas.'

Harry Potter and The Conversation

I paced through my throne room like the God on Earth that I was. There was just something special about the fear of my assembled Death Eaters. The way they cowered at my feet, their abject terror that I might call upon them to explain their latest misstep.

It almost made up for the report that Dumbledore still lived. Almost.

Snape had turned out to be a traitor... Why? Why had the Potions Master betrayed me? I knew his mind; he was in complete agreement with my goals. Why had Severus Snape gone to Dumbledore? Because I killed the Potter woman so long ago? Was he truly that obsessed with a mere woman? I shook my head. It didn't matter; Snape was now marked for death, and was no doubt in agony now from the punishment charm I had directed toward my Mark on his arm. A small taste of what was to come.

That was when it happened. Without warning my anti-apparation wards were breached. A sharp crack was the only announcement that the wards had failed... no not failed, the warding scheme announce that the traveler was keyed to the ward... but I was the only one keyed to the ward.

In the middle of the chamber a cloaked figure stood. I drew my wand as my Death Eaters scattered pulling away from this figure that had demonstrated such phenomenal power as to penetrate my sanctum.

"Who are you?" I called

The man threw back his cloak to reveal the young man I hated more than any other.

"Potter!" I hissed.

Before I could react, Potter raised his wand toward the ceiling. "I am Harry, son of James, Grandson of Charlus, heir to the houses of Potter and Black. I come to the fortress of my enemy, Tom, son of Merope, grandson of Marvolo, heir to the houses of Gaunt and Slytherin, and call for Parley!" The boy's wand pulsed and I felt the sympathetic answer of my own wand as the call for Parley was sealed.

There was no rejecting a call for Parley. He had come of his own free will. The magic of the Parley would bind me to allowing him his confrontation and allowing him to leave without pursuit for twelve hours. Either of us attempting to use magic on the other would result in the betrayer's horrible death.

Where had Potter learned of the Ancient call for Parley?

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It took most of twenty minutes to have an appropriate meeting room set up and for my 'devoted' followers to be banished from Potter's presence before one of them did something that violated

the Parley. None of them understood the risk that violating the Parley involved.

I still don't know why that surprised me. After all the bulk of my followers were graduates of Hogwarts under Dumbledore's guidance as Headmaster. I had by that point long suspected that the poor quality of instruction at the school reputed worldwide to be the premier school of magic was part of a plot on Dumbledore's part to ensure that there was no one who could challenge him.

That didn't answer the question of where Potter had learned of Parley. Was this the latest of Dumbledore's traps?

I stared at the boy over the table, and he returned my gaze with one of his own. He seemed... resigned to what was about to happen. The silence between us stretched into five minutes, so I attempted a probe of legilimency. I found no barriers at all. The boy had left his mind open to me, in fact I found a surface thought that all but welcomed me into his mind. This wasn't the child I had seen in Quirrell's class, the boy I had faced over my father's grave or the angry young man I possessed in the Ministry of Magic's atrium. My presence didn't even cause him pain any longer. What was going on?

Potter sighed. "So, what should I call you?"

"Excuse me?" I responded. That wasn't a question I expected from the boy. "I am Lord Voldemort!" I declared.

"Yeah yeah yeah," Potter sighed again rolling his wand hand signaling that I should hurry. "I know all about your anagram of Tom Marvolo Riddle. Your first Horcrux was a chatty bastard. My name anagramizes out to Pyjamas the Terror. Big deal. What should I call you?"

I glared at the presumptuous boy. It wasn't until later I realized that he knew about my Horcruxes.

"Alright, fine. I know you hate Tom, so I'll call you Riddle, Ok?" He gestured toward his face. I notice the bruising for the first time. "Do you mind if I heal myself while we talk. If I read the rules of Parley right the only magic we're allowed to cast has to be approved by the other."

"That's quite the beating Potter, who else wants you dead?" I asked.

"Oh, this?" Again he gestured toward his face, "No, this is from not being able to convince my friends that evoking Parley was a good idea. They tried to stop me." With a grunt of pain he placed his left hand on the table top where I could see three dislocated fingers. "So? Healing?"

I nodded. He ran his wand along the first of his damaged fingers and sighed with relief as the joint was repaired. "What do you want Potter?" I ground out through clenched teeth.

The boy shrugged. "It occurred to me that we've never talked, you know? Oh we've spoken a few times, you sneer at me and talk of how superior you are compared to me, tell me I'm, about to die, and I've usually tried to come up with some adult sounding responses, but we've never really, you know, talked. It's always 'this is your last day Potter' and 'you'll have to work at it Voldemort' and bullshit like that. I mean we've been tied together for my entire life and we've

never really spoken."

"So, you came here today in order to speak with me?" I asked incredulously.

"Yeah. I wanted to know why you've done all this."

"For the power, Potter. I was born to rule!"

"For the power? How's that working out for you? I mean you surround yourself with whining idiots like the Malfoys and hide in this... dump."

I touched his mind again, which coincided with yet another sigh from the boy. His earlier welcome was still there. I found the memory of how he learned of Parley... The Mudblood Granger.

"Cute isn't she?" The boy asked. "Scary smart too, but definitely cute."

"A proper wizard would never sully himself by dallying with such an abomination." I sniffed.

"Ouch!" Potter said with an odd expression. "That cuts a bit close to home doesn't it Riddle? Of course I can console myself that my mother was at very least a witch, while your dear old dad was a plain old fashioned Muggle."

I glared at the boy in a way that would have caused the most hardened of my Death Eaters to soil himself. For all the effect it had, I need not have bothered.

"What do you want Potter? The sooner this is over the sooner I can kill you and carry on with my conquest of Britain."

"That's what I want to know. Why are you doing this? Why do you want to become the king of the sheep?"

His audacity astounded me. "What do you mean?"

"Your Death Eaters are among the most independent people of the Wizarding world, and they throw themselves at your feet in terror. How do you suppose the average wizard in the street is going to react to you?"

"With fear!" I exclaimed.

"And that does it for you? Dumbledore has told me a bit about your childhood. You had a rough life. So did I. When was it you decided that your life goal was to be a twat?"

I couldn't believe this boy dared speak to me in such a way. "This parley isn't going to last forever Potter. I will make you regret ever being born."

The boy actually looked bored. "And you haven't already done that during any of the times you've tried to kill me before?"

It was a novel experience to discover someone that wasn't frightened by my power. I didn't like it.

I forced myself to smile. "When I torture your Mudblood and your other friends to death in front of you, you will learn the price of your defiance Potter."

The boy just shook his head. "God you're a twat. You could have done so much, but you had to turn yourself into... well, you."

"What are you talking about?" I demanded.

"You were handsome, smart, and stupidly powerful. You found the freaking Chamber of Secrets, something that scholars had been seeking for centuries; you were the heir of Salazar Slytherin. You would have been celebrated for finding the Chamber alone. You could have claimed your family's seat on the Wizengamot being the first in centuries with the bloodline, intelligence and power to claim it. You could have changed the world for the better."

"That's what I'm doing boy!" I spat.

"No, Riddle it isn't what you're doing. What you're doing is surrounding yourself with the dregs of the world, hiding from what you are, pretending to be a pureblood and praying every day that I don't kill you again."

My fury burned hotter than ever. "You didn't kill me, you got lucky boy. The only reason you survived is that the magic of a prophecy protected you."

Potter made a derisive noise. "You and Dumbledore, you're both idiots, believing in the ravings of a drunken woman, as each of you do everything in your power to make her ravings come true.. Do you even know the full prophecy yet?"

The boy knew the prophecy? I drove a probe back into his mind. I would strip the knowledge from his brain and ...

Nothing. Where before his mind had been open to me, now all I found was... nothing.

"Nope," the boy said shaking his head. "You had your free look. But I'll tell you the prophecy, because it doesn't mean anything, not anymore." He paused, seemed to concentrate and recited: *"The one with the power to vanquish the - Dark Lord approaches... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies..."*

To actually hear the full prophecy... I couldn't believe it. So, I thought as I parsed the prophecy in my mind, what power could Potter possibly have that I didn't know? "What is this power of yours Potter?"

"No idea." Potter grinned. "It doesn't matter because I've already fulfilled it, if I believed that sort of thing, which I don't."

"What do you mean you've already fulfilled it?"

"Isn't it obvious?" He asked, running his wand over his left cheek closing the cut and healing the bruise. "I killed you back in '81. You were quite thoroughly vanquished."

"Potter, you idiot. I'm sitting right here!" I all but screamed at him. Did he really believe that he had vanquished *ME*?

"You asked," he said with a sigh, setting his wand down on the table top now that he was finished healing himself. "Well, if you don't want to discuss why you've done this to yourself and you won't explain the path you've taken to achieve your goals, how about we talk about some of the things I've discovered over the last few weeks... Like how I defeated your defenses to get here."

The boy was actually smirking at me. "As I said before, the Parley won't last forever Potter. I guarantee that you are going to suffer the torments of Hell before I allow you to die.

"You're interested then? Well it's something of a long story. Dobby?"

There was a pop and a particularly manic House Elf was standing on the table between us.

"Yes Harry Potter Sir? How can Dobby help the Great Harry Potter?"

"You have your elf address you like that? It appears that Severus wasn't lying about your ego." I noted.

"I want him to call me Harry, and he's not 'my elf' he's my friend." Potter said shaking his head. "That's another thing you have in common with Dumbledore. You both take the word of a man so petty as to hate me because my father was mean to him when they were in school. Twats the pair of you."

That seemed to have touched a nerve. "What of Snape?"

"He's a cunt. And I don't mean that in a nice way. Dobby could you bring in some tea please?"

"Yes Harry Potter sir! Would Evil Dead Snake Wizard want tea too?"

I did want some tea, but I wasn't going to admit it to Potter. I shook my head and added the mouthy House Elf to the list of people and creatures to torture to death in front of Potter before I kill him.

There was a short pause while the elf got Potter his tea and popped away to where ever elves go when they aren't needed.

"Well, as you might have guessed Dumbledore knows about your Horcruxes."

I hadn't known or even suspected that. That when I recalled Potter calling my first Horcrux a 'chatty bastard'. I would have to make sure that the precious items were safe. I nodded. No sense in letting the boy know that I had been caught off guard. If my first diary actually was compromised, Lucius was going to have some explaining to do.

"You can thank Lucius Malfoy for that by the way. If he hadn't planted your diary on Ginny Weasley Dumbledore would probably never have sussed out that you had made them.

That was when I decided to kill the entire Malfoy family.

Anyway, Dumbledore knows about your Horcruxes, and I had pulled together my friends to figure out how to find them. We had been working on the various ways of tracing the damned things when one of my friends had a revelation."

"Let me guess. Granger the Mudblood." Far too many times I was treated to the Malfoy spawn whining about that girl.

"No, not Hermione. Not Padma Patil, Su Li, Tracey Davis, or Hannah Abbott either. No it wasn't one of the geniuses working with me to defeat you that stumbled onto the clue. It was Ron Weasley. The girls were going on about how Horcruxes had been around since the Dynastic Egyptians and Ron just asked a question."

In spite of myself, I wanted to know where Potter was going with this. "And what did the boy ask?"

Ron sat in the middle of all the discussion of the dark magic involved in what you did and said 'You know Harry, if Horcruxes have been around since the Egyptians were building pyramids, why aren't we hip deep in ancient Egyptians?'"

That was actually a good question, one I pondered on myself when I was first researching the possibility of immortality.

"Ron's question stopped all of us in our tracks. We spent the next two days talking about just why there weren't any surviving Egyptians. Then we changed the track of our research. We didn't spend anymore time on trying to figure out how to detect the damned things, instead we started looking into their history. You'll never guess what we found."

"What?" I asked. "What did you find?"

"Horcruxes don't work. Oh you can tie a portion of your soul to a physical object, but doing so doesn't anchor your life force to this plane of existence, it just causes you to go slightly mad.. If the soul fragment is removed from the charmed object it dies." The boy laughed "Your first Horcrux tried to return himself to life by possessing Ginny Weasley and using her life force to bring himself back. I ended up fighting Slytherin's Basilisk to stop that, and it turns out I did it for no reason. As soon as your sixteen year old shade had separated itself from the diary it would have vanished in a puff of magic and Ginny would have been fine."

"What do you mean they don't work. Of course they work Potter. I am evidence of their functionality," the boy's ignorance astounded me.

"Think about it Riddle. Do you really believe that you are the first to actually try it? Of course you aren't. You aren't even the first to try the whole 'Seven is a significant magical number' idea. They don't work. The historical record is filled with fools who tried and failed to make it work.

You were just the most recent."

I was speechless for a few moments digesting what Potter said. I had never looked into the history of the Horcrux, just the implementation... what if Potter was... No it wasn't possible; after all, I was alive.

"How do you explain me then Potter?"

"Your continued existence was a puzzle, I do admit. Until we made an important discovery, and we have you to thank for it."

"What do you mean?"

"You killed an Auror in full view of Amelia Bones. During the autopsy of that Auror a standard scan of the magical signature of the caster of the spell that killed him was taken."

The boy was playing games, doling out his story in bits and pieces, trying to make me ask him for the information. "And?"

"It was mine."

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The boy took a long sip at his tea. What was he telling me? The man I killed showed signs of having been killed using Potter's magic?

"What?"

"You killed him using my Magic. That answered a lot of questions actually. All the healers tell us that the magical core is somehow tied to the physical body, the literature has several examples of people being possessed by wraiths having only the magical potential of the possessed magic user, yet you still had magic as a disembodied wraith. Our wands are near matches, I've always had problems with small everyday magic, but the big flashy stuff? I do that with little or no effort. You've been siphoning off a portion of my magical core since I was fifteen months old."

Potter leaned back in his chair. "It's lucky for me that you killed the man in front of Amelia Bones and that when you did it I was with Susan Bones or I might have had some explaining to do, what with so many in the ministry being out for my head the way Malfoy pays them to be." He grinned, "For that matter, I didn't really want to explain to Madam Bones what Susan and I were doing when you killed the Auror either, so that really worked out for me."

I was finding it a bit difficult to breath. Potter had to be lying. He had to be lying. "How could I possibly be using your magic?"

"The answer is my scar." Potter picked up his wand and tapped the lightning bolt scar with the tip. "You know, Dumbledore believes it to be an unintentional Horcrux, and attributes the connection between us to it being one."

"That makes sense." I couldn't believe that I was agreeing with Dumbledore.

"Oh really? We found the ritual needed to make a Horcrux. Do you really believe you could have done that 'unintentionally'? For that matter, do you have any connection with your other Horcruxes? Can you hear Nagini's thoughts or does your presence cause her pain? Get serious Riddle, you're smarter than that. This scar isn't a Horcrux," he tapped it again. "It's a conduit between us. A leech, drawing on my magic and feeding it to you."

"No..." I gasped.

"When you cast the killing curse on me in my crib, my magic reacted to it with sufficient power to destroy your body and most of the cottage. This somehow formed the conduit between us. That connection anchored your consciousness to this plane of existence... somehow." He seemed to enjoy my reaction to his theories. "Now that I know it's my magic you're throwing around, I can use it. You only have the power I allow you to have, and right now I'm not feeling too generous, you know?"

A feeling of horror filled me. "That means..."

"That means you can't kill me, or you die. Your Death Eaters can't kill me, or you die. It means that you are limited to my lifetime. It means that there is no immortality for you." The boy leaned forward over the table. "It means that any magic you do, I have access to. Your wards? As long as you are keyed into them, I am keyed into them. If I were to pick up my wand and curse you and violate the Parley, I would likely lose my magic. You would die."

"The boy obviously hadn't thought this through. "But I can imprison you. I can use potions to extend your life until such time as I can separate this body from your magic."

He actually rolled his eyes at me. "Ah, you caught me. The idea that you might, oh I don't know, try something like that, never occurred to me when I decided to tell you about our little situation. I mean it isn't very likely that I might have taken a time delayed poison that would kill me if you did somehow manage to violate the Parley and survive. Is it?"

He wasn't telling me everything. What had I missed? Only everything so far. A distant feeling of panic, something I haven't felt since that night in 1981, was nipping at my consciousness.

"Either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives..." the little bastard was enjoying this. "That bit makes a little more sense now doesn't it? I can't move on to my full potential as long as you're drawing on my magic. You can't conquer the world without your own magic now can' you?"

"I will survive this Potter. I always survive."

"Maybe you will Riddle, I doubt it, but it's possible I suppose."

"Why are *YOU* doing this?" I demanded. "If what you say is true, you never needed to come here. You could have done whatever it is your women told you to do to break the conduit from the safety of your common room. Why are you here?"

"A lot of reasons. You and your megalomania cost me my parents, my godfather, any semblance

of a normal life, and allowed Dumbledore to sentence me to sixteen years of life with the only surviving members of my family who hated me and made sure I knew it." The boy picked up his wand again and tapped his scar and then began twirling the wand between the fingers of his right hand. "And mostly because I wanted to see your face when I did this." He jabbed his wand at the scar over his eyes and I knew nothing.

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"And then I was here."

Once again I looked around what appeared to be some sort of office. The man behind the desk who had been asking the questions was dressed in the manner of the administrators of the orphanage when I was a child. He didn't seem all that interested in the answers I offered; rather he simply asked his question and made notes of my answers as they poured out of me.

"Thank you Mr. Riddle." He completed a few notes and tore off a ticket from a roll at the side of his desk. "This will take you through to the Evaluation section for your final Judgment. Again I apologize for your wait; we were swamped today for some reason."

"That's mostly my fault," I admitted. There was something about this place that forced you to speak the truth. "My Death Eaters were tied to my life force via their Dark Marks. The loss of the magic sustaining me drained them."

"Yes," the man said dryly, "I know. The door to the Evaluation section is the second on your left. Next!"