

## That Universe Over There

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/23702959) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/23702959>.

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Category:	<a href="#">Multi</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling</a>
Relationships:	<a href="#">Luna Lovegood/Harry Potter</a> , <a href="#">Lucius Malfoy/Narcissa Black Malfoy</a> , <a href="#">Sirius Black/Mrs Zabini</a> , <a href="#">Arthur Weasley/Molly Weasley</a>
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Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Master of Death Harry Potter</a> , <a href="#">Female Harry Potter</a> , <a href="#">Manipulative Albus Dumbledore</a> , <a href="#">Harry Potter is Lord Peverell</a> , <a href="#">Accidental World Domination</a> , <a href="#">Harry Potter Raises Himself</a> , <a href="#">Harry Potter Epilogue What Epilogue   EWE</a> , <a href="#">Harry Potter is Lord Slytherin</a> , <a href="#">Slytherin Harry Potter</a> , <a href="#">Dimension Travel</a> , <a href="#">Time Travel Fix-It</a> , <a href="#">Sort Of</a> , <a href="#">BAMF Harry Potter</a> , <a href="#">Oblivious Harry Potter</a> , <a href="#">He has his moments okay</a> , <a href="#">Oblivious to his own BAMFness</a> , <a href="#">Voldemort Dies (Harry Potter)</a> , <a href="#">Abandoned Work - Unfinished and Discontinued</a>
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Stats:

Published: 2020-04-17 Updated: 2021-12-17 Words: 242,407 Chapters: 58/?

# **That Universe Over There**

by [mytimeconsumingssidehobby](#)

## Summary

Finding himself in another universe, Harry makes the perfectly logical choice and adopts his younger self, destroys this world's leftover Voldie pieces, and tries his best to avoid happy goblins.

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Harry blinked as the world around him came slowly into focus. So maybe impulsively touching things in the Department of Mysteries wasn't the best idea, but to be fair the day had been rather dull up until that point. Of course, most days tended to be dull when compared with being hunted by insane Dark Lords and overzealous death minions. Thankfully, said hunting hadn't resulted in any sort of long-term complications for the famous Boy-Who-Couldn't-Die. No loss of sanity or anything. Everything was perfectly fine, thank you very much. Of course, there was that whole "Master of Death" thing that he hadn't really figured out yet, and an impressive urge to touch potentially dangerous magical artifacts, but really, everything was fine, which totally explained why he was waking up in an unknown place and getting rained on.

Wait, rain? Okay, so outside, opposite of inside, which is where he was last (probably - the last few moments were a bit fuzzy).

Standing up, Harry took a look around. And then he blinked. And then he rubbed his eyes. Was this some kind of new memory chamber or something? Had he fallen into a pensieve (again)? Accidentally apparated? Wait, he wasn't drunk, so probably not that one. He still hadn't lived down that particular incident.

Deciding that the particulars of his arriving at a place of his childhood nightmares were not all that important at the moment, Harry grabbed his... *that* wand, and began casting a wide variety of spells, hoping that he'd figure out for sure where he was. Or trip some kind of alarm and have some panicked Unspeakables show up. He wasn't picky.

All of a sudden he heard a distinct popping sound, and he turned to face whoever had just apparated behind him.

...

Well. That was unexpected.

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Ivy blinked. Something had just happened. What had happened was unclear, but she was fairly certain this fell under the category of "freaky." Briefly, she hoped to herself that Uncle Vernon wouldn't find out, but since Dudley had been the one chasing her a second ago and was now nowhere in sight, it was more likely that she'd be locked in her cupboard without dinner tonight. Which was rather unfortunate, seeing as she hadn't had dinner last night either.

She was so caught up in her thoughts that she didn't immediately notice the man staring at her. When she did notice, she jumped back just a little, but he just kept staring at her. Really,

what was his problem? So, there they both stood, staring at each other. Blinking occasionally. At least he wasn't chasing her. That was a good sign, right?

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Of all the things Harry had expected to see (not that he had a lengthy list of preconceived expectations for this particular situation), a little girl who looked suspiciously like him was not one of them. He was fairly certain he had never fathered a child, and even he had, this girl looked like she was at least six. Way too old to be his. He definitely hadn't slept with anyone at age seventeen. Dark lords and all that. So unless there was some vital piece of information relating to the process of conception in the wizarding world that he hadn't been informed about (wouldn't exactly be the first time he hadn't been told something), this child wasn't his. That was a relief.

But she looked *so much* like him. It was like looking in a weird trick mirror at himself as a child, but also as a girl, and of course he just so happened to be standing on top of what appeared to be his old primary school, and wasn't that just a coincidence and oh Merlin that one unspeakable guy had been talking about gateways, but he hadn't been paying attention because it sounded too much like portkeys and those things were the devil's creation, but he had heard something about universes and he thought it was just the guy being dramatic but what if... No. That was ridiculous. He definitely had not been stupid enough to touch something that had transported him into an alternate universe, right? He laughed (cackled?) mentally. What a ridiculous thought. That was certainly not what had happened. But, just to be sure...

"Were you just running from Dudley?"

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Ivy stared at the stranger. Most people asked things like "what's your name?" or "where are your parents?" How'd he even know Dudley anyway? She certainly hadn't seen this man before. Even if she thought he did kind of look like her...

"Yes," she finally said, even if it did come out more like a question.

"And then you appa... *appeared* here?"

"Yes?" That one was definitely a question.

"Huh," was all the man said, and then he continued to stare at her. Ivy began to fidget. She knew what he was probably thinking. She was used to her family calling her a freak, but she still hated it when other people said it. After a few moments, the man finally spoke again.

"Last name Potter then?"

Ivy felt her stomach drop a little. So he knew who she was too. She braced herself for the oncoming scorn and just nodded her head in answer to his question. To her surprise, the man actually smiled at that. And not the kind of smile Dudley got when she got in trouble. No, this was a *nice* smile.

"What's your first name?"

“I-ivy,” she managed to get out.

---

Harry had often been accused of jumping into situations headfirst without a plan. Admittedly they were relatively true accusations (mostly because any plans he made tended to fall apart fairly quickly), but he thought that his track record so far showed that he either had an insane amount of dumb luck or was really good at thinking on his feet. Or both. Probably both.

Still, this impromptu plan would most likely cause Hermione’s eye to twitch in a way that promised eternal pain should it be acted upon. But she wasn’t here, and really, how badly could this turn out?

That was a rhetorical question that he chose not to think too long on. There were alternate young female versions of himself to save and possible alternate universes to wreak havoc upon. Critically thinking through this situation was unnecessarily time-consuming at this point.

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Ivy watched as the stranger seemed to ponder the revelation of her name for a moment. She wished she knew what he was thinking.

“Would you like to come with me?” he finally asked. She vaguely remembered hearing one of her teachers say that children should never go with strangers, but then Aunt Petunia sometimes mumbled that she wished Ivy would be taken away by those strange people, so maybe it was fine? Plus the man seemed so nice. He had a nice smile, and he was smiling at *her*. Nobody ever smiled like that at her.

“Yes.”

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Harry beamed. She had hesitated for a moment, but she had agreed, so that meant he had succeeded in his attempt to come across as good-friendly-safe rather than evil-stranger-danger. Oh, and sane. Which he wasn’t, necessarily, but that didn’t matter too much at the moment.

“Well then, shall we be off?”

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Ivy glanced behind her. The roof of the school was rather far from the ground, and she still wasn’t entirely sure how she had gotten up there in the first place. Of course, he was on the roof too, so that meant he probably knew the way down. She turned back towards the man and nodded.

“Great! Well, I suppose there isn’t anything you need to get from the Dursleys first?”

She shook her head. He had said Dursleys. Not her family, not her parents, not home. Just their name. She already knew he must know something about them, seeing as he knew Dudley, and knew her last name, but did he know what happened there? Was that why he

offered to take her? And if so, *why*? No one ever seemed to care, or at least, not for long. And what made her think this would be any different? Would he just take her back tomorrow?

As if sensing her thoughts, he bent down and held out a hand. “You never have to go back to the Dursleys again,” he said quietly.

She looked into his eyes. He looked so kind.

“Promise?”

“I promise.”

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Harry was startled by the sudden hug. He didn’t remember ever being so willing to show physical affection. But then again, this wasn’t really him, and even if she was living the same life he had, she was young. Maybe, just maybe, she was not yet quite as broken as he had been.

A small voice interrupted his musings. “How do we get down?”

He took a step back and grinned, remembering his own sense of wonder at being introduced to magic. Now he was going to be the one to do the introduction, and he was sure he would enjoy it immensely.

He held out his hand again, and when she took it, he pulled her into a hug.

“Magic,” he said, as he apparated them from the rooftop.

## Chapter End Notes

Just a small note to clarify because a lot of people were confused by this, sorry: Harry thinks Ivy must be at least six. She is, in fact, eight, almost nine at this point. Just a bit small for her age. Childhood malnutrition and all that.

Also, I haven’t abandoned this. Just struggling with the last bit.

Edit: Yeah, it's abandoned now, sorry.

## Chapter 2

Harry was quite pleased with himself. They would need to go to Diagon Alley soon, but there were a few things he wanted to do before that, the first of which would be to explain things to Ivy a bit. And what better place to do that than a magical forest that unicorns could often be seen in. Yes, he was quite pleased with himself. This was perfect.

The sound of someone retching somewhat ruined the moment.

Harry turned sheepishly around. He had honestly forgotten how bad side-along apparition was, especially your first time. Oops.

“Sorry about that,” he said. “First time is always pretty rough. Forgot to warn you about that part, didn’t I.”

The look he got in return left no doubt in his mind as to just how impressed Ivy was with him at the moment. Thankfully, the look only lasted a minute as she promptly turned around and began heaving up the remaining contents of her stomach. On second thought, that probably wasn’t a good thing...

A few quick waves of his wand later and everything was back to normal. And by normal, he meant not covered in vomit. Magic was a wonderful thing.

“So,” he started, “what do you think?”

Ivy blinked at him. “Magic is real?”

“Yup!”

“And that’s how you got us here?”

Harry nodded.

“And magic made me vomit?”

Harry went to protest that it wasn’t technically *magic* that caused her to vomit per se, but she continued.

“I don’t like it.”

What was wrong with her? Magic was amazing!

“What do you mean you don’t like it? Magic is amazing!” There was no way she would be able to refute such a factual statement.

Ivy just wrinkled her nose. “I thought magic was supposed to be cool.”

Harry sputtered. Of course it was *cool*. “Of course it is.”



“Well show me then.”

Harry conjured a rabbit. Little girls liked rabbits, right? Ivy did not appear nearly as impressed as she should be. Harry gritted his teeth. He would impress her.

Six conjurations, eight transfigurations, and nearly three dozen other spells later, Ivy finally smiled.

“Well, I guess you can do something with magic after all.”

Harry stared at her, mouth gaping open slightly. This was not how this situation was supposed to go. Granted, he hadn’t really had a plan in the first place, but he knew this wasn’t it.

“So can you teach me?”

That got his attention. “Wait, what?”

“Teach me. Can you teach me magic?”

Harry nodded.

“Great!” Ivy beamed. “Does this mean there are more freaky people than us?”

Harry scowled at that. Nope. This simply wouldn’t do. “We’re not freaky.”

Ivy tilted her head. “But Uncle Vernon always says...”

Harry interrupted her. “We are NOT freaky,” he said again. He wanted to correct her thinking on this as soon as possible. “Look, Vernon and Petunia knew about magic, alright? And they didn’t like it. Maybe it scared them. I know Petunia for one was always jealous of m— of Lily, and so maybe she was jealous of you too, I don’t know. But that means that what they say about magic, or about you isn’t anything you need to pay attention to, okay? Magic is perfectly normal, and there are plenty of people who have magic, like you and me.”

Ivy nodded her head at that, and Harry watched as she seemed to be thinking about what he said.

“So who’s Lily?”

Harry’s eye twitched. It was good he was completely sane, otherwise he would probably have apparated to Privet Drive and burned down Number 4 right then and there. And possibly also Number 10. They had always been terrible people.

Ivy just watched him expectantly, apparently taking this whole leave-with-a-stranger-and-be-introduced-to-magic thing completely in stride. Honestly, he had expected her to freak out a little more by this point.

“Lily was m— was your mum,” Harry said softly.

“Oh.” Ivy’s voice was quiet as well. “Well, that’s a nice name.”

Harry nodded. "It is."

"Was she a nice person?"

Harry nodded again, barely managing a quiet "yes."

"And she did magic too?"

"Yes, she had magic."

Ivy nodded solemnly. "Thank you."

"For what?" Harry had a pretty good idea what, but he wished he could be wrong.

"For telling me her name."

---

The next few hours were spent answering questions, talking about magic, and telling Ivy what he could about the wizarding world. He even managed to finally introduce himself after two hours when Ivy reminded him that she didn't actually know his name yet. He wondered if her being this trusting of him was a good thing. Oh well, he could work with it. She could be as trusting of him as she wanted and he would make sure she was appropriately suspicious of everyone else. It was a great plan.

After mentioning his mum to Ivy, Harry had mildly panicked when the thought came to him that things might be different in this world. Maybe Ivy's parents weren't Lily and James. After all, she was clearly not him, so it stood to reason that there would be other differences in this world as well. After that, he tried to stick with the generals regarding the wizarding world that were (hopefully) unlikely to cause too many problems should discrepancies be found.

Harry also began to put together a plan. As lovely as this forest was (even if they hadn't seen any unicorns yet), they couldn't very well stay there. Besides, it was getting late and no doubt Ivy would be hungry, though Harry knew from experience that she was most likely quite used to ignoring such feelings.

Essentially, it all came down to the fact they needed money. And to get money they would need to go to Gringotts. Or go rob some muggles. Either way. Thus, Harry began mentally planning how to get money from Gringotts without a key and without antagonizing the entire Goblin nation, as well as where he might take Ivy once they got money.

"Let's go on a holiday," he said suddenly, interrupting their lovely conversation on least horrid forms of magical transportation. (Brooms. Definitely brooms)

"I've never been on holiday before," Ivy said slowly.

"Me neither." And wasn't that just a sad thought; Savior of the Wizarding World and had never been on holiday, let alone left the country? Very sad indeed.

"Where should we go?"

Harry paused at that. “Everywhere.”

Ivy grinned, and Harry grinned back. Time to go ~~antagonize~~ meet some goblins.

## Chapter 3

*Two years, two months, and nineteen days later*

“IT’S HEEEEEEEEERRE!!!!”

Harry cringed a little as ~~the little menace~~ Ivy ran into the room. There was really no need to ask what had her screaming at the top of her lungs on such an otherwise beautiful Monday morning, but it was only polite, he supposed.

“What’s here exactly, Ives?”

Ivy huffed as she plopped down onto the sofa. “My Hogwarts letter, of course.”

Harry nodded, trying to keep a look of solemn contemplation on his face. “I see. Well, I suppose you want to write them back right away, hmm? I’m sure they’ll understand that you would much rather be homeschooled. So much to be learned from traveling and all.”

Ivy rolled her eyes. “Yeah right. I’m going to Hogwarts.”

“Are you sure? Because it’s really not too late to choose somewhere else. I’ve heard lovely things about Castelobruxo, and I know you enjoyed our time in the Amazon.”

Ivy gave him a look that showed just how convincing he was at the moment, and so he resigned himself to a long, drawn-out sigh.

“Fiiiiinne,” he said. “I suppose we’ll have to go back to Gringotts again,” he added under his breath.

Ivy grinned. “Just because you hate going there... Besides, it’s not like it’s going to kill you.”

Harry’s eye twitched. No, a high chance of imminent death wasn’t exactly the problem he had with Gringotts.

### ***Flashback***

*Harry patted Ivy’s back in what was hopefully a comforting manner. When it was apparent that her stomach was going to retain its contents, he led her by the hand to the main part of the Alley. It looked different from what he remembered, but then again, this was a different universe, and one that hadn’t gone through a second war, so there were bound to be changes. There were a few shops he didn’t remember seeing before, but for the most part the overall layout was the same. And there, exactly as pictured in his memories, stood Gringotts.*

*Harry could feel Ivy tensing more and more the further they walked down the Alley. He squeezed her hand reassuringly. He had done his best to describe Diagon Alley, and some of the things they would likely see, but he knew no words could possibly be enough.*

*As they entered Gringotts, Harry briefly wondered how exactly this encounter would go. He doubted he would be able to access any vaults in this world, and they didn't have Ivy's key. Perhaps there would be some other way for her to withdraw money from at least her trust vault, but if not he might have to go on a little jaunt around muggle London.*

Fifty minutes later:

*Harry wasn't entirely sure what had just happened, and he honestly never wanted to see that many goblins...smiling? grinning? at once. Frankly, they were way more terrifying when they looked so happy. Harry pinched himself just to make sure he was still there.*

*They had entered the bank and walked up to a teller, but before Harry could open his mouth to say something that would hopefully result in them leaving the bank alive and preferably with money, the Goblin spoke.*

*"Greetings, Lord Peverell. How may Gringotts assist you today?"*

*Harry hadn't quite known what to say to that. He had never seen a goblin acting so...dare he say it...nice.*

*It only got worse from there. Apparently, the goblins knew all about the whole "Master of Death" thing. They weren't particularly helpful in explaining what exactly they knew about it, but somehow something about it got Harry a huge vault filled with more galleons than he would possibly need over many lifetimes.*

*On top of that, he was evidently Lord Peverell in this world. Again, the goblins didn't seem particularly keen on providing the details of why that was the case, waving it off as something of little consequence. But that came with its own large vault, which held a number of artifacts and an extensive library collection. The goblins had also mentioned something about political influence, but Harry sort of just tuned it out at that point. He figured there was plenty of time for researching the extent of the vault and title later, but right now he really just wanted to get some dinner.*

*Thankfully he hadn't actually had to ride the carts down to the vaults. Instead, they had presented him with a nifty little pouch that would only open for him and would allow him to access the money from his vaults easily. He vaguely wondered why he couldn't have gotten something like that in his own world.*

*Once the matter of money withdrawals was all set, the goblins had ever so helpfully used a series of legal loopholes to turn guardianship of Ivy over to Harry. It all seemed a little hand-wavy to him, but he was left with the impression that either the goblins of this world were insane, or they really hated someone and were just using him to exact their revenge. He wasn't quite sure which was worse.*

*So, the two humans left the bank, one wondering if every magical creature was as nice as the goblins, and the other wondering if nice, helpful goblins were a sign of the end of the world.*

***End Flashback***

The occasional repeat visit to Gringotts tended to yield similar results. The goblins were always exceptionally helpful, providing Harry and Ivy both with specialized services that Harry was certain no other wizard was given access to. And their smiles.

Despite the repeated trauma that was dealing with happy goblins, there were some benefits. Ivy's eyes had been fixed, as well as most of the residual effects of her time at the Dursleys. The horcrux in Ivy's scar had been moved into a container and promptly destroyed, and both their scars had been moved to less visible locations since they could not be removed entirely.

Ivy had made several goblin friends over the course of their unfortunately necessary visits and had even picked up a few words of their language. Harry was frankly too terrified of smiling Goblins to do anything other than walk out as quickly as could be deemed appropriate once he concluded his business there, but Ivy would spend hours chatting away with the goblins while Harry ran other errands. Horcrux hunting did take a bit of time after all.

Harry hadn't actually managed to get all the horcruxes yet. The diary and diadem were both inaccessible at the moment (considering he'd rather not break into Hogwarts or Malfoy Manor). The goblins had cheerfully taken care of the cup, and Harry had momentarily felt a pang of sympathy for Voldemort when he saw the amount of glee the goblins had while destroying it.

The ring had turned out to be the easiest to get and destroy since a few words of parseltongue (and wasn't THAT a surprise when he found he could speak it again) were enough to take care of the majority of the protections surrounding it.

The locket was a little more difficult in that it involved breaking into Grimmauld place and stealing the locket, all while avoiding being caught in the wards or by Kreacher, but somehow he had managed it. To be honest he had pretty much bulldozed his way into the house, taken the locket, adjusted the memory of the portraits and Kreacher, and hightailed it out of there. There were more Black family members alive than he had known in his time and he didn't want to risk the possibility of any of them finding out about him or the locket. It wasn't the most elegant solution but it worked. Hopefully Kreacher would end up a little less crazy too.

And then of course there was the one in Ivy herself, which had been taken care of straight away. Nagini hadn't been a horcrux until later on in Harry's own world, but he figured he could probably kill the snake if he came across it anyway just for safe measure.

So, all in all, four down, two to go. Not too bad.

Wary of the happy goblins and slightly fearful of the supposed political influence they kept mentioning (it was almost as if they wanted him to get involved in politics or something), Harry had decided that leaving the country was a spectacular idea, and so, after a few horcruxes had been taken care of, they set off for an extended trip around the world. They moved around from place to place, taking their time and exploring parts of both the magical and mundane world. At first, Harry had worried about Ivy needing a "stable home environment" or something like that, not that he had much experience with knowing what that looked like, but with every new place they went her confidence grew and the smiles

became more common, so he figured things were fine the way they were. She picked up on new things quickly, and Harry tried his best to teach her what he could in regards to typical muggle school subjects as well as magic and the wizarding world.

His greatest mistake was not immediately enrolling her at one of the other wizarding schools in the world. Not that he had anything against Hogwarts per se, it had been his first real home after all, but Ivy going to Hogwarts would mean he would be forced to stay in Britain. Harry knew for sure he would somehow be cajoled into getting involved in British wizarding affairs by the goblins, Ivy, or both. The goblins would use their creepy smiles to try and get him involved politically, and Ivy would try and sweet talk him into either saving or taking over wizarding Britain. It was a bit of a toss-up, really.

But, everyone makes mistakes, so now Harry had to deal with an incredibly excited almost-eleven-year-old who had been officially accepted into Hogwarts, which also meant that Lord Henry Peverell was going to have to be officially introduced into British wizarding society. Joy.

### ***Flashback***

*“What do you mean Henry? My name is Harry.”*

*“I apologize Lord Peverell, but legally your name is now Henry James Peverell.”*

*“But why Henry?”*

*“Well ‘Harry’ and ‘Peverell’ don’t exactly go together, now, do they?”*

*Harry, or Henry, as he was supposedly named now, blinked. THAT was the reason? He turned towards Ivy, who was nodding solemnly.*

*“They don’t go together,” she said, repeating the goblin’s words.*

*Harry ended up with a particularly lovely bruise on his forehead from repeatedly banging his head on the steel table. At least the goblin wasn’t grinning, he thought, as he suppressed a shudder.*

### ***End Flashback***

“Sooo...” Ivy drawled. “The Alley?”

“Yes, yes, we’ll go to the Alley.”

“And Gringotts?”

“And Gringotts,” Harry muttered.

“So when do we leave? Today?”

Harry grinned. “I have an international portkey scheduled for the 30th so you’ll just have to wait for then.”

Ivy pouted, but Harry wasn't swayed. He was going to enjoy his last few remaining days of freedom, er... holiday... as much as he could. He had planned this out six weeks ago when they first arrived in Istanbul, knowing Ivy was going to want to leave as soon as her letter came. If he hadn't already had a plan she would have found a way to talk him into leaving early. Nope. Wasn't going to happen. He was prepared! Harry: 1, Ivy: well, that's really not important.



## Chapter 4

August 1st, 1991

Ivy practically skipped as she made her way through the busy alley. Everything was going according to plan. Someone had found out that the young, reclusive, and extremely eligible Lord Peverell was going to be in Diagon Alley today. So naturally, practically every witch in England was there as well, and Ivy was taking full advantage of the situation. Of course it was a situation primarily of her own making, seeing as she had been the one to leak the news in the first place, but that was neither here nor there. She fully expected to have at least an hour or two before Harry managed to get away from his, \*ahem\*, “suitors.”

Harry had the until Ivy graduated to find someone and get married, otherwise she was going to find someone for him. She hadn't bothered to tell him that bit of information, but she figured she's let him have a little time to try on his own. This was really just a gentle nudge in the right direction. She was truly being very nice about it. She could have sent tips to the international press, but she didn't. See? Perfect angel.

Ivy headed into Madame Malkin's. Of all her errands, this was by far the one she preferred to do on her own. Harry had a terrible sense of fashion (at least in her opinion), so even if it was just school robes she preferred to get it done herself.

“Hogwarts, dear?”

Ivy was greeted by a pleasant looking witch. Ivy nodded.

“Got the lot here – another young man being fitted up just now, in fact.”

Madame Malkin led Ivy over to a stool and began taking measurements.

“Hello, Hogwarts too?”

Ivy turned to face the voice. It belonged to a blond-haired boy that appeared to be around her age.

“Yes,” said Ivy.

“My father's next door buying books and Mother's up the street looking at wands.”

Uncertain if he was expecting her to offer up similar information, Ivy said, “My uncle's probably getting chased through the alley by a bunch of witches right now.”

The boy gave her a curious look. “Who is your uncle and why would witches chase him?”

Ivy shrugged. “Henry Peverell.” The boy suddenly looked like he was managing to choke on air. “Apparently he's ‘eligible’ or something like that.”

The boy nodded. “So, know what House you'll be in yet?”

“No.” Ivy knew what house she wanted to be in, but she had yet to find out how her stubbornness matched up to the sorting hat.

“Well, no one really knows until they get there, do they, but I know I’ll be in Slytherin, all our family have been – imagine being in Hufflepuff, I think I’d leave, wouldn’t you?”

Ivy hummed. “No, I think Hufflepuff would be rather nice.” The boy looked rather put out at that statement. “I mean, just imagine what you could get away with? No one would suspect a Hufflepuff.”

The boy clearly did not know what to say to that, and so the next few minutes passed in silence. Finally Ivy was finished and was allowed off the stool. As she made her way to the door, the boy called out, “What’s your name, anyway?”

Ivy glanced back and said, “oh, I’m Ivy Potter.” And with that she exited the shop.

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Harry was having a terrible day. He wasn’t sure how all these people knew who he was or that he was going to be here today, but he’d put money on Ivy having something to do with it, somehow. He briefly wondered if he could use the Elder Wand to cast a blanket obliviate over all of Britain, but that might be taking things a bit too far.

Ivy of course was nowhere to be seen, which was just another indication that she had had something to do with this mess. Harry mentally ticked off the list of errands for the day, trying to narrow down which ones she would most likely have wanted to do herself. Getting a wand, perhaps, possibly school robes, and maybe a pet. Knowing her she’d probably end up with a miniature dragon or something. Honestly, she was almost as bad as Hagrid had been when it came to animals. At least she preferred small ones, even if they did tend to be deadly.

Seeing as there were no people running out of shops screaming, Harry figured a wand and a pet had yet to be procured, and so, made his way towards Madame Malkin’s. He had almost reached the shop when he saw the future ~~terror~~ savior of the wizarding world step out. Upon seeing the glare Harry was leveling in her direction, Ivy grinned and shrugged.

After questioning Ivy and determining that she had done nothing worse than possibly prank Draco Malfoy (which was something he could get behind 100 percent), they set off together to finish their errands. One slightly creepy, and possibly somewhat omniscient wandmaker coming up. Harry hoped it didn’t turn into some kind of awkward conversation about his current wand or identity or Master of Death status. Oh, who was he kidding, of course it would.

---

It was.

At least Ollivander’s grin wasn’t nearly as terrifying as the Goblins’. Still, Harry had been called “Mister Potter” and had been left with no question in his mind that Ollivander knew way too much about him and was suspiciously excited about something.

Harry had shuffled Ivy out of there as quickly as he could, which wasn't all that fast considering it took 147 wands before she found the right one. And it wasn't even the holly wood, phoenix feather wand that Harry had had in his own world. She had tried it (wand attempt number 38), after Ollivander's little speech that sent shivers down Harry's spine as he remembered it from his own experience. The wand had promptly burst into flames, however. Burned. Gone. The next 90 seconds had been extremely awkward, but then the wandmaker had simply retrieved another wand and continued the process. Harry wasn't entirely sure what to make of the situation, but he would reflect on the possible significance another time.

The wand Ivy did end up with was a whole other mystery. It wasn't even one that Ollivander had made, and it had apparently been sitting in his shop longer than he had. It had both two woods and two cores. Alder and Applewood for the woods, and a Thunderbird tail feather and Horned Serpent horn for the cores. Harry, not actually knowing much about wands, decided that he had best do a little research into wandlore, since Ollivander seemed way too giddy for there not to be some significance in the rather odd sounding wand.

Finally, there was only one errand left. A pet for Ivy. Harry felt his heart clench at the thought of seeing Hedwig again. He didn't want to pressure Ivy into choosing her necessarily, but... No. If they found Hedwig, she was coming with them. End of story.

And find her they did. It was actually Ivy that spotted her first, and Harry could hardly hold still as they paid the shopkeeper. Of course, that's when Ivy spotted an "absolutely adorable" European asp that just "had to come with her," never mind the fact that snakes weren't technically allowed at Hogwarts, or the fact that being a magical variety of snake it had significantly deadlier venom.

It took Harry a moment to get over the fact that Ivy was literally cooing at the snake. Well, to be fair, it wasn't like they came across snakes all the time. Still, he was mildly surprised at the whole Parseltongue thing. He hadn't even checked to see if Ivy could speak or not. Honestly it had rather just slipped his mind. Oh well. One more thing to contemplate. Anything to avoid flirting witches, political responsibility or scheming goblins, really.

After somewhat insincerely lecturing Ivy on how she couldn't bring a snake to Hogwarts, and completely failing to convince her (though his reasoning hardly even convinced himself, knowing how little that rule was ever actually enforced), they left the shop, one owl and one snake in tow.

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Later that evening, back in the relative safety (meaning private and warded with everything he could think of) of their new residence, Harry thought back on the events of the day, and came to a few conclusions.

One, he would need to retrieve the diadem out of Hogwarts as soon as possible. And maybe deal with the basilisk. No telling how long the castle would actually remain standing once Ivy got there.

Two, he had a lot of research to do. He had spent the last couple years traveling and ignoring all the hints the goblins kept giving him about political power. Well, he was stuck back in Britain for the next ten months, so he might as well look into it. And who knows, maybe it

would be fun. He scoffed at that particular thought, remembering his previous encounters with politicians. Well, maybe he could find a way to make it fun. \*cough\* wreak havoc \*cough\*. He wouldn't want to be bored, after all.

Third, he really needed to figure out this whole Master of Death thing. So far the goblins and Ollivander had been the only ones to give any hint as to knowing what that was, but they hadn't exactly explained anything to him. But honestly, where was he supposed to look for information like that? It's not like he could Google it. Not to mention the fact that Google wasn't even out yet.

Finally, he needed to find one sane person to talk with. Harry considered himself a sane person (most of the time), but was it really too much to ask to find one other sane magical person in Britain? He really missed South America sometimes. Maybe he could convince Ivy that they should visit over Christmas. Yes, good plan.

But back to his problem of social interaction. He needed someone. The problem was, all the people he would have gone to before were kids now, or were people that he honestly had no desire to see. How do you talk to someone you know really well when they have no idea who you are? It's not like you can start up a conversation by saying, "Oh hi, yes, I knew you nine years from now in another universe. Terrible weather we're having, isn't it?"

He also needed to find someone because if he didn't Ivy would find someone for him. Or worse, she'd try to get him to go on a date. She had done it before, and he was never setting foot in Montréal again as long as he lived, no matter what universe he found himself in, thank you very much.

Well, he could wait another day.

## Chapter 5

Draco wasn't sure what to think. The girl he had met was Ivy Potter? *Defeater of the Dark Lord* Ivy Potter? And she thought Hufflepuff would be a good House to be in? Her reasoning did make some amount of sense, but still. *Hufflepuff*. Draco wasn't sure being able to get away with things was a good enough reason to stick it out in Hufflepuff for seven years.

"Well. Draco? What do you think of your new wand? Do you feel ready for Hogwarts?"

Draco wanted to roll his eyes but refrained. He was trying to prove he was ready to go to school, and acting childishly would not help his efforts. So he simply smiled at his mother and said, "Yes, I am quite looking forward to it. And my wand is great."

His mother smiled back at him. He knew she wasn't nearly as thrilled about him going to school as he was. These were the type of rare moments when he wished he had a younger sibling so there was someone else for her to dote on. Just not too much.

"Mother..." Draco wasn't exactly sure what he wanted to tell her about his earlier encounter.

"Yes, darling?"

"I met someone today in the Alley."

"Oh?"

"Yes. I met a girl." His mother smiled. "Wait no, not like that." Draco felt his face heat up a bit.

"What was this girl's name?"

"Ivy Potter."

Next to his mother, his father just barely managed to not spew his wine across the table. The only indication of his mother's surprise was a slightly raised eyebrow.

"And what were your thoughts on Miss Potter?," his mother asked, as his father regained his composure.

Draco thought for a moment. "She said she thought Hufflepuff would be a nice House to be in."

He thought he saw his father's eye twitch just slightly, as his mother calmly replied, "Well, Hufflepuff is certainly an interesting choice. There are many respectable witches and wizards who have come out of Hufflepuff. I'm sure she will be a credit to her House should she end up there."

Draco did his best to convey an entirely unimpressed look. "She said Hufflepuff would be nice because no one would suspect a Hufflepuff and you would be able to get away with a

lot.”

“Well I suppose there could be some truth to that...” Really. His mother was not helping at all.

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*August 31, 1991*

Albus Dumbledore was not having a good day. It was the day before the students were set to arrive, and he still had no word regarding Ivy Potter. Sure, she had sent her acceptance to enroll at Hogwarts, but that had been it. He couldn't find her, no one had heard anything or seen her anywhere, and the goblins weren't exactly helpful, so he had no idea if she had visited Gringotts or not.

Everything had gone downhill from the time Ivy Potter went missing, though in reality it had started with his wand. One day his wand, the Elder Wand, had given out. Sure, it was still a wand and still responded to him, but it lacked the same type of power he had grown accustomed to. Four days later he had found out that Ivy Potter was missing from the Dursleys. Arabella hadn't known precisely what day she had *gone* missing, but it couldn't have been more than a couple days.

He couldn't exactly get the ministry involved in finding Ivy, since that would mean revealing that he had not-so-legally placed her at the Dursleys in the first place. Then he had been informed that someone had taken over guardianship of Ivy Potter, and he still hadn't been able to get the name of her guardian. Normally he would be able to find information like that easily, but since he couldn't afford to go through normal ministry channels...

He had watched the spelled quill fill out the Hogwarts letters, but no address had appeared on hers. Just her name. The quill had struggled for a moment, but had eventually moved on to the next letter. Albus had taken that to mean that she was behind some fairly serious wards, which was a good indication that she was safe, at least. Albus could only pray that she would arrive tomorrow at Hogwarts, safe and sound.

If she was living somewhere with wards as strong as that, it was also likely that she was already aware of the wizarding world, and thus he wouldn't need to worry about sending someone to introduce her like he had to for muggleborns.

It was a shame, though. He would have liked to have had an opportunity to gauge her reactions to the wizarding world and help instill proper values and all. She would undoubtedly be seen as a symbol of the light, and he needed to ensure that she followed that path well.

Still, tomorrow she would (hopefully) be at Hogwarts, and his work could begin. Regardless of who her guardian turned out to be, Albus was sure he would be able to adequately influence her over the school year. The invisibility cloak he had intended to give her had been recalled by the goblins, so he would need to find something else to encourage her with. Maybe providing some other type of memorabilia of her parents? She would certainly be interested in that. No matter, she would be here tomorrow and his plans could begin.

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September 2, 1991

Harry paced back and forth. Today was the day. Well, technically yesterday was the day, but today was the day he would find out what house Ivy had been sorted into. Hopefully it wouldn't make much of a difference what house she was sorted into. She would do well anywhere, and make friends, and have a distinct lack of dark lords trying to kill her, and all would be well.

Speaking of dark lords, he had nearly forgotten about Quirrellmort. He should probably take care of that.

But back to the important matter at hand. Harry didn't particularly care what house Ivy ended up in, but he had concerns about each of them. She could end up in Gryffindor like he had been. But Harry knew what the Gryffindors were like. He had been one, and he doubted whether there were *too* many differences between the other Gryffindors in his world and the Gryffindors in this one. On the one hand, Ivy might end up being friends with Ron and Hermione like he had been. Harry knew that her life would not end up the same as his (that was kind of the whole point of this, after all), but the thought that she could have the same good friends he had had was a nice one. On the other hand, Gryffindor might encourage Ivy's...adventurous tendencies. Plus there were the Weasley twins. Harry had no doubt that Ivy would somehow get them involved. Hopefully Hogwarts would be left standing by the end.

Then there was Ravenclaw. That seemed like the least likely house to Harry. Sure, Ivy was smart, but she tended to be an act first and research what went wrong later sort of person. He had no idea where that had come from. Plus in Ravenclaw there was a good possibility that she'd be bored. And a bored Ivy was not a good thing. The Montréal incident was a fine example of that.

Ah, Hufflepuff. The house Ivy claimed to want to be in. Harry had no doubt that she'd have at least tried to talk the hat into it. It would probably have come down to who was more stubborn. Most Hufflepuffs were nice when they didn't think you were a traitor to wizarding-kind, so Harry could see that turning out well. As per his request as the supportive, yet reasonable parental figure he was, she had agreed to keep all her plans for world domination strictly theoretical, so Harry wasn't too worried about her suddenly taking over with an army of loyal Hufflepuff minions or anything. Not at all. That's the beauty of ignoring that little niggling in the back of your mind and shoving it into the furthest recesses of your brain so you don't have to think about the possibility of the mini you you're trying to raise suddenly taking over the wo... Yep. No worries whatsoever.

Last but not least was Slytherin. Harry was fully prepared for an Ivy in Slytherin. Besides the fact that most people would be shocked (not that Ivy would particularly mind), there was a chance that some of the other Slytherins would be upset, what with the whole kill-the-dark-lord-as-a-baby thing. After confirming that Ivy was a parselmouth, Harry had taught her *Serpensortia*, stressing that it was for *emergencies only*. Same went with sticking Tiger on anyone. The highly venomous snake (that she had named Tiger of all things - it didn't even have proper stripes) was only allowed to attack people in case of Ivy's imminent death. And

no, someone being stupid is not a good enough reason to stick a snake on them. *Imminent death.*

And then there was Snape. If Ivy did end up in Slytherin Harry was going to invest in a pensieve just to catch a glimpse of the look on Snape's face at the pronouncement. Harry idly wondered what Sirius would have thought had he been in Slytherin...

SIRIUS!

That's it. Harry was the worst godson-from-another-universe ever.

First Quirrellmort and now Sirius. Harry felt like he was failing in spectacular fashion.

After what seemed like an eternity (it was almost lunchtime for Merlin's sake), a school owl *finally* came into view with the expected letter, brushing aside his nearly overwhelming feelings of guilt about having forgotten about his, well technically Ivy's, godfather for the past couple years. Harry eagerly accepted the letter, presented the owl with a plate of bacon, ignored Hedwig's glare in his direction, and began reading. He skimmed through the first few lines, knowing he wouldn't be able to focus on anything else the letter contained until he knew the outcome of the sorting. Ah, there it was.

Slytherin.

Satisfied with that bit of knowledge, Harry went back and began reading the letter more carefully. Met some people on the train... good, good. Oh, the Headmaster asked to speak with her after the feast, well no surprise there. Harry had certainly been in that office enough times during his own school years. Asking for a large box of chocolate for...Snape? Huh? Harry reread that part a few times.

*My new head of house, Professor Snape, seemed really upset last night. He looked sort of grumpy and worried all at the same time. Could you please send me a large box of chocolates so I can give it to him? Maybe the ones with the exploding strawberry bits. Those are my favorite and they make everything better.*

Sure, until she gets a sugar high and runs around for an hour ~~screaming~~ naming the way each species of dragon is most likely to kill you. Surprisingly it's not all death by fire.

Well, that was an interesting take on Snape. Harry wasn't sure Snape would actually appreciate a box of exploding chocolates from his new student, but maybe it'd be worth it just to get a pensieve memory later...

Harry continued reading until he came to what would forever be known as *the paragraph*.

*I miss you, and I hope you're not too lonely while I'm gone.*

Well that was sweet of her. He missed her too.

*Maybe you should be friends with Professor Snape.*

Ah. There it was.



*This morning at breakfast I was talking to Draco, and he came up to us and his eyes were doing the same twitch thing that yours do.*

Harry resisted twitching his eye at that. He had impressive muscle control at this point.

*I think the two of you would get along very well.*

Not likely, but by all means, continue.

*Oh and speaking of friends, I met Draco again on the train,*

Wait, again? Oh, that's right, she had met him getting robes like he had.

*He was very nice and I think we will be best friends. There was another girl, Pansy, who said she was his best friend, and I said we could all be best friends. She didn't seem very happy about that. Maybe she doesn't want more friends. I thought everyone likes more friends, but maybe she's just shy.*

Harry actually snorted at that.

*I met a lot more people on the train and last night, and I think I made a couple other friends too. How many best friends can you have? So far I think I have three. Maybe four if Pansy wants to be friends. But either way I have Draco, and then the two other boys I met. Their names are Fred and George.*

Harry froze. No, no, no, abort, find a time turner, this was not happening...

*They were really nice. Aren't they the ones you said would be able to find me anytime? That seems like a good thing for friends to be able to do.*

In his defense, Harry had told Ivy not to sneak around or do anything reckless because Dumbledore, Snape, and the Weasleys would always be able to find her. That had obviously backfired.

*Anyway, they asked me what house I wanted to be in, and I said Hufflepuff because I could get away with anything, and they thought that was really funny. Today on the way to breakfast they found Draco and I and helped us get there. They were really nice and said that they were looking forward to having friends in the snake house. Draco said they weren't friends, but I think he was just hungry.*

Oh Ivy...

*So if all three of them are my best friends, can I still have more? There were a few other people I met that were*

Here it was scratched out, but Harry could make out something that looked vaguely like... cut? Huh. Wonder what that was.

*really nice. Like this one boy named Neville. He's in Gryffindor too. He said he likes plants, so I lent him my copy of 101 Venomous Vines of Venezuela. He looked excited.*

Harry had definitely not seen *that* book in her trunk. He wondered if she had taken any other books with her that could be potentially used for chaos. Harry chose not to think on that any longer, choosing instead to focus on the fact that Ivy had potentially made friends with Neville. Hopefully that friendship continue to grow. It would be good for both of them. If Neville was anything like the Neville he had known, then being around Ivy could help him raise his confidence, and hopefully being around Neville would tone down some of Ivy's... plots. Harry was choosing to be extremely optimistic about the situation instead of worrying about the fact that a Slytherin Ivy had made friends with the Weasley twins on her very first day. And Malfoy... Well maybe he wasn't such a prat in this world. If he was, Ivy would show him the error of his ways soon enough, and that was comfort enough for Harry.

# Chapter 6

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*September 5, 1991*

Albus Dumbledore had held many titles over the years, but the title of headmaster was by far the most important, he thought as he surveyed the students coming into the Great Hall for breakfast. He chuckled a little at the sight of first years dragging their feet to their house tables. The morning after the first astronomy lesson of the year was always the same. Despite countless warnings from older students and teachers that they really ought to take a nap beforehand, most eleven year olds resented any comparison (real or imagined) to the little children they were trying so hard to prove they were not. Thus, the first Thursday breakfast of the year was almost inevitably filled with tired first years, smirking older years (especially those with first year siblings), and a table of amused professors. Even Severus rolled his eyes good-naturedly at the scene (though it was perhaps directed more towards the other members of the staff than anything). Albus chuckled again at that thought, then turned his mind back to the satisfaction that was his position as headmaster.

Yes, his other titles and responsibilities were important, but none compared to this. Teaching had long been his preferred occupation, and his role as headmaster had only increased his ability to help shape the young minds of their world, even if he sometimes missed teaching the students so directly. If it came down to it, Albus knew without a doubt that he would give up his other positions in an instant if it meant retaining his position as headmaster. The political responsibilities he held gave him ample opportunity to oversee the direction of the wizarding world and help guide the populace towards the light side of magic, but there he was always dealing with adults who more often than not proved to be stubborn and unyielding in their opinions. Here, at least, he was given the opportunity to help shape those opinions. The young students he oversaw could be taught and molded into great witches and wizards.

The fact that most of the stubborn adults he mentally complained about had been his students as well at one time or another wasn't particularly relevant to this line of thought. He would surely be able to sway *these* children, even if he hadn't been able to sway their parents, and the wizarding world would be better for it.

His musings were interrupted by the arrival of dozens of owls bringing the morning's mail. A beautiful snowy owl caught his eye, and he watched as it landed gracefully next to Ivy Potter, accepting a piece of something as she untied the letter it had brought. The bird was certainly an uncommon breed for these parts, and Albus wondered who had sent Ivy a letter with such a majestic looking bird. Perhaps it was her mysterious guardian.

Albus had so far been unable to learn anything about Ivy Potter's guardian. Ever since she had gone missing from the Dursleys he had been searching for the girl, but to no avail. Upon her arrival at Hogwarts, however, he had discovered one possible reason for his failure. Where he had been expecting a girl with a lightning scar and glasses, Ivy had shown up

without either, making his descriptions to trusted witches and wizards secretly aiding in his search rather useless.

As headmaster, he had fully expected to be automatically made magical guardian of Ivy Potter once she arrived at Hogwarts, as was done with all muggleborn (or muggle-raised) students. Here again he was foiled, but it did at least inform him that whoever Ivy had been with the last couple years did have actual guardianship rights. It would be difficult to change that, even if he did know who exactly held her guardianship, but if it became necessary Albus was sure he could find a way to do so.

He sighed. Ivy being sorted into Slytherin had done nothing to assuage his fears over Ivy's guardianship situation, or his necessary plans at preparing her for her eventual role. It would have even much simpler if he could have begun with a fresh slate. A young witch with no magical background, entranced by this newly discovered world and hitherto unknown knowledge of her parents and their noble sacrifice... But alas, he now had to prepare himself for the possibility that she had grown just as prejudiced as the majority of her house. It was unlikely that she had been exposed to too much dark magic in such a relatively short time and at such a young age, but then again he had seen plenty of students enter Hogwarts in the past with more knowledge of the dark arts than anyone should have in their lifetime. He would have to keep a careful eye on Ivy Potter.

And all of this because a mysterious stranger had stolen her away from the safety of the home he had so carefully placed her in.

He was by no means the only one with concerns over Ivy's sorting. Minerva had been quite shocked at first, but had immediately leapt to the conclusion that it was somehow Albus's fault for leaving Ivy at the Dursleys all those years ago. He wasn't quite sure how she had arrived at that opinion, but he did his best to ease her concerns. No need to risk accidentally antagonizing his Deputy so early in the term after all.

Severus had been quite another matter altogether. In a different set of circumstances the look on the boy's face when the hat announced the child of his best friend and greatest rival had been sorted into his own house would have been amusing. As it was, it was merely one more thing to sigh about. Severus had of course sworn to protect the child, but Albus worried that with the increased interaction that would inevitably result from his being her head of house, Severus might see the girl more as the daughter of the friend he lost and less as the daughter of the man he despised. Albus wanted him to protect Ivy, but he couldn't risk Severus actually caring about her. It would make it that much more difficult to convince Severus to return to spying once Voldemort returned. And if Severus were to try to interfere with his plans for Ivy? No, Albus needed his spy, and he needed to keep Severus from growing close to the girl. No doubt some subtle reminders that she was *James'* daughter would do the trick.

The reactions of the rest of the staff had been mixed but lacking in the same type of emotional response as his two heads of house. Of course Hagrid had been a little emotional about Ivy being there in the first place, but he hadn't said anything about the girl's sorting. Oh how Albus wished he had been able to adhere to his original plan and have Hagrid introduce Ivy to the wizarding world. It would have made so many things easier and Hagrid would no doubt have done a very good job at dissuading Ivy from considering Slytherin as an

acceptable house. But what was done was done, and it did not do to dwell on regrets. Now was the time to gather new information, and adjust his plans accordingly. After a century of planning Albus liked to think that he had gotten fairly good at it.

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Ivy finished scanning her letter just as two red heads plopped down on either side of her.

“Hello, Fred, George,” she said. “What are you two doing over here?”

Draco looked like he was about to jump in with some sort of insult, but she just pushed a piece of toast into his face. He was always so grumpy when he was hungry, and it seemed like he was nearly always hungry. Didn’t the boy eat enough? Maybe not. That could explain why he was grumpy all the time. Especially around the Gryffindors. Ivy had heard somewhere that the color red made you more hungry. That explained it then.

“We just came to...”

“See our favorite...”

“Slytherin of course.”

“And Draco,” she added.

“Of course,” the twins said together, giving Draco a smile that seemed to unnerve him. Weird. Didn’t he know that people smiled to make you happy? Why did he look panicked?

“So how are you kids...”

“Surviving your first day...”

“After astronomy?”

“It’s alright. Draco didn’t want to take a nap beforehand though so we’re really tired.” A yawn punctuated the end of her sentence, reaffirming that statement.

“Of course not! I’m not a baby.” Draco grew quieter, as if realizing just who he was talking to. Ivy didn’t understand why he was so reluctant to talk to the twins. They were so nice.

Ivy rolled her eyes. “You don’t have to be a baby to take naps, you know. Uncle Henry says it’s one of life’s greatest gifts, to be able to fall asleep whenever you want.”

“Ah, the mysterious Uncle.”

“What other wise words has he shared with you?”

“Well I told him all about all of you and how I made friends.”

Ivy didn’t notice the way all three boys tensed up slightly, although for different reasons.

“Wait, what did you tell him,” Draco asked. He wanted to know that he was being accurately portrayed to someone as prestigious as Lord Peverell.

“I told him I met the three of you and that I thought you would be my best friends. I also asked him how many best friends I could have and he said as many as I wanted to. He also said it was a great idea to make fiends in different houses, and that I should keep making as many friends as I could. He wrote something about finding nice kids that I can study quietly with but I’m not really sure what he meant. Oh, and he said that you two would always be able to find me, but he didn’t tell me how you could do that.” Ivy looked at each twin in turn. “So how can you find me? It some sort of charm? Do you think you could teach me?”

Ivy missed the look of slight panic that flashed over both boys’ faces before they were able to choke out an answer.

“‘S not a charm,” the one she was pretty sure was Fred muttered.

“We just know Hogwarts really well,” said probably-George.

“And we’re really good...”

“At finding people.”

Draco looked unimpressed. “You’re only third years. You can’t possibly know the school better than all the older students. And why would you be able to find people so easily?”

If Ivy had been able to read the minds of the twins (or even their facial expressions a little better) she would have seen the alarms blaring red in their brains as they tried to come up with an excuse.

“Magic,” said George. Man was this going to be awkward if she was mixing up two of her best friends.

“Motivation,” said Fred at the same time. And with that they both rose quickly and left the great hall, presumably to head to class or something. Good for them for being so responsible and getting to class early.

Draco sighed, and then sighed again when Ivy didn’t respond to his first one. “Why do they have to sit with us here,” he said. “They have their own table over there.” He gestured to the (much louder) Gryffindor table on the other side of the hall.

“Because they were being nice and coming and saying good morning. It’s a nice thing to do with friends, you know.”

“But they’re not my friends.”

“Well they’re my friends, and you’re my friend, so you might as well be friends.”

Draco opened his mouth to reply but suddenly Pansy was there and Draco was sufficiently distracted. Pansy smirked at Ivy, who smiled back. Pansy didn’t look quite as happy then. Ivy

wasn't sure why. Wasn't she happy that Ivy had noticed how nice Pansy was being by distracting Draco from his grumpiness? Oh well. She could thank Pansy later. Time for class.

## Chapter End Notes

Thanks everybody who has read this or commented so far. I've never posted anything before so I was kind of nervous but I've loved reading the comments that have been sent. You guys are so nice!

## Chapter 7

*September 6, 1991*

Draco hadn't stopped beaming all morning. Today was their first day of potions. It was the class he had been most looking forward to, and since his godfather was the teacher it was obviously the best one. Ivy hadn't been excited for it at all at first, which Draco did not understand one bit. He had asked her why, and she had asked, "isn't it a bit like cooking?"

He had sputtered, and said that of course it wasn't, and then for some reason she had seemed much happier about their upcoming class. Draco wasn't sure what cooking had to do with anything, or why she would have thought potions was in any way similar (as if *he* would like anything that resembled something as tedious as *cooking*), but she seemed to have finally realized that potions was the best, so he was satisfied.

---

Ivy went over the things she knew about potions in her head. Henry claimed to not be very good at potions, but he had taught her a few things. Most of all, though, he had drilled into her mind three facts that he said were very important to know about potions. She wasn't quite sure why, and when she had asked he hadn't been able to come up with a good response, only saying that it was *very important* that she knew those three things. So, being the perfect little angel of chaos that she was, she diligently recited the answers to herself all the way to potions class.

Upon arrival in the dungeon classroom, Pansy had immediately claimed the seat by Draco, so Ivy sat down next to Neville and began asking how he was liking the book she had lent him. At first he had been shy and slow to respond, but upon seeing that Ivy was genuine in her question he seemed to calm down and they began discussing a few of the more vicious of the vines in the book. Ivy was impressed that Neville had read so much of it already. Sure, learning about deadly plants was awesome, but still it had taken her like a month to read that book and here he had had it for a few days and was almost finished. And he remembered little details about nearly every single one.

Once Professor Snape entered the room, however, the noise quieted to the point where you could have heard a fly sneeze. Which turned out to be a good thing, since the professor was speaking barely above a whisper.

"Potter!" Even though she had been paying close attention Ivy was still a little startled at the sudden calling of her name.

"Yes, Professor?"

"What would I get if I added powdered root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?"

Oh this was perfect. Just what she had been mentally reciting. "Draught of Living Death, sir."



The only indication of the professor's surprise was a slight raising of one eyebrow. "And where would you look if I told you to find me a bezoar?"

Two for two. This was going great. Ivy guessed that maybe Henry really did know what he was talking about. "The stomach of a goat, sir."

Professor Snape gave an almost imperceptible nod, then dropped his voice to its previous volume and asked, "And what is the difference between monkshood and wolfsbane?"

Three for three. How had Henry known she would need to know this? Had he been asked these same questions? That would make sense. Was this the standard potions introduction then? "It's the same plant, sir, also called aconite."

Professor Snape looked at her for a moment, then nodded. "Very good. Five points to Slytherin."

Ivy heard a small huff to her left but didn't too closely at who had made it. Her professor was still looking her in the eye.

"Tell me, Potter, where did you learn the answers to those questions?"

Ivy was slightly confused, because weren't these things she was supposed to know and remember and foR MERLIN'S SAKE DON'T EVER FORGET? At least that's how Henry had made it seem.

"My uncle told me I needed to learn those things, and make sure I didn't forget the answers."

Professor Snape looked shocked for a moment, but quickly recovered and said, "Your... uncle? And what, pray tell, did your uncle teach you about potions?"

"Oh not much, sir. He said he wasn't very good at it and that I would be much better off just waiting until I came here so I could learn from someone who actually knew what they were doing. He just taught me those three questions and told me to remember the answers."

The professor paled a bit, though it went unnoticed by the majority of the students. "And what is your uncle's name?" he asked softly.

"Henry Peverell."

Snape paled further, though thankfully for him most of the eleven year olds currently occupying the room were unable to recognize any change.

The lesson proceeded as normal after that. Well, as close to normal as Ivy assumed it was likely to be. This was her first potions lesson, after all, so she didn't have much to compare it to.

Things were going fairly well, until a boy behind him had a cauldron blow up, and Neville stuck something in their cauldron that must not have been right, because theirs started melting and spewing something that looked not at all like what the description on the board said. The Professor was there in an instant, berating both boys and then Ivy for... something.

Ivy wasn't really paying attention. She was much more focused on trying to avoid the spilled potion mishap that seemed determined to eat whatever it touched.

“-ter. POTTER ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?”

Ivy jerked her head up at that. She hadn't been listening, but somehow it didn't seem wise to tell her teacher that.

Professor Snape kept going, and she stopped paying attention again, though she did manage to catch the last part.

“-be you should have been in Hufflepuff. I...”

“That's what I said!” Ivy blurted out, interrupting whatever else Professor Snape was about to yell say.

He stopped mid-rant, and just stared at her unblinking. She vaguely noticed that the rest of the room was looking at her, minus Neville who was whimpering at the boils covering his face and hand.

After what seemed to be an unnecessarily long time for everyone to keep staring at her, Professor Snape took a deep breath, like Henry did sometimes when his eye had twitched too much and he needed some other way of expressing emotion, and said, “Potter, take Longbottom to the hospital wing. NOW.”

Ivy glanced briefly at Draco, who just shrugged, then grabbed Neville's unhurt hand and her things, leaving a still silent group of students staring at them as they exited.

Well at least potions had been interesting. It beat out History of Magic for sure.

---

*September 12, 1991*

Today was going to be the best day. Today was the first flying lesson of the year. Henry had already taught Ivy how to fly, of course. It was part of his ongoing attempt to prove how awesome quidditch was. It wasn't that Ivy hated it or anything, she just wasn't that into it. Henry assured her that it was just a temporary apathy towards the sport, and that she was sure to enjoy it once she got to Hogwarts. Regardless, Ivy *did* love flying, and today was her first chance to do that since she had arrived at school.

Draco had been complaining for four days now about how unfair it was that first years weren't allowed brooms of their own. Even Pansy had seemed to be annoyed at him. Even *Greg and Vincent* seemed annoyed at this point, and in the twelve days Ivy had known them they hadn't so much as twitched an eye at anything. Finally, taking pity on the entirety of Hogwarts, Ivy had asked Draco, “Well if first years aren't allowed a broom, maybe it's for a reason? Maybe someone died or something. Or maybe something else horrible happened and now they're being cautious so no one gets hurt.”

That had shut Draco up for a single afternoon until he had gone on an impulsive library research spree and discovered that the reason behind the ban on brooms was actually a bunch of first years a couple decades back who had brought brooms to school, tried to go for a leisurely fly around the lake, and then ended up in the lake because none of them knew how to fly properly. Apparently the giant squid in the lake had been involved somehow. Ivy kind of tuned it out as soon as Draco launched back into his rant about the unfairness of the rule.

But today was flying day, so Draco would hopefully be happy about that as much as she was. It was also just as likely that he would spend the entire lesson complaining about the quality of the brooms they were using or something as equally pointless as that, but Ivy was an optimistic person. The fact that Fred and George had already complained about the school brooms did nothing to dampen that optimism.

---

Well this was going...not well. This was not going well. Somehow poor Neville had lost control of his broom, fallen, broken his wrist, and was now being escorted to the hospital wing for the second time in a week. Then Draco had picked up the funny looking ball Neville had dropped, and suddenly the situation had deteriorated into a shouting match. It was, to some extent, Slytherin against Gryffindor, but there was mostly just a lot of shouting. Finally Draco had mounted his broom, taunting the kid Ivy was 97 percent sure was Fred and George's little brother, and saying that he should see if he could catch the remember... something. Ivy wasn't quite sure about that last part.

Deciding that enough was enough and that this probably counted as one of those acceptable times to use spells on people (Henry had said when she was hurt or about to be hurt, someone else was about to be hurt, or people were being idiots), she waved her wand in Draco's direction and the ball flew into her hand.

Suddenly she was reminded in a not-quite-so-pleasant way of potions the previous week. Everyone got quiet and turned to stare at her. Even Draco was looking at her with his mouth slightly open.

"How did you do that?" Draco asked incredulously.

"Umm...magic?" Honestly. They were at a *magic school* where they were learning *magic*. Why was anyone surprised by that? They had been going to the same classes as her. At least she was pretty sure. There was one kid that looked unfamiliar but to be fair she hadn't even been there two weeks. She didn't know *everyone*. Yet.

One of the Gryffindor girls spoke up. "Well what spell was that?"

"Spell?" What did she mean spell?

"Yes." The girl sounded frustrated. "What spell did you use?"

"I didn't?"

"Well you had to have done something. Just waving around doesn't do anything and we don't know nonverbal spells yet."

Ivy went to reply that no, she really hadn't used a spell, just had thought what she wanted to happen and aimed her wand in the general direction. It wasn't like she had done anything *exciting*. But Pansy cut in with something that was most likely an insult if you went off the offended looks on some of the Gryffindor's faces and the pleased looks on some of the Slytherins, and the shouting resumed.

Ivy ignored her fellow students as they descended into yet another shouting match, choosing instead to take a closer look at the odd ball she was holding that everyone seemed so interested in. She'd make sure she gave it back to Neville when she visited him in the hospital wing.

---

Ivy didn't get a chance to visit Neville in the hospital wing at all, since by the time she had gone he had already been released. She gave him his ball back, which he accepted gratefully, then they entered the great hall for dinner together, only to find Draco and the yes-that's-definitely-Weasley boy ("Ron," Neville whispered helpfully) glaring each other down as best as can be done by eleven year olds. Seeing the newest arrivals, Ron quickly grabbed Neville by the arm, leading him over to the Gryffindor table while saying he had to talk to him, and Draco stomped walked gracefully and with great poise to the Slytherin table, Ivy following in his wake and rolling her eyes. Apparently the argument hadn't ended during the flying lesson. Oh well. It was dinnertime, and Ivy was determined to eventually realize her goal of getting Draco to eat enough that he wouldn't be so grumpy.

---

*A Short Time Later:*

"You did WHAT?"

Draco suddenly regretted telling her anything. His sense of self-preservation kicking in, he backtracked a little and said, "Well I wasn't actually planning on going."

Apparently that was not the correct thing to say. His mother had always taught him not to make a lady mad. His father had muttered something along the lines of "an angry witch is a scary..." in reply, but Draco hadn't heard the last part before his mother had demonstrated exactly why he should never make a lady mad. Did Ivy count as a lady? Given the look on her face Draco was going to go with yes.

Ivy seemed to be mentally compiling a list of Draco's every fault, and come on Ivy, the list can't be *that* long, but she eventually spoke. "That is so much worse, Draco. He's going to go there and be waiting for you and he'll get in trouble and it'll all be your fault."

Draco was about to explain that that was sort of the point, but thought better of it. "Come on, Ivy. Weasley and Longbottom will be fine. Look, I'm sorry I said you'd be my second but it's not like we're going so why does it matter?"

Oh no. That face did not look good.

"So not only did you drag *me* into this, you dragged *Neville* into this too?"

“Technically Weasley dragged Longbottom into this.”

“Because *you* challenged him to a duel. What were you thinking?”

Apparently that was a rhetorical question because when Draco went to explain his thought process in precise detail Ivy just glared at him.

---

*Later That Evening:*

“Ivy, come on. What are we doing? We’re going to get caught and then we are going to get in trouble and Snape will be mad at me and then he will tell my dad and then *he* will tell my *mum* and then I’ll be in real trouble.”

Ivy shook her head and continued to drag him down the corridor. “You’re the one who challenged them in the first place...”

“Technically it was only Weasley...”

“AND,” Ivy continued, completely ignoring Draco’s last statement, “we didn’t find Neville *or* the twins before they headed back to their common room and I don’t know where that is, so now we have to find Neville and tell him not to worry about this stupid duel.”

“Wait, so you don’t care if Weasley gets in trouble?”

Ivy looked surprised. “Why should I? You were stupid enough to challenge him to a duel but he was stupid enough to accept. Plus if we find Neville we’ll probably find him so it’s not like we have to do anything extra.”

Draco seemed to accept this response, and Ivy found that she didn’t have to drag him quite as hard the rest of the way.

They were almost there, when Draco pulled Ivy abruptly to the side. “Shh,” he whispered when she began to question him. “Do you hear that?”

Ivy listened, and picked up on a voice. “Who is that do you think?” It certainly didn’t sound like Weasley or Neville. Or any kid for that matter.

Draco suddenly looked panicked. “It’s Filch. Quick, we have to run.”

Had any portraits been paying attention at that moment they would have heard a voice say “I told you this was a bad idea,” with the strangest type of echo. It was almost as if it had been said by more than one person at once. But none of them were, so there was no one to comment on it, or on the sight of two children running through a mostly deserted corridor late at night.

---

*September 13, 1991, Morning*

“So then what happened?” George asked.

Ivy was more than happy to continue her tale. “Well we kept running, and found ourselves in the forbidden corridor on the third floor...”

“Accidentally,” Draco inserted.

“...and we thought we heard Filch coming so we tried to find a room to hide in, and we only found this locked door, so we went in it...”

“Less accidentally.”

“...and went in a room with this huge Cerberus in it...”

“Definitely not on purpose.”

“...so we turned around and ran straight to the common room...”

“Very much on purpose.”

“...except we didn’t know the best way there so it took a really long time and we had to wait for a minute to sneak back in so no one saw us and that’s why we’re really tired this morning.”

The twins looked at each other, then back at their favorite little snake and her slowly-growing-on-them friend. “Wicked,” they said in unison.

---

*Sometime Later*

*Dear Ivy,*

*No, we may not adopt a Cerberus. And no, you may not ask Hagrid if you can have a Cerberus puppy. You already have a deadly magical creature. No more until AFTER you graduate from Hogwarts.*

*With Love,*

*H.P.*

Ivy reread the letter one last time. So that’s who the Cerberus belonged to. Good to know.

# Chapter 8

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*September 14, 1991*

“Again Neville, I’m really sorry you got dragged into all of that.”

Neville shrugged. “It’s okay. I could have said no.”

Ivy tilted her head and asked, “Well why didn’t you?”

*Flashback*

*“I need you to be my second in a duel tonight.”*

*Neville brain froze up at that. Ron wanted him to do what?*

*“Be my second in a duel.” Apparently Neville had spoken out loud. “You know, show up, and beat Malfoy if he cheats or something.”*

*What Neville wanted to say was something along the lines of: “Why would you do that? Why me? Don’t drag me into this. Why are you the way you are?”*

*What came out was altogether different. Actually, nothing really came out (which was part of the problem). There was a sort of squeaking sound that was unfortunately audible and he found himself quite involuntarily nodding his head. Merlin, he was screwed.*

*“Who is Malfoy’s second?” was the question he finally managed to get out.*

*“Potter,” was Ron’s reply.*

*Neville’s next thoughts included several words that he was fairly certain he was not supposed to know.*

*End Flashback*

“Didn’t get a chance.”

Ivy nodded. “Yeah, I understand. Well sorry just the same.”

Neville just shrugged. It hadn’t ended up being so bad. And they hadn’t even gotten caught, unless you count the Weasley twins, but they had just laughed at Ron’s indignation and said that Malfoy probably didn’t show up because Ivy wasn’t an idiot and had likely made him stay in their common room. So with no worries that the twins were going to tell on them, Neville had gradually relaxed about the whole thing. This whole adventure thing was kind of

exciting. Of course that didn't mean he'd want to do it again. Well, maybe he would, but maybe the next one could be during the day. And not break any school rules.

"Oi, Gred. Looks like we got ourselves a snake in the lion's den."

Neville looked up to see the twins sitting down across from Ivy and him.

"What's our favorite snake doing over here?"

"Just saying hi to Neville. And telling him sorry about the whole duel thing before."

Neville went a little red. Couldn't they keep it down? He really didn't want anyone else hearing about this.

The twins just nodded.

"Yes, poor Neville..."

"Bravely following our dear, idiot baby brother..."

"Like the true friend he is."

Neville went even more red. He could feel it. He must look like a tomato by now.

Ivy smiled. "Yeah, he is a good friend. Still wasn't nice to drag him into it though," she said, her smile changing to a frown as she spoke.

Nope, now he was a tomato. The twins had obviously noticed and were smirking at him. This was all horrible.

Finally the fates took pity on him.

"Well sorry we can't stick around..."

"But we best be heading off."

Ivy looked at both boys. "How come? It's Saturday? And don't say the library because I'm not sure I'd believe you."

They pretended to look affronted at that.

"Hey, I'll have you know that we spent plenty of time in the library..."

"The first week..."

"Of our first year."

Neville and Ivy both laughed.

"But as it turns out..."



“Today is quidditch tryouts.”

Ivy sighed. “What is it with everyone and quidditch?”

Both twins gasped. How did they keep doing things like that so in sync?

“You can’t mean to say, Miss Potter...”

“That you don’t know about quidditch?”

Ivy rolled her eyes. “Of course I know about quidditch. I know plenty about quidditch. I just don’t get what the big deal is.”

With that the twins got up, leapt over the table to some mild protests by surrounding students and a very stern look from their head of house at the staff table, and both knelt on one knee on either side of Ivy. Neville was awkwardly in the way but there wasn’t anywhere to go so he just stayed put.

“Come with us, o fairest snake so we can demonstrate to you...”

“Just how amazing...”

“Wonderful...”

“And absolutely brilliant quidditch is.”

Ivy rolled her eyes again. “I don’t think watching a bunch of students try out is going to change my mind at all.”

The twins gave her a quality puppy dog eyes look, and Ivy giggled. “Alright fine. I’ll come. Happy?”

The twins whooped and ran out of the great hall, completely ignoring Professor McGonagall’s protests from the head table.

Ivy turned to Neville. “Do you want to come?” she asked.

Neville shook his head no. “Sorry, I’ve got an essay I need to finish. Thanks though.”

Ivy just smiled and shrugged her shoulders. “That’s okay. I’ll make Draco go.”

For the briefest moment Neville pitied Malfoy. He recovered exceptionally quickly.

---

“So where are we going anyway?”

“Quidditch tryouts.”

“Tryouts already happened, Ivy. Plus I thought you hated quidditch.”

Ivy huffed. “I don’t *hate* it, I just don’t see why everyone is so obsessed with it. And the Slytherin tryouts were yesterday.”

It took Draco a moment to understand the implications of that sentence. She knew tryouts were yesterday. So why...

“No, no, nonononono. No. We are NOT going to another house’s tryouts.”

“You lost the right to say no to me, Draco Malfoy.”

“Oh would you get over it already.”

“You dragged me into that stupid duel...”

“That I never intended on fighting.”

“...so you can let me drag you into this.”

Draco muttered that she had, quite literally, been the one doing all the dragging. Ivy ignored him in favor of continuing to drag him. Deciding that it was much more dignified to walk of his own accord than to be dragged through Hogwarts, Draco shrugged out of her grasp and began quickening his pace. Maybe people would think *she* was the one following *him*. That would be much better for his image. Truth is rather irrelevant when it comes to image, after all.

“At least tell me it’s Ravenclaw or something.”

Ivy shook her head. “Gryffindor.”

Draco’s protest of “why me” did absolutely nothing to dissuade Ivy.

---

Ivy was enjoying herself. She had half expected the twins to do *something* amusing during the tryouts, because, well, it was them, and she wasn’t disappointed. The longer it took for the Gryffindor captain to run the prospects through trials, the more theatrical the twins became. Even Draco was entertained, though he did his best to hide it.

Both were also entertained by the Gryffindor captain’s growing frustration at the prospective seekers. He was trying to have them go up against each other, but none of them were good enough to actually do much. One kid had almost fallen off his broom, but had recovered in time. Two others had nearly crashed into each other in an attempt to catch the snitch, which had disappeared after that. Draco had burst out laughing at the sight, and the Gryffindors had turned to glare at the two Slytherins.

A moment later the Gryffindor captain flew over to where Ivy and Draco were sitting.

“What’re you two doing here?”

Ivy shrugged. “The twins invited us.”

“You,” Draco added unhelpfully.

“Us,” Ivy said again.

The Gryffindor had a pained look on his face. “Fred, George,” he bellowed. “Get your brooms over here.”

The redheads flew over with an entirely unnecessary number of loops and spins, to Ivy’s amusement, Draco’s annoyance, and their captain’s exasperation.

“Yes, oh cap-i-tan?” George asked.

“Why’d you invite a couple of snakes to tryouts? Don’t you know they’re just going to report back to Flint? What were you thinking?”

“Whoa, calm down there, Wood,” said Fred.

“See, we’re just trying to do our duty...”

“As the wonderful friends we are...”

“And introduce a couple of kids...”

“To the fantastic sport of quidditch.”

Ivy was fairly certain she saw Wood’s eye twitch. Why did people do that so often, anyway? Sure, she’d made it a game to see how often she could get Henry to do it, but she had no idea so many other people did it too.

“Right,” said Wood. He turned back towards Draco and Ivy. “So you two are new to quidditch then, hmm?”

Draco rolled his eyes and started to say that he was perfectly well acquainted to the sport, thank you very much, but Ivy interrupted the start of that particular rant.

“Oh I’m familiar with quidditch. I just don’t see what the big deal is.”

Wood’s eye twitched very clearly that time.

Ivy continued. “The seeker tryouts aren’t going so well though, are they. Do you need any help having them go up against someone? I could help if you wanted. Except I haven’t got a broom with me so I suppose that wouldn’t do much good.”

All four boys were staring at her.

“You play seeker and you didn’t tell me?” Draco asked, incensed.

Ivy rolled her eyes. “Yes I can play seeker. I’m pretty good at it I think. At least that’s what Henry says. And he’s *really* good so I guess that’s gotta be worth something.”

Wood had a very pained look on his face now.

Fred hopped off his broom and plopped down next to Ivy. "Here you go, princess," he said, handing his broom to her. "Go help Wood. I'll stay here and keep the grumpy dragon company."

Draco protested that his name was not *dragon* and that he was not grumpy. Ivy personally thought his protest didn't help his cause, but she just hopped on Fred's broom and took off.

---

Oliver watched the Slytherin first year take off towards *his* tryouts on *his* player's broom. He looked at both of the twins, but they each just shrugged, the one twin then turning and following after Potter.

Wondering why he couldn't have just been handed a new seeker on a golden platter, Oliver sighed and headed off towards the students still hoping for a spot on the team. If nothing else, it was unlikely that Potter was actually *worse* than some of the Gryffindors. That wasn't a particularly comforting thought. No doubt if she was even halfway decent Flint would snatch her up next year.

When he arrived at the group of seeker wannabes he asked, "So where's the snitch?"

None of the other students met his eye. Finally someone muttered, "We lost it."

Oliver felt like crying. "Well then go find it. That's why it's called a *seeker*."

"But we already tried that," one student who was most definitely not making the team whined.

Forty minutes later, no one had even spotted the snitch. He glanced around. Potter and Weasley were sitting on their brooms, chatting away, the chasers who were on the team were on the ground, also chatting, his other beater was still in the stands, talking to the *other* Slytherin, the seeker hopefuls were still meandering around the pitch, and everyone else had left.

With a significant amount of willpower, Oliver turned towards the small first year near him. "Potter, think you can find the snitch?"

Potter stopped talking to Weasley and turned towards him, surprised. "Umm, sure? Why?"

Oliver gritted his teeth. "Because *apparently* we...lost it."

"Oh, okay. On it." And with that she took off cheerfully. Well the kid was definitely a natural on the broom. No doubt about that.

He turned towards Weasley, who had a stupid grin on his face. "Oh, shut up Weasley."

"Didn't say a thing..." Oliver glared and Weasley mimed zipping his lips shut.

Less than five minutes later Potter was back. With the snitch. "Here you go," she said, handing it to him. "Sorry it took me so long."

She was sorry it...took her so...

Oliver graciously accepted the snitch. That was it. It now was his desire, no, it was his *duty* to convince her that quidditch was brilliant. And that she should love it. And play it. Well, maybe not for Flint, but perhaps he could figure out a way to get her into quidditch without her ending up being the star of the Slytherin Quidditch Team for the next six years.

## Chapter End Notes

Okay so I had more that was going to be part of this chapter, but then all of a sudden it was long, so I split it up. So now there'll be one more chapter with Ivy, and then we'll finally be getting back to Harry. I have a detailed outline for most of year one at this point, and a general outline through year five. My point being, I have no idea how long this will end up being. I'm just kind of going with it. Also, I've never done this before. Anyone else ever had the feeling that they have absolutely no control over what they're writing? I think something, I can picture it, and then suddenly I can't unthink it. Like, that's just the way it is now, y'all. Thanks to everyone who has been reading and leaving comments so far. You guys are the best. Stay safe, everyone.

## Chapter 9

Stupid Gryffindors. What did they have that he didn't have? He knew all about quidditch too. And sure, he wasn't on a team, yet, but he would be. And he would be the best... whatever position he ended up playing. Not beater, though. Maybe seeker or chaser. Keeper if he must. Of course he was determined to get Ivy on the team too, and she would undoubtedly be seeker, so maybe he would go for chaser. And he would be brilliant. Much better than those stupid Gryffindors and their stupid grins and stupid ability to get Ivy to play their stupid game. Draco paused and offered a quick prayer asking forgiveness from whatever deity was over quidditch. But still, stupid Gryffindors.

And stupid Weasley, whichever one it had been, with his stupid grin and his stupid names for Draco (didn't he know that only his mother was allowed to call him that?), and his stupid comments about his supposed crush on Ivy. DRACO MALFOY DID NOT HAVE A CRUSH.

Feeling slightly better, Draco now concentrated on ridding his face of what he was sure was a pinkish tint he did not want. Ever. Stupid Weasleys. Stupid Gryffindors.

So focused was he on utilizing his extensive vocabulary to eloquently describe the stupidity of the color red and everything it represented (mainly Gryffindors and undesirable blushes in this case), that he failed to hear his name being called until he was suddenly faced with an irritated older student practically towering over him.

"Malfoy!"

Draco blinked. Why was he being yelled at?

"Malfoy, are you even listening?"

"Sorry, what?"

The older student huffed. "Were you even listening to me? Were you at the Gryffindor tryouts?"

Why did this student car... Oh wait. Slytherin. Fifth Year. Surname Flint, given name Marcus. Quidditch Captain. *Slytherin* Quidditch Captain. Draco's thoughts turned to a couple of those French words his father had made him promise never to let his mother hear (or know where he had learned them in the first place).

Draco nodded. Flint gestured for him to continue. Not knowing what he was supposed to be continuing, Draco verbalized his response.

"And?" Flint was clearly agitated.

"Sorry?" The Gryffindor stupidity had obviously rubbed off on him. That was the last time he let Ivy drag *him* to a group of Gryffindors.

“What happened? Who’s on the team? Who’d they get as seeker? What’s their strategy?”

Draco could only utter a very eloquent “umm” in response.

Flint didn’t take kindly to the (non)response.

“Come on, what did you see? What happened?”

“Well, Ivy found the snitch.”

Flint stared at him for a moment. “Ivy...as in Potter? Potter found the snitch? What was Potter doing playing with the Gryffindors?”

So Draco found himself obligated to tell the entire story of what had led to Ivy retrieving the snitch for the Gryffindor tryouts. He left out a few parts, such as Weasley accusing him of having a crush right as he was leaving, or the Gryffindor Captain going on and on about how Ivy just “had to play quidditch” because her talent was “too good to pass up.” Well, he tried to leave all that out, anyway. It didn’t work out. He thought a couple more of those French words as he felt his face heat up again.

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Marcus Flint had been excited to learn that a couple Slytherin students had been at the Gryffindor tryouts. Not only had they shown up, but they had *stayed*. Wood must have been very distracted to have not kicked them off the field right when they showed up. Oh well. His gain. On the downside, they were both first years. But he had heard that Malfoy at least had a bit of a head for quidditch, so he had hoped to gain at least some useful information from him. Except not only had the kid not even noticed him until Flint was practically shouting his name, but he hadn’t been able to give much description of the tryouts at all. Except for the part about Potter. Now that had been interesting.

At first Marcus had been incensed that a member of *his house* had, in any way, shape, or form, helped out Wood of all people. He mentally spit out that name in his thoughts as per usual.

But the longer he thought on it, the more he decided there was a great deal to be gained by this. First of all, it meant that he had a potential spy among the Gryffindors. Malfoy was obviously useless when it came to that, But Potter was apparently in the good graces of the Lions. Everyone knew she hung around the Weasley twins, but they didn’t count. Now that she had been accepted in some way by *other* Gryffindors, there was a good chance she’d be able to tell him what happened with their quidditch team.

The second piece of useful fact he was able to extract from this information was that Gryffindor was unlikely to have a good seeker. That in and of itself was fantastic news.

Then, of course, there was the fact that Potter was evidently good at quidditch. That would have been a bit more exciting if Malfoy hadn’t gone on to complain about how Potter didn’t actually *like* quidditch and how Wood had apparently been heard saying how he was determined to get her interested in the sport.

Neither of those would do at all.

Potter would have to be convinced to play quidditch. She didn't even have to *like* it, for Merlin's sake. She just had to be good at it. But if she *was* to become interested in quidditch, it would absolutely not do to have *Wood* be able to take the credit. Marcus honestly hadn't been sure about Potter getting sorted into Slytherin in the first place, but by Merlin she was in his house, so if anyone was going to get her interested in quidditch, it was going to be him.

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*\*thump\**

Percy banged his head against the table. If he heard *one more* person ask him why his brothers had invited two Slytherins to the Gryffindor quidditch tryouts, he was going to lose it. This was going to be it. This would be his end. He always knew the twins would somehow be the death of him. And yet people kept coming up to him, assuming that because he was their older brother he was able to exercise some amount of control over them. Ha. As if. He was the last bloody person in this bloody school they were likely to listen to.

He had been a prefect for all of two weeks and already he had given up on those two. Sure, he would continue to put up the token protests to their...shenanigans...but in his heart of hearts Percy Weasley had given up. He had at least hoped to be able to stop them from continuing their ridiculous quest to confuse everyone in the school. They were already identical. Why on earth did they need to try and confuse everyone further? Most people couldn't tell them apart anyway, but they still insisted on answering to the wrong names switching places. It had gone on all last year, and as soon as Percy saw his prefect badge he had been determined to put an end to it. But that, along with any other plans he might have regarding the twins, quickly fell to the wayside. He was a failure. An absolute failure. Two weeks and he had already given up on putting a stop to the twins' schemes.

Percy's internal rant of despair was rudely interrupted by Oliver. Literally the last person he wanted to see right now (as he conveniently ignored the fact that they shared a room and he was thus more likely to see Wood than most other people on the planet right now). He prepared himself for the inevitable quidditch question.

"Perce, I need your help."

That wasn't what he had expected. Knowing this would probably end in disaster, but frankly too tired at the moment to care, Percy answered, "with what?"

"I need you to talk the twins into getting Potter to let me teach her quidditch."

Percy took a full minute to process that sentence. "I'm sorry, you what?"

Oliver repeated himself but it did absolutely nothing to help Percy.

"Let me get this straight." Oliver was practically bouncing on his feet by this point. "You want *me*, to convince the *twins*, to talk to...Potter was it?" Oliver nodded. "Right. So you want them to talk to *Potter*, a first year, in *Slytherin*, because you, *Oliver Wood*, captain of the



*Gryffindor* Quidditch team, want to teach her about quidditch. Am I missing anything there?”

Oliver shook his head. “No. That ‘bout sums it up.”

Percy felt his eye twitch. “Right. First of all, why do you think I’d be able to get the twins to do anything? And second of all,” he said, ignoring Oliver’s attempts at answering his first (mostly rhetorical question), “why?”

Oliver looked confused. “Why what?”

“Why do you want to teach quidditch to some first year Slytherin anyway? You do realize that you’d be essentially handing a player to Flint for next year, right?”

Oliver waved him off. Percy wondered if he should take his friend to Madame Pomfrey to get checked out.

“That’s not important. What’s important is that I get her interested in quidditch.”

“Why?”

Oliver stared at him. “Because...well, because it’s quidditch.”

Percy had heard that answer many times over the past few years, but never in this particular sort of situation.

“And I won’t let Flint beat me again,” Oliver continued.

Percy tried to connect that statement but could find no logical connection whatsoever.

“Again, you do realize you’d be handing him a player, right?”

Oliver shook his head. “No, you don’t get it. If I don’t get to her first, then *he’ll* be the one to show her how great quidditch is. I can’t let him beat me again.”

“How is he beating you at anything? How is this anything to win?”

Oliver reiterated several of his previous points. “So, will you help me?”

*\*thump\**

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*At the same time, in another part of the castle*

Ivy nudged Draco. “Did you feel that?”

Draco looked up from his book that was most definitely a very serious read related to very serious academics and not at all a novel about dragons that he had brought from home. “Feel what?”

Ivy paused. “I think it was the kind of feeling like when someone’s eye twitches.”

“What are you going on about?”

Ivy rolled her eyes. “No, I mean it. I felt something. And it feels like someone’s eye twitched.”

“Why on earth would you be able to feel that?”

Ivy shrugged her shoulders. “I always feel it when Henry’s eye twitches.”

Now Draco rolled his eyes. “Well then maybe somewhere someone’s eye is twitching because of you.”

Ivy thought about that for a moment. “Fair enough.”

And with that, Draco turned back to his dragons...er, I mean studying.

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*September 18, 1991*

Fred watched as Ivy practically skipped towards Hagrid’s hut. When she had asked them if they knew Hagrid, and if they could introduce her, they had both readily agreed. Then she had started talking about how the Cerberus she and Malfoy had found belonged to Hagrid, and she wanted to learn all about it. Fred supposed it was only natural to want to learn all about the thing that had almost killed you. Still, her enthusiasm had come as a bit of a surprise.

The little Malfoy had absolutely refused to come, and as much as Fred had enjoyed teasing him at the quidditch tryouts, he wasn’t at all saddened at his absence.

Reaching Hagrid’s hut, George stepped forward and knocked on the large door. The door soon opened, and the gamekeeper looked down at them with a smile.

“Well, if it isn’t the Weasleys. Come in, come in.”

Fred noticed Hagrid’s smile fall just slightly as he caught sight of Ivy and the green on her robes. He quickly intervened.

“This is Ivy Potter. She was very excited to meet you and has some questions so we thought we’d do the honors.”

Hagrid’s smile lit back up. “Oh, of course. And what kind of questions do ya have for me, young lady?”

Ivy beamed up at him.

*Forty minutes later*

This was not what Fred had planned this morning. When Ivy had said she wanted to ask Hagrid about the Cerberus, he had assumed she meant she wanted to know because she had been scared of the one she had seen, or because it was a cool magical creature that could rip

people apart. Either was fair. He liked large creatures from hell that could tear you up just as much as the next person, but she didn't seriously *want one*, did she?

He ventured a glance at his twin. Well at least he wasn't the only one thinking along those lines.

To be fair, his first indication of the direction this visit would take should have been when Hagrid compared Ivy to their brother Charlie.

His thoughts were interrupted by the two unconcerned individuals in the room laughing loudly. Fred watched as Hagrid brushed tears from his eyes.

"Ya know, I haven't seen ya since you was a baby. Wee little thing you was too. And now look atcha. All grown up and pretty as a picture, you are."

Ivy's eyes shot up. "You knew me when I was a baby?"

"Course I did! Why, I was the one to deliver ya after... well, after *it* happened. Took ya up in the motorcycle myself, delivered ya all the way to Surrey."

Fred wondered if anyone else caught the way Ivy's face froze at that statement. A quick glance showed that his twin at least did. Hagrid didn't seem to notice though.

"You were the one that brought me to the Dursley's?" Ivy was trying to sound happy but was failing miserably, or at least that's what Fred thought.

"Yeah. Never knew their names, though. Just followed Dumbledore's directions of where to take ya."

Ivy tensed further. "So Dumbledore was the one that sent me there?"

Hagrid nodded. "Yeah. Great man, Dumbledore."

"Why'd he send me there, do you know?"

Hagrid shrugged. "Said you'd be safe. Said it was best if ya stayed with family. Out of the wizarding world for a bit. Less people to bother ya, I suppose."

Ivy nodded at that. She smiled, but Fred could tell it was forced. "Well thank you for helping me, Hagrid. It was nice to meet you."

They continued to exchange pleasantries all the way to the door. As they began walking back to the castle, Fred took a moment to take in Ivy's face. She was deep in concentration, and she seemed to be bothered by something. What was it about what Hagrid had set that was bothering her?

As they continued walking, Ivy's face went from concerned to contemplative to something Fred recognized very well. He had seen it often on his twin's face after all. Ah. The beautiful look of someone scheming. Turning to his twin they exchanged a look and then nodded at

each other. Someone needed to look out for Ivy make she didn't get into *too* much trouble. And they were obviously the perfect pair to do that.

# Chapter 10

## How to free Sirius:

- Steal Pettigrew from Hogwarts
- Get Ivy to steal Pettigrew from Hogwarts
- Get Ivy and the twins to steal Pettigrew from Hogwarts
- Ask the Goblins
- Get Ivy to ask the Goblins
- Go to the DMLE
- Go to the Wizengamot
- Ask the Goblins how to go to the Wizengamot
- Break into Azkaban
- Send a Patronus and tell Sirius to break out of Azkaban
- Break into the Department of Mysteries and attempt to get my Hermione here
- Break into the Department of Mysteries and attempt to get a Hermione here
- Convince the Hermione here to help

Harry looked at his list. This was not going well. Every one of his ideas so far had merit (shut up, you niggling voice of reason that sounds suspiciously like Hermione in the back of my mind), but they also each had some serious flaws.

First were the plans involving nabbing Pettigrew. Harry really didn't want to break into Hogwarts. Hence the fact that the diadem was still there. Although if it became absolutely necessary he supposed he would at least be able to kill two birds with one stone, so that was something. And he didn't want to risk Ivy getting hurt at all, so he didn't want to send her after Pettigrew, even with the twins' help. She could handle herself fairly well but she was still eleven, and Pettigrew was a fully trained adult wizard and death eater who had managed to escape notice for the last decade.

Then there was the problem of going to the ministry. Harry had carefully avoided anything to do with the ministry, or politics, or wizarding Britain... The goblins claimed he had political power at his disposal, but if he did he certainly hadn't done anything with it. While he would be the last person to claim knowing anything about politics, he was fairly certain that he couldn't just waltz in there and say his name and expect everyone to do what he wanted. Unfortunate, really, at least in this case.

While no one had successfully broken out of Azkaban at this point in time, at least as far as Harry knew, no had successfully broken *into* Azkaban either. Probably because, despite Hermione's opinions to the contrary, most witches and wizards did possess *some* amount of sense. A tiny bit, but a bit nonetheless. Besides, Harry wasn't an animagus, and that was the only way he knew of to get in or out undetected. Hmm. Maybe he should work on that.

Harry was pretty sure he could get into the Department of Mysteries. He'd done it before, after all. Plus he had been there all the time before ending up in this universe, and it was probably similar. So that part was fine. It was the getting Hermione from his universe over

here that posed the problem. First of all, he wasn't entirely sure she would appreciate it. Second of all, he wasn't too sure he would even be successful. He hadn't tried too hard to go back, since he had decided Ivy was more important, but he didn't think interdimensional travel was likely to be one of those things that he could learn about at the DoM library. And yes, they had a library. The Unspeakables were the nerds of all nerds, and Harry was always surprised that not everyone seemed to fully grasp this concept. Still, interdimensional travel was not likely to be in there, or else surely someone else would have done it by now.

Of course, maybe someone else had but just hadn't told anyone and instead had assimilated themselves into society using a new name so helpfully provided by the little happy terrors of the magical world. Nah. Probably not.

That probably complications associated with trying to recruit a Hermione from another universe had led him to consider recruiting the Hermione of this universe. But then again, she was eleven. Well, almost twelve. But still.

And the only other plan on his list...

Oh how he loathed dealing with those grinning menaces.

He quite liked the idea of Ivy asking the goblins for help, since they would probably take over the world on her behalf if she asked. But she wouldn't be available until Christmas, and Harry already felt bad enough about leaving Sirius in Azkaban for this long. He was a Gryffindor, for Merlin's sake. He could force himself to approach the goblins for help. He could. He would. Right after he made another list of every possible alternative to that plan.

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*September 20, 1991*

Harry walked into Gringotts. He had done it. Well technically he hadn't done it yet, but he was about to do it, so he was still counting it as a successful day so far. Plus, he'd only been stopped by two witches on his way here. He really needed to talk to Ivy to figure out how to put an end to that. He knew she was behind it.

Walking up to the nearest available teller, he cleared his throat and was about to speak when the goblin spoke first.

"Ah, Lord Peverell. What can Gringotts do for you today?" The goblin's voice was louder than necessary (his grin indicating that it wasn't an accident), and Harry felt the eyes of several people in the bank turn on him.

In a much quieter voice than the goblin had used, Harry expressed his wish to speak with a goblin representative about Sirius Black. The goblin grinned more, and Harry heard a small squeak of terror behind him somewhere. Not turning to see who was justifiably scared of the grinning goblin, he continued to stare down the goblin teller.

"Right this way, Lord Peverell," the goblin finally said, once again speaking unnecessarily loud. More eyes turned in their direction. Harry's eye twitched. "Gringotts would be happy to assist you in any way we can."

Ignoring the quiet murmurings of the surrounding witches and wizards, Harry followed the goblin into the back offices.

A few other goblins shuffled into the office, and Harry was invited to take a seat. They went through the usual, though blessedly brief pleasantries, and Harry was invited to state his reasons for being there.

“Sirius Black is innocent and I want to get him out of Azkaban.”

To the goblins’ credit, they didn’t even pause. “Very well,” the one in charge said. “How may Gringotts assist you in that endeavor?”

Harry squirmed in his seat a bit. “None of the plans I’ve come up with so far seem particularly viable, so I was hoping you might have some suggestions?” He listed a few of his previous ideas, explaining about Pettigrew’s status and the infeasibility of breaking into Azkaban.

The goblins in the room whispered amongst themselves for a moment before the goblin in charge turned back to Harry. “I believe we have a solution, Lord Peverell. Allow us a few moments to assemble the necessary documents.”

All of a sudden pieces of parchment began flying into the room, and a stack on the main desk began to form. The assembled goblins quickly went through the documents, throwing out some, and putting others back into the pile. In what was quite literally a matter of moments, the goblins had a rather large stack of papers that they proceeded to hand to Harry.

After expressing his thanks, Harry ventured to ask, “so, what do I do with this?”

One of the goblins who had been assisting seemed surprised that Harry was asking. “Just take these to the ministry, of course.”

Right. Of course. And do what, exactly? Harry’s confusion must have still been evident because the goblin in charge spoke again.

“I would suggest taking these to Madame Bones of the DMLE. Just take these there, give them your name, and they will do what you wanted.”

Harry blinked. So out of all the plans that he had made... And the one he thought was the least feasible... Just show up to the ministry... Tell them his name and...

Harry managed to mumble out a thanks as he was escorted from the goblin offices. He cradled the stack of papers close to his chest, and deciding that there was no time like the present, apparated to the ministry, ignoring the startled faces at both Gringotts and the ministry lobby as well as the fact that it was technically impossible to apparate to or from either location directly.

Once at the ministry he looked around for some sort of map or sign. He knew where the DMLE offices were in *his* world, but that wasn’t an absolute guarantee that they were the

same in *this* world. Seeing no such sign, he decided that it was probably close enough to the same, and set off in the direction his destination was probably in.

Coming to a security desk, he approached cheerfully and asked if this was the way to the DMLE head offices. Upon confirmation of that assumption, and the question of his name, Harry said, “Henry Peverell. Thanks,” and then walked on. Technically he was supposed to get his wand checked, but he was in a hurry and honestly it probably wasn’t the best idea to go waving around the Elder Wand in front of people. Plus the guard didn’t ask, probably because he was too busy gaping.

Harry continued on until he found an office with a nice little placard indicating that he had arrived at Madame Bones’ offices. Stepping inside, he was confronted with a secretary who asked, “Can I help you?”

“Yes, I would like to see Madame Bones, please.”

“Do you have an appointment?”

Harry shook his head. “No, sorry. Just came from Gringotts to bring these over.” He gestured to the stack of papers in his arm.

The secretary gave him a once over. “Name?”

“Henry Peverell.”

The look on the secretary’s face changed completely at that pronouncement. Very quickly Harry found himself being escorted to a comfortable looking waiting area and was asked if he wanted, tea, refreshments, and something that sounded suspiciously like the secretary’s firstborn child before finally being able to clarify that yes, he could see Madame Bones, and so sorry, sir, it would be just a moment.

Harry assured the apologetic secretary that he didn’t mind waiting. And no, he didn’t need anything. And yes, he was sure. And...

After a few moments the door to Madame Bones’ office finally opened and a middle aged looking man stepped out. He gave Harry a curious look before making his way out of the office. The secretary hurried inside and conversed with Madame Bones for a moment before gesturing to Harry.

“Madame Bones will see you now, Lord Peverell,” she said.

Harry got up and walked past the secretary into the head of the DMLE’s office. This was it.

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Amelia Bones had seen many things. How could you not when you ran the entire Department of Magical Law Enforcement. But this was its own type of thing, and Amelia wasn’t quite sure how to handle this. The Death Eater trials had all happened nearly a decade ago, and there hadn’t been a petition of innocence in years.



Then suddenly the mysterious and much-speculated about Lord Peverell shows up at her office, dumps a pile of documents on her desk, from Gringotts no less, and proceeds to tell her that not only is Sirius Black, one of the most notorious of Voldemort's death eaters, innocent, but he never had a trial in the first place.

It hadn't taken long to confirm that Black had not, in fact, had a trial, which in itself was worrying, but then Peverell had gone on to say that Black wasn't even the Potter's secret keeper. Instead, he claimed that *Pettigrew* had been the secret keeper. And that he was still alive.

Further still, when questioning his involvement in this case, Amelia had learned that Lord Peverell was the guardian of one Ivy Potter. And that the guardianship had not been for the duration of her removal from wizarding Britain. That had led to a conversation that left Amelia with many more questions than answers.

Albus Dumbledore had been insistent that Ivy Potter had been well taken care of and placed in a safe, suitable location, but upon hearing Lord Peverell's account, she was most likely going to have to begin an investigation into possible child neglect, or even abuse.

And as for Dumbledore? Merlin, was he going to be in for some questioning. *Muggles*? Dumbledore had left the girl-who-lived with *Muggles*? Amelia didn't have any personal problems with muggles like many witches and wizards she knew, but to leave an orphaned witch whose family had been targeted by a dark lord did not seem to resemble anything close to the suitable and safe environment Dumbledore had assured them she was in. And if the investigation turned up anything...

Well, there was no use dwelling on speculation. First things first, she needed to see to Sirius Black's immediate removal from Azkaban, pending a trial that was nearly a decade late. And for a member (even if possibly disowned) of an Ancient and Noble House, no less. Merlin, she needed a drink.

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*October 2, 1991*

"So let me get this straight. You are James and Lily's son from another universe, except you're older and defeated old Moldyshorts in your world, you ended up here, kidnapped, sorry, *adopted* Ivy, the goblins love you, and they helped you help me get freed from Azkaban."

Harry could admit that it sounded a bit ridiculous even to himself, who was the one who had lived all that, but he just nodded.

"Okay cool."

Harry blinked. Wait, was that it? That had gone better than expected.

# Chapter 11

*October 3, 1991*

Severus closed the door to his office behind him. He rather despised Thursday mornings. The youngest of the Hogwarts students had astronomy on Wednesday nights, and were usually a strange combination of tired and overly hyper the next morning. Plus Thursday mornings he taught both the second year classes. Second years were the worst. They came back after a single year of schooling thinking they now knew everything and that they were somehow qualified to not pay attention to the directions.

Having attended breakfast at the earliest time, Severus had plenty of time to spare before his first class of the day. Mentally listing off the things he would like to accomplish before having to deal with the twelve year old terrors, he was caught off guard by a sudden knocking on his door.

Wondering who dared to bother him during this sole moment of peace he walked to the door and threw it open.

Suddenly the second years seemed a welcome sight.

Before him was his godson, which was not a completely unusual or unwelcome sight, but said godson was accompanied by none other than Potter, and not one, but *three* Weasleys. Oh how he missed the days of there being a single Weasley at Hogwarts. It had all been downhill from there.

Realizing that simple wishes would do nothing to rid himself of the students' presence, Severus motioned for them to come inside. As they filed inside he was unceremoniously handed a sealed letter and a cage with a...rat? Raising an eyebrow at the students, but receiving no response, Severus sighed and opened up the letter that he saw was addressed to him. Why had it come to him via the students in that case?

He began scanning the letter.

*...animagus revealing...*

*...unbreakable cage...*

*...measures to prevent escape...*

*...aurors...*

Severus glanced down at the signature. It was signed Lord Henry J. Peverell. He sighed. This was really not how he had wanted to spend his morning, but realizing that he might as well proceed with the letter's request, he placed the cage on his desk and began casting a series of revealing spells at it.

Apparently the Weasley prefect had already charmed the cage unbreakable as stated in the letter, so the children must have had some sort of prior instruction. Why bring it to him though? The spell to reveal an animagus was certainly within the capacity of a fifth year with superior grades. When asked, however, the prefect simply said that they were told it would be best to bring the rat to him.

But why him? There were plenty of other teachers at Hogwarts and out of the five students standing there only one had ever sought him out before.

Sighing again, he prepared to cast the animagus revealing spell. To his utter shock it was positive.

“Where did this rat come from, Mr. Weasley?” he said, directing his question to the eldest of the present Weasleys.

“It’s my, well my brother’s now. It’s our pet rat, Scabbers, sir.”

This immediately set the alarm bells in Severus’s mind off. “And how long have you possessed this...Scabbers?”

“Nearly ten years, sir.”

The implications of this were abhorrent. To have a disguised witch or wizard living with a family for that long without discovery...

“Why now? Why bring this to anyone’s attention now?”

To his surprise it was Potter that answered. “Uncle Henry sent a letter addressed to me yesterday evening, sir. He told me to ask the Weasleys for help bringing the rat to you, and to give you the letter he sent with mine.”

“And how did your guardian come to be aware of this?”

Potter shrugged. “I’m not sure. He just said it had to do with my parents and that he would explain later.”

Severus froze. A thousand thoughts flew through his mind, none of them good or particularly pleasant. Several possibilities were lining up in a way he absolutely did not care for.

“Draco,” he said, “go to the floo, call the aurors immediately, and request that a pair be sent over right away.” His godson hurried over to the floor and began doing as directed.

“Weasley,” he said, again addressing the eldest student in the room, “wand out and be prepared to cast a stunner if necessary.” Weasley nodded and got into position. “The rest of you, stand back.” Surprisingly they all did just that.

He cast a stunner at the rat, then proceeded to enlarge the cage to a size sufficient for a human. Double checking that the unbreakable charm remained intact, he proceeded to cast the animagus reversal spell. To his absolute horror a familiar face emerged from the transformation. He saw a twitch, and immediately a red beam shot past him, directly hitting

the now fully human appearing wizard. Turning, he gave a nod to Weasley, then focused his eye back on Pettigrew.

A moment later two aurors stepped through the floo. They hurried over to where Pettigrew was being held, and at their request Severus levitated the now large cage off of the desk and onto the floor.

“Merlin’s beard,” the first auror exclaimed. “What happened here?”

Severus recounted the previous events.

The second auror let out a low whistle. “And you say this is Peter Pettigrew?”

At Severus’s nod the auror shook his head. “Merlin. First Black, and then this.”

Severus’s head shot up. “What about Black?” he asked harshly.

“Found out that Black’s innocent. Released yesterday. Turns out the bloke never even had a trial. Wasn’t the Potter’s secret keeper at all. Said it was...” The auror trailed off as he caught sight of Potter, and instead just gestured to the still stunned man.

Severus felt his mouth go dry. “Then there is a good chance you will find a dark mark on his arm.”

The first auror revealed that there was, in fact, a dark mark on Pettigrew’s arm.

After the aurors asked how they came to be aware of Pettigrew’s presence, Severus handed them the letter, explaining that he had been asked only to contain the rat, perform the spell, and alert the aurors, and had not, in fact, been given any warning of who it might be.

The auror reading the letter grunted. “Lord Peverell. Makes sense. He’s the one that got Black off after all.”

Now that was an interesting bit of information. Severus tucked that away for future consideration.

The aurors proceeded to take statements from each of the students present, then departed with Pettigrew in tow.

Severus cast a quick tempus and grimaced. So much for getting anything done before his classes. He ushered the students to the door, instructing them to go straight to their classes.

“And it would be best not to speak to anyone of this incident until the aurors have finished, is that clear?” He received five nods in response. Satisfied, he watched as the five children headed off to their classes, before closing the door behind him and heading off to his own classroom.

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*Later that day*

Severus resisted the urge to let out a lengthy sigh or simply bang his head against the table. Was this it? Was this the moment the headmaster had finally lost it? Severus could think of no other explanation for the man's insistence that this ridiculous plan would work.

He had suffered through Albus's tale of reassuring the Weasley parents that their children were perfectly alright, as if Severus would have let anything happen to them, even if they were a bunch of Gryffindors. Then Albus had asked about what Severus knew about Lord Peverell (which was unfortunately little), and the conversation had gone downhill from there.

Albus's "brilliant plan" was to get Sirius Black to contest guardianship of Ivy Potter. What Severus tried to point out, and what Albus seemed decidedly determined to ignore, was the fact that Peverell was the one who was responsible for freeing Black in the first place. Severus doubted that Black would go against the man he no doubt felt incredibly indebted to. Albus had merely waved off Severus's concerns, stating that he was convinced he could get Sirius to their side, and perhaps even downplay the role Peverell had had in the man's release.

Thus, Severus was now resisting the urge to do something unbecoming of his well-cultivated reputation. Like bang his head against the table. If anyone caught him he would never live it down.

Taking a deep breath, he finally ventured a question, hoping that the answer would restore his faith in the headmaster's mental faculties. "Why contest Peverell's guardianship at all? Has something occurred to make him no longer a suitable guardian for Potter?"

What Albus revealed to him next had him using every bit of willpower he possessed to not reach over and strangle the old man with his own beard.

"You left Lily's child with *Petunia Evans*?"

"I believe it is Dursley now."

The urge to reach across the table increased. "Why..." Severus's voice lowered to barely a whisper. "Why would you leave a magical child with *Petunia*? She despised magic and she hated Lily."

Severus ignored the headmaster's attempt at an explanation. The man's attempts at constantly referring to Potter as *James's* daughter were more blatant than normal and did not go unnoticed. So that's how the old man wanted to play it, was it? Fine.

Severus was not a stupid man. He knew Albus fully expected the Dark Lord to return, and for Severus to return to spying when that occurred. And he was quickly realizing that the headmaster had an interest in Potter that went far beyond the normal concern of a headmaster for his student, even if it was the Girl-Who-Lived. Albus had something planned for Potter, that he was sure.

There was only one thing to do. And doing so would put him in the path of dealing directly with the one person he loathed perhaps more than James Potter. But for Lily's child, he could.

He would have to approach Lord Peverell. He needed his own information about the man. What sort of person was he? Potter had arrived at Hogwarts looking decidedly well-cared for, and clearly had some magical training already. She was cheerful, made friends easily, and so far was doing very well in the majority of her classes. History of Magic didn't particularly count, in Severus's opinion.

But if what Albus had insinuated was true, and she had been kidnapped by Peverell, why was she so happy, not to mention apparently fond of her guardian? And how had Peverell gained guardianship of Potter in the first place, let alone without alerting Albus to the change?

Severus sighed for what felt like the hundredth time that day. He would need to acquire more information on Peverell to be sure, but he would also need to gain insight on Ivy Potter. It looked like his month of avoiding the first year student, for what he was sure were completely reasonable reasons, was at an end.

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*October 4, 1991*

Sirius was a free man. He could leave at any time. There was nothing holding him here. He repeated that to himself over and over as he watched the people around him. He had never been one to shy away from attention, but the gaping and the blatant stares were not the kind of attention he would have preferred.

He understood, he really did. For years people had believed he was the most despicable type of wizard there could be. He was still angry over the fact that everyone had so readily believed that he would betray his friends like that, but they had, and now their beliefs had been proven spectacularly wrong. And so, they stared. Gaped. Pointed. Whispered.

At least Sirius could amuse himself by making faces in the direction of witches and wizards who stared a little too long. Sometimes he gave them a just-released-from-Azkaban-and-clearly-insane look, and sometimes he gave them a posh, pureblooded type sneer. Both had produced equally amusing results.

And Merlin did he need some type of entertainment to keep his remaining sanity intact during this conversation.

Dumbledore had very quickly sent an owl requesting a meeting with Sirius. He had acquiesced to the headmaster's request, but had quickly started to regret it. He had never thought his opinion of a man could plummet so quickly, yet here he was.

Did the headmaster not realize that it was Sirius's sanity that was somewhat in question, not his intelligence?

Apparently not, for the headmaster had, over the course of the last hour, spouted so much nonsense that Sirius was tempted to look around to find the Hippogriff responsible for this pile of dung.

Frankly, Sirius was almost just as offended by the headmaster's apparent belief that Sirius was either stupid or could be so easily manipulated as he was by the actual content of man's

entreaties. He was a Black. He knew every manipulation technique in the book. He even knew where the book was in the Black library.

But did the man seriously think he would go against the man responsible for his release from Azkaban? Or that, if Sirius did gain guardianship of Ivy for some reason, he would allow the headmaster to manipulate her continued upbringing?

No, the warning bells had sounded as soon as Dumbledore had mentioned getting Ivy away from Peverell and helping her back to the light. Dumbledore had mentioned Ivy's sorting into Slytherin (which Sirius didn't bother to inform him he already knew about), most likely assuming that Sirius's well-known loathing of that house would convict him that his goddaughter needed saving. Yes, the warning bells had sounded, and Sirius had learned long ago the consequences of ignoring them.

Dumbledore also was clearly seeking information on Peverell. Why he simultaneously assumed Sirius had never met the man and yet knew something about him was perplexing, but Sirius merely shrugged at the headmaster's questions and happily said he knew absolutely nothing.

The legilimency probe Sirius felt did nothing to endear the headmaster to him. He pushed some memories of asking the aurors who Peverell was to the front of his mind, and resisted the urge to show Dumbledore Amelia's frankly beautiful rant against the man. It was something he was going to preserve in a pensieve forever.

Finally, the headmaster seemed satisfied that Sirius knew nothing, and was either completely on board with his suggestions, or a total idiot (Sirius wasn't sure which), and left Sirius to his own devices.

Time to go interrogate his godson-from-another-universe. Sirius did not believe the headmaster was up to anything particularly good (at least concerning Ivy and himself), and he needed answers. Who best to get them from than someone who had already lived this?

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"We need to talk."

Harry immediately tensed at the sound of the four most anxiety-inducing words in the English language.

"What about?" he asked, aiming for nonchalant and probably failing terribly.

"I need to know everything," Sirius said, coming and sitting across from Harry on the sofa.

"Okay...um, like everything everything?"

"Preferably, yes," Sirius said, raising an eyebrow. "Is that going to be a problem?"

"No, no, definitely not. It's just... Well, why do you need to know? Did something happen?"

Sirius sighed. "I met with Dumbledore, as you know." Harry nodded. "And there were a few things he said that I would like some insight on."

Harry gulped. Is this where Sirius got mad at him for kidnapping Ivy or for accidentally leaving him in Azkaban for a couple extra years? His earlier explanation had gone so well...

“Well, I found myself in this world, and Ivy appeared at the same time, and...”

Sirius cut Harry off with a wave of his hand. “Not what I meant, although I would enjoy hearing more about Ivy over the past couple years later. No, I meant *your* life. Before you came here.”

Harry’s mouth formed a small “o.” So Sirius wasn’t mad at him. At least not yet.

He launched into his life story, beginning with his first year at Hogwarts, but to his surprise Sirius asked him to begin earlier. He began to tell about getting his letter, but Sirius wanted him to start even earlier than that. Finally he asked where he ought to start, and Sirius simply said, “The beginning.”

So Harry began at the beginning. He started with what he knew of his early childhood, and the events of the night of his parents’ murder. He tried to skim over the years at the Dursleys, but Sirius kept pressing, and Harry, realizing that Sirius must be looking for insight into Ivy’s childhood, eventually gave in and told him the whole of it. The look on Sirius’s face was positively murderous, and Harry once again considered the pros and cons of burning down Number 4 Privet Drive.

Then, to his utter surprise, Sirius came and wrapped him in a hug. Harry assured him that Ivy had done remarkably well since he had found her, and that he had done his best to mitigate the results of the Dursley’s less than loving care. To his further surprise, Sirius just said he knew, and was so sorry that *Harry* had gone through all of that.

With the realization that Sirius actually cared about *him*, and not just about Ivy, some little piece of Harry broke and he opened up to Sirius in a way that he hadn’t to anyone else except, well, Sirius. There was no other person living or dead that he had shared the entirety of the Dursley’s abuse with, and Harry found that once he started he couldn’t stop.

It was different this time. The one other time he had shared this, he had been fourteen and recently traumatized. Now, he was a few years from thirty, and felt that he had recovered from most everything that had happened to him.

But this was Sirius. Even if not the same Sirius he had once known, it was Sirius, and Harry found himself relishing in the opportunity to be completely honest for once. Not once did he question Sirius’s trustworthiness or sincerity. For the entirety of the time he had been in this world, Harry had been focused solely on Ivy and her protection. He had not made any real friends, and had very few acquaintances even. Now he had someone who wanted to know about *him*. Someone who was interested in *him*, and not because he had a well-known name or was rich either. Right now he had someone who wanted to know about him, the person who had suffered an horrific childhood, who had killed someone at age eleven, who had seen far too many loved ones die at the hands of a madman, and who had ultimately found himself in an unknown world, completely alone save for a little girl with green eyes who he would never allow to go through what he had.



So he talked. And continued talking. They talked well into the night, and the first signs of dawn were evident by the time Harry had finished.

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Sirius had not expected a happy tale by any means, but the story Harry had told had been downright horrendous.

He had ignorantly assumed that the story would get better once Harry began on his Hogwarts years. But if anything it got worse. The repeated confrontations with Voldemort, the near-death experiences at what should have been the safest place for him in the world. The *horcruxes*. And yes, Sirius knew what those were. He was fairly confident his own mother had researched it out at one point not for “scholarly interest,” as she claimed (as if she did anything for so benign a reason), but with the intention of creating one herself. He honestly wouldn’t put it past her to have attempted such a thing.

Throughout the night one reoccurring theme was Dumbledore’s involvement in the events of Harry’s life. And what puzzled Sirius was that Harry seemed to speak fondly of Dumbledore, even when Sirius asked questions that clearly (to him, anyways) revealed Dumbledore’s manipulation of events to lead Harry to his final confrontation with Voldemort. Harry had *died*. As in, actually *died*. Not only that, but he had seen clear evidence of Dumbledore’s knowledge of and belief in the necessity of his death. The more Harry spoke, the more convinced Sirius was of Dumbledore’s manipulation of Harry. He seriously (pun unintentional but duly noted and appreciated) doubted whether the Dumbledore of this world varied so much in his intentions. Between his conversation with Dumbledore and Harry’s story, Sirius was giving more and more credence to those warning bells that had sounded.

And if he found out that Dumbledore had done *anything* to put his goddaughter in danger, even Hades wouldn’t be able to hide him.

And from what Harry had said, not to mention done, Sirius thought there was a good chance he would have plenty of help.

“So, what’s this whole Master of Death thing about, then?”

## Chapter 12

*October 31, 1991, morning*

Ivy was bored. Nothing interesting had happened in nearly a month, and she was bored. Sure, classes were fine, and it was fun to go flying with Oliver or Marcus, even if they never wanted to go together for some reason. And Fred and George were entertaining, and had shown her how to sneak around the castle easier. Neville didn't appear to be that big on adventures and when asked if he wanted to go see a Cerberus he had shaken his head no. Ivy's multi-step plan of helping Pansy be less shy so that they could all be best friends hadn't yielded anything yet, and Ivy didn't have any other plans in the works. It was a little hard to play matchmaker from Hogwarts, after all. Unless she found one of the graduating seventh years... Henry probably wouldn't go for that though.

So yes, Ivy was bored.

But today was Halloween, and Henry had hinted that something interesting might happen today. Those weren't the *exact* words he had used, but he did mention that since it was the anniversary of her parents' death, someone might try to do something bad. He also told her to be careful, stay safe, and not do anything reckless. Ivy chose to focus on the possibility that something interesting might happen. She did keep Tiger with her all day though, just in case.

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*Evening*

Nothing had happened. Maybe Ivy could come up with some way to make the day interesting still. The feast was good and all, but in the end it was just more food than usual. That wasn't particularly interesting.

And then...

Okay now it was interesting. A troll? How did a troll get inside the castle anyway? Weren't there, you know, *walls*? And wards? Maybe this was the sort of thing Henry had talked about. Maybe someone had helped the troll?

And poor Professor Quirrell. He was so easily frightened. This must have come as quite a shock.

All of a sudden the students were being led out of the Great Hall in what was no exactly an orderly fashion. Wouldn't it be safer to just stay here? Besides, as Draco so helpfully pointed out, the troll was in the dungeons, and the Slytherin dormitories were in the dungeons, so weren't they technically headed *towards* the troll? Ivy had to admit that Draco had a good point. Hey, maybe they'd get to see it!

With this optimistic thought in mind, Ivy followed Draco out of the Great Hall. As they moved along with the rest of the mass of students, she saw a little flash of red out of the corner of her eye. Craning her neck to see over the other students who were unfortunately

almost all taller than her, she saw Fred and George and...Neville? They were glancing around and hurrying off to one of the side corridors. Maybe this was it. Maybe this was her chance to have an interesting day. Without a second thought she pulled Draco off to the side and in the direction of the twins.

Draco hardly had time to protest before he was chasing after a running Ivy. Ivy thought it was very nice of him to follow after her so quickly. Why was he yelling out her name though?

It took a minute to catch up to the twins and Neville, who were also running. When they caught sight of her, and then Draco a moment later, they didn't even say anything, just kept running.

Finally they arrive at a bathroom. A girl's bathroom. And... oh. There was the troll. It was *huge*. And for just a moment Ivy regretted being so excited about seeing it. A scream brought her attention to another person in the vicinity. Who was that? Oh, looked like Granger. What was she doing here?

Another scream, a few more screams, lots of screaming. Ivy may or not have been screaming as well. It was a little chaotic. Suddenly she felt something slide around her neck. Oh right. Tiger was with her still.

*§Why iss there sso much running and sscreaming?§* he hissed out to her.

*§Ssorry, Tiger,§* she said. *§Theress a troll.§*

*§Yess I know theress a troll. I could ssmell it back in the chicken room.§*

*§Why didn't you ssay anything?§*

*§Sshould I have?§*

Their conversation was interrupted by another smash of the troll's hammer against a sink and the subsequent screaming. Ivy probably ought to help.

"Hey George, does this count as an imminent death situation?"

George, who was throwing spells as quickly as he could just shouted out "YES."

Well Henry had said...

*§Tiger, can you bite the troll?§*

*§Why would I eat troll? It ssmellss sso nassty.§*

*§Becausse it wantss to hurt uss.§*

*§Well why didn't you ssay sso in the firsst place, ssilly sspeaker.§*

With that Tiger threw himself off Ivy in way she didn't know he was even capable of, and quickly reached the troll, sinking his fangs into the troll's thick hide. The troll tried to shake

the snake off, but the snake evaded every attempt of the troll to hit it or remove the deadly animal from its prey.

It took a moment, but finally the troll succumbed to the snake venom, and landed with a loud thud on the ground. Tiger slithered back to Ivy, grumbling about nasty, mean trolls who smell bad, taste worse, and want to hurt his short speaker. Ivy was about to take offense to that last statement, when Neville cried out, “what is THAT?”

Ivy looked at him, and noticed that the four Gryffindors were all staring at Tiger. Draco was also staring, but he already knew Tiger, so Ivy didn’t quite understand why.

“This is Tiger,” she said. For some reason this did nothing to make the others stop staring. “He’s my snake,” she added. Still nothing. “He bit the troll.” At this point she was just pointing out the obvious, but she wasn’t sure what they were waiting for.

This seemed to break everyone out of their momentary frozenness as well as make them momentarily forget their very recent trauma. Ivy found herself suddenly hounded by questions. And why was Draco asking so many? Again, he already knew Tiger.

Finally they calmed down, and Granger asked, “You have a snake...named Tiger? But...he doesn’t even have proper stripes?”

Draco groaned, clearly expecting the same lecture that he had received when he had asked the same question.

Ivy just responded with a cheerful, “yep!” and everyone nodded except for Draco, who seemed a little put out for some reason.

“Umm, guys, there’s still a troll here.” They all turned to Neville, who was blushing a little and pointing to the dead troll.

“On it!” the twins shouted, before levitating the troll’s club and hitting it over the troll’s head.

“What was that for?” Draco demanded.

“Well Potter’s snake can’t very well take the blame for killing the troll, now can it,” Granger said. “Then everyone would know she had a snake and that might not be the best idea. So this way when the teachers find it, we can just say that the Weasleys hit it over the head with the club.”

The twins nodded along with this statement. Neville looked a little confused but seemed to agree. Draco looked like he was about to protest, but Ivy wasn’t sure *why* it would be bad for everyone to know she had a snake. Lee Jordan had a tarantula after all. But she just shrugged and said, “sounds fine to me.”

Draco gave her a look, but didn’t protest any further.

Suddenly several teachers came pouring into the destroyed bathroom. Their arrival brought a series of loud exclamations and questions which Ivy mostly ignored. Ivy did notice Granger

start to tell some story about chasing after the troll, but Draco interrupted her and told the teachers that of course Granger hadn't come looking for the troll, but that Weasley (no, the other one, no not the *prefect*) had made her cry and she had been in the bathroom this whole time.

There were various reactions to this statement. Ivy herself wasn't sure where Draco had learned that particular part of the story, but no one seemed to contest it so it was probably accurate. The twins both looked a little sheepish, which was understandable since it was *their* brother that had apparently played a part in this whole situation. Neville was clearly wishing that Snape would look anywhere other than in his direction, and Granger looked rather miffed that Draco had accused her of crying. Apparently Draco's dislike of Weasley was greater than his dislike of Granger. Maybe Ivy could convince the two of them to be friends. Then maybe she could put a stop to Draco's constant whining about the girl who kept beating him in class. The rest of the Slytherins would no doubt appreciate that as well. Even Pansy got tired of hearing about it, and she didn't like Granger at all. Of course she was probably just too shy to say anything. Why else would she sit there patiently listening to Draco when no one else would pay him attention?

Ivy was asked a question by one of the adults present, and realized that this was perhaps not the best moment to think about Pansy and how to get her to come out of her shell.

She spouted off something that she hoped resembled an answer, but Granger jumped in and began explaining again. Ivy shot her a grateful look. Normally she could come up with answers really easily on the spot but she was getting a little tired. And she was hungry. She hadn't had a chance to eat much before the whole troll thing.

After trying her best to pay attention to what was going on to make sure she knew which story they were going with (beat the troll over the head with a club, got it), she sighed a great sigh of relief. She wasn't entirely sure why, but it seemed like the thing to do.

After the teachers were satisfied by what had happened, and had both taken and given a number of points, she and Draco were ushered to their common room by a grumpy looking Professor Snape who kept mumbling something about dunderheads and lions.

Once they arrived at the common room, the professor turned to Ivy and said, "I hope, Miss Potter, that you do not mean to make a habit of letting your snake wander around the castle?"

Ivy thought that wasn't fair, seeing as Tiger hadn't actually been *wandering* anywhere. She had just carried him with her all day. But Draco blurted out, "You *knew*?"

Ivy personally thought that if Draco wanted to keep any part of this a secret he was doing a rather poor job of it, but the professor just looked down at the two and said, "of course I knew, though your story seems to have been bought by both the headmaster and the others present. Now, Miss Potter..."

"I promise he won't bite anyone, sir. Uncle Henry said he was only allowed to bite anyone in the case of imminent death, and George said that's what this was, so I thought it was okay." Ivy really hoped that Professor Snape agreed with George's saying that it had been a case of imminent death. If it wasn't and Henry found out about it, it wouldn't be one of those lovely

eye-twitching responses. It'd be the disappointed look for sure, and there was nothing, absolutely *nothing*, that Ivy hated more than the disappointed look. Except cooking, but that was irrelevant.

To her relief, the professor sighed. "Yes, Mr. Weasley was correct in his assessment of the situation. And since no complaints have been raised so far by anyone in my house I am going to presume that they are either ignorant of its presence, or are amenable to it. Am I correct in that presumption?"

Ivy nodded. "All the first year girls know Tiger. And the fifth year boys. And Draco. And all the second years. And maybe the rest of the first year boys. I'm not sure. And a few of the third years, and all the prefects."

Draco graciously pointed out that *actually*, all the Slytherins knew. Professor Snape raised and eyebrow at that and Ivy looked at Draco expectantly.

"You know..." Draco looked at Ivy for help, but she didn't know what he wanted exactly. "The thing...with Claridge?"

They were both looking at her. Of course she knew the thing with Claridge. He was annoying and had hurt Tracey's feelings. When Tracey had asked if she could borrow Tiger Ivy had agreed. When the other girls brought the snake back, they all looked very happy, and even Pansy said how wonderful Tiger was. For his part, Tiger had declared Tracey to be his favorite person aside from Ivy.

Ivy told her head of house and her best friend all of that. Professor Snape looked like his eye was about to start twitching, and Draco protested loudly that *he* was Tiger's favorite.

"No, you're his favorite *boy*. Tracey is his favorite *person*."

Draco pouted, and Ivy patted his shoulder comfortingly, while Professor Snape sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Just keep your snake from getting out. Potter."

Ivy agreed cheerfully to this, and she and Draco entered the common room, only to be bombarded by a dozen questions of where they had been and what had happened. And if Draco slightly exaggerated his role in the entire thing, well at least Ivy got the last piece of treacle tart.

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*November 1, 1991*

"I know you told me about your school years, but I don't think I really got it until just now," Sirius said, putting the letter from Ivy down on the table. "Not until I had my entire life flash before my eyes and a decade of my predicted lifespan lost. Merlin, how did you do it?"

Harry shrugged. "We just did. It's not like most of it was planned or anything."

Sirius nodded. "Well hopefully that will be all the excitement that takes place this year. Have you thought any more about what you want to do about the stone?"

“Not yet. I’ve been thinking I should probably take care of that sooner than later, just to be safe. And to make sure Ivy doesn’t somehow get the bright idea to go looking for it. As far as I know she still doesn’t know about it at all.”

Sirius agreed that that was probably a good thing, although he doubted whether or not Dumbledore would allow her ignorance to continue much longer, assuming he was planning something similar to what Harry had experienced.

“Oh, and then there’s Quirrell. I should probably take care of that too.”

“What about Quirrell? He’s the one who tried to steal the stone, right?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah. I just need to find a way to get rid of the Voldemort in the back of his head.”

Oh, right. Evil dark lord possessing one of Ivy’s teachers. Somehow he had forgotten that little detail. “Well can’t we just kill him?”

“I’m not sure. Last time I killed...” Harry cleared his throat. “Last time Quirrell died, but the part that was Voldemort got out. And I’d really hate to go hunting for that one. So much easier to get rid of when you know where it’s at.”

Sirius couldn’t argue with that. “So we’re dealing with a wraith that’s possessing a man. Okay. Shouldn’t be that hard. I think there’s a book about it somewhere at the house.”

They both shuddered at that thought. If they had to, which it was looking like they would, they would endure the trip to Grimmauld Place. But neither could claim to enjoy the prospect. Sirius’s grandfather had died earlier in the year, leaving Sirius the sole heir of the Black estate, including the much-hated house of his childhood. Harry had of course broken into the house a couple years previous, but he wasn’t particularly eager to go back. But go back they would. They were Gryffindors. No dark, infested house could scare them away. Not at all. But then again, they had time, right? No need to rush into a situation unprepared. They were Gryffindors, sure, but they were also adults, fully capable of doing adult-like things such as thinking through things, making a plan, being responsible, and not going out in the rain or on an empty stomach. Perfect.

---

~~More time later than was strictly necessary~~ *A respectful amount of time later*

Harry and Sirius stared at the door.

“You open it.”

“No, you open it.”

“It’s your house.”

“Does that mean I can burn it down?”

“No. We still need the book.”

“And then can I burn it down?”

“What about the neighbors?”

“Maybe you can use fiendfyre? You have excellent control.”

“I don’t think Madame Bones would appreciate that.”

“She doesn’t have to know.”

“*Someone* would find out.”

“You could always oblivate them?”

“You plan on obliterating the whole of Britain?”

“As if you’ve never thought about doing that.”

“Yes, but that was for a good cause.”

“*This* is a good cause.”

“No.”

“It’s a better cause than avoiding going on a date.”

“Is not!”

“Is too! You know what, maybe *I’ll* set you up on a date. What do you think about that, hmm?”

“Absolutely not.”

“I’m sure Ivy would *love* to hear all about how her uncle turned down a date arranged by her adoring godfather.”

Harry gasped. “You *wouldn’t*.”

Sirius smirked. “Wouldn’t I?”

Harry glared. “Doesn’t matter. Let’s just go get the book.”

“And then fiendfyre?”

“No.”

Sirius pouted, but faced with an unrelenting godson-who-was-also-the-master-of-death, he gave it up as a lost cause and entered his childhood house for the first time in years.

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“I can’t believe Kreacher liked you.”



Harry didn't stop laughing, the little bastard.

"He doesn't like *anyone*. Well unless they're, you know, my mother. Or my brother. Or my cousins. Or any of their friends. Okay, so maybe he just hates me. But still, why does he like *you*?"

"Oh come off it, Sirius. I told you I destroyed the locket. He was bound to be happy about finding that out."

"Yeah, sure, but he called *me* fleabag and called *you* Master Deathy. Hardly seems fair."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Well *I* was nice to him and told him nice little things like the fact that I destroyed the very thing he had been trying to destroy for a decade. *You* bemoaned his continued existence and got in a three-way yelling match with him and your mother's portrait."

"I still don't see why we couldn't set at least *that* on fire."

"We can always come back."

"And have another lovely conversation with my dead mother? No thank you."

"Or to see Kreacher." Sirius couldn't believe that Harry had the gall to tease him with something so horrifying.

"*You* can come visit Kreacher. I will stay happily put at home."

"At my house, you mean."

"Precisely."

Harry laughed. Then Sirius stumbled upon the most brilliant idea and grinned.

Harry, catching a glimpse of Sirius's grin backed away and shook his finger. "No, no, no. Whatever, you're thinking, no."

"I haven't even said anything yet."

"But you were thinking it, and whatever it is, no. I know that look."

"What, you mean this look?" Sirius made the most innocent face he could.

"I know that one too. No."

Sirius rolled his eyes. "It's nothing bad. In fact, I think you'll love it."

Harry paused. "What is it?"

Sirius grinned again. "Oh, nothing. I just thought of what I'm getting you for Christmas."

Harry grumbled about how this wasn't the time to be thinking about presents, but then he froze and looked at Sirius. "No. Don't. I know what you're thinking. Absolutely not. You can't. No. No. Please no." The last one was said pleadingly but Sirius was unmoved.

He grinned and Harry sighed. Yes, it was a brilliant plan, and everyone would be happy with it in the end, he was sure of it. How could he not, when Harry was so clearly adored?

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*November 3, 1991*

Sirius drummed his fingers. He wasn't entirely sure what Harry would think of his most recent idea.

It had all started as he contemplated life and the fact that this was the first birthday he had celebrated in eleven years. Then he had thought about *why* he hadn't been able to celebrate his birthday. Not that his birthday was a huge deal or anything, but it was still nice to have the option of celebrating at least. That had led him to think on the person responsible for making him unable to celebrate his birthdays (not to mention landing him in Azkaban). *Pettigrew*. Part of him was glad Pettigrew was in Azkaban. Let him have a taste of the dementors for once. But part of him wished he had been able to exact his own revenge. Sure, that hadn't gone so well last time, but he had waited for this day for nearly a decade. He was determined to have satisfaction.

And thus, his idea. Which he would need Harry's help to accomplish. Well, it *was* his birthday...

"Harry, you know it's my birthday today, right?"

Harry looked up. "Yeah?"

"And you said I broke out of Azkaban in your world, right?"

Harry nodded, clearly not following Sirius's line of thought.

"How would you feel about breaking *into* Azkaban?"

Harry choked. "Sorry, *what*? Why would you want to do that?"

Sirius's eyes narrowed. "Pettigrew."

Harry recovered, before responding, "I'm really sorry about that. I just didn't want to risk Ivy getting hurt and..."

Sirius waved him off. "It's fine. It was the right thing to do. It just seems a shame that he should be left so cozily in Azkaban now."

Harry looked like he was about to ask why Sirius of all people was calling Azkaban cozy, but noticed the look on Sirius's face and, probably realizing that Sirius was *not*, in fact, referring to Azkaban in that way, cleared his throat and gestured for Sirius to continue.

“So, I was thinking that we could break in, make sure our old friend Pettigrew is fully satisfied with his stay, and then, I don’t know, end it?”

“And you want to do this by breaking into Azkaban?”

Sirius nodded.

“It’s kind of a terrible idea.”

Sirius nodded again.

Harry sighed. “I’m in.”

Sirius grinned, but it faltered as Harry held up a finger.

“On one condition.”

“Sure, what is it?”

“We wait until tomorrow. We don’t need anyone even so much as suspecting that you had anything to do with it. And who knows who might make a connection between his death and your birthday.”

Sirius had no problem with that. In fact, he was delighted. He had assumed that even if he had Harry’s help, it would take some time before they were able to launch such an expedition. Harry seemed to think otherwise, and Sirius wasn’t about to argue.

“Deal.”

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*November 4, 1991*

“Well that was...”

“Yeah.”

“Let’s maybe not...”

“Yeah, I’m good.”

“We should go now.”

“Yes, let’s.”

Overall it had gone better than Sirius could have even expected. Harry had apparated them right into Pettigrew’s cell, and had set up a Patronus shield that looked nothing like anything Sirius had ever seen. It kept all the Dementors away, and gave Sirius plenty of time with Pettigrew. He had been a little worried that Harry would find the scene disturbing, but Harry gave no such indication. In fact, the only comment Harry had made the entire time was to ask if Sirius wanted to stop for Indian food on the way home.

Admittedly, Sirius didn't feel *that* much better when he was through with Pettigrew, who now lay dead on the ground. He had sort of hoped that he would have felt a little more... something. Instead he viewed the entire scene with a rather detached sense of emotion. Nodding at Harry to let him know he was through, he watched as the Master of Death erased any sign of their presence. Now it looked as if Pettigrew had died a normal death. Or at least as normal as one would expect to find in Azkaban.

Giving a silent thanks for Harry's foresight, since really, they didn't need anyone questioning Pettigrew's death, he grabbed onto Harry's arm and felt the distinct pull of side-along apparition.

He might not feel better per se, but he would sleep well tonight, no doubt about that.

## Chapter 13

*November 9, 1991*

“So nothing at all happened during the quidditch game?” This child was going to be the death of him. How do you not notice a bludger coming directly at your face? Severus had noticed, and he hadn’t been sitting even remotely close to Potter.

“No. Was something supposed to happen?” Why was she so cheerful all the time?

Severus was fairly certain he could feel his life expectancy dropping by the minute. He would have to keep a closer eye on Potter. Someone obviously needed to make sure she didn’t get into trouble.

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And clearly the headmaster was not going to be that person. Severus sighed. How a man so powerful and generally respected could be so oblivious to reality was beyond even his comprehension. Well, there had been one other... He really didn’t want to think on the dark lord and his descent into madness. He would just need to keep an eye on the headmaster. And Potter. While still gathering information on Peverell. And watching out for his godson because Merlin knows the boy didn’t possess nearly enough self-preservation skills. The troll incident was evidence enough of that.

Severus had never been so happy to see a snake in his entire life. Despite being a Slytherin, and head of Slytherin house, he did not particularly care for snakes themselves. There was a slight possibility that opinion had been influenced by a certain snake that enjoyed swallowing people whole, but all in all Severus thought it was a perfectly reasonable preference. Potter’s snake was clearly deadly, but if a bunch of eleven year old girls could tolerate, even like the snake, he could tolerate it as well.

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*December 3, 1991*

The entire Slytherin table watched as Percy Weasley walked to where Ivy Potter was eating breakfast with some of the other first years. They had grown accustomed to the Weasley twins showing up on occasion, and even a couple of the other first years from other houses, but this was a unique sight. Equally unique was the fact that the Gryffindor prefect was grinning from ear to ear and he walked with a spring in his step.

The collected Slytherins who were out of hearing range could only guess what was being said, but Weasley was obviously happy about something, and it most likely had to do with Potter in some way and she grinned back at him. Malfoy burst out laughing, and everyone’s curiosity increased. Then, as cheerfully as he had come, Weasley returned to his own table.

A few Ravenclaws had also noticed, and the quiet murmurings of the students’ whispers could be heard.

Still speculating on the cause for that rather unusual interaction, the Slytherins, selected Ravensclaws, and a few Hufflepuffs and Gryffindors who had noticed something going on watched as *more* Weasleys approached Potter. The Weasley twins appearing at the Slytherin table wasn't altogether unexpected, but they, in contrast to their older brother, were far from cheerful and instead practically dragged Potter out of the Great Hall. She didn't seem to mind terribly, only rolling her eyes at the twins, so no one interfered. As the observants to the exchange resumed their breakfast, many were left wondering what exactly the first year Slytherin might have done to warrant such reactions. Most could only hope that if the Weasley twins decided a pranking war was in order, that they would be left out of it.

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Ivy rolled her eyes for the millionth time in the last six minutes. And she thought Draco exaggerated when complaining. Now she was sure he had absolutely nothing on the Weasley twins.

"Come on, it's not that bad."

"Two years, Potter. *Two years.*"

Ivy rolled her eyes at Fred, again. "You only started it last year, so it's not really two years."

"But we *planned*. And we *practiced*," George insisted. "And now it's *over*."

"And is that why Percy was beaming when he came to congratulate me and thank me for being such an outstanding member of society?"

They both scowled at her. She couldn't help it; she laughed.

"Percy has been trying all year to ruin our prank, but nothing he did worked. It wasn't until *you* let everyone know how to tell us apart that it was ruined," Fred accused.

"You do realize I only told like three people, right?"

"But it was *who* you told. Why did you have to tell Ronnekins about it anyway? I didn't think the two of you were even friends."

"We're not, really. But he was there when I was telling Neville and Hermione. He was very excited to know all about it."

Both twins sighed in unison. "But that's just it," George said. "He was the best part of the prank."

"Yeah, we know most people couldn't tell us apart anyway, though I don't understand why," said Fred.

"Especially when there are so many obvious differences between us," said George.

Ivy rolled her eyes (number 1,004,283). "Obviously."

“But we perfected it all last year. When we got home last summer our dearest little brother had such a difficult time telling us apart.”

“Yeah, it’s not like we purposefully switched names or anything.”

“Of course not,” Ivy giggled. “You two would never do something like that.”

Fred and George beamed. “You know us so well,” they both said. Then they sat down with a huff on either side of Ivy. “Well, now that prank is done for. I supposed we’ll have to think up something else,” Fred said.

“Did you really do all of that just to confuse Ron?” Ivy asked.

“While that is definitely reason enough, oh little snake, we did also have the added benefit of seeing how many eye twitches we could get by doing it,” George said.

“Oh, I love that game!” Ivy exclaimed.

George grinned. “Of course you do. Why else do you think we get along so well.”

“Well, I am sorry about ruining your prank, but I’m sure you have something else you can do, right?”

The boys both assumed an exaggerated thinking pose. Ivy giggled.

“Well, nothing comes to mind at the moment,” Fred began.

George tapped his chin. “But I suppose we do have several weeks before the start of the new term.”

“Plenty of time for such geniuses as ourselves to come up with something, I’m sure,” Fred added.

“Well you’d better think of something soon. Won’t Christmas be too busy to plan something like that?” Ivy asked.

Fred shook his head. “Nah, we’re staying here. Won’t have anything else to do so I’m sure we’ll think of something.”

“Besides, we’ll have the whole castle practically to ourselves,” George added. “Who knows what we’ll be able to accomplish then.”

Ivy tilted her head inquisitively. “Why are you staying here?”

“Mum and Dad are visiting Charlie in Romania, so the rest of us are staying here,” George explained.

“Oh.” Ivy nodded her head in understanding. That didn’t seem like very much fun. Maybe she could talk to Henry. That reminded her though... “If we come back to Hogwarts and it’s

not standing it's not my fault, right? I can't be responsible for Hogwarts getting destroyed over Christmas if I'm not here, right?"

Fred looked at her with a confused look. "Not that I'm not flattered that you think we'd be capable of actually destroying Hogwarts, but we don't have any intention of doing that. And why would you get blamed for it?"

Ivy shrugged. "Well Uncle Henry said he hoped Hogwarts was still standing by the time I graduated. And that I shouldn't do anything that could umm...what's the word. Jepra..."

"Jeopardize?" Fred offered.

"Yeah, that one. I shouldn't do anything to jeopardize that."

Both twins wondered what exactly Ivy had done in her short life to make her guardian warn her against destroying Hogwarts. Choosing to assume that he meant it in a clearly metaphorical way, they each decided that it was probably fine. Unless Ivy managed to get a Cerberus. Then all bets were off.

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*December 5, 1991*

"Do you want to come to my house for Christmas?"

Fred looked up from his essay. Yes, despite all assumptions to the contrary, he did actually write his essays. He, like his twin, just chose to do it out of sight as often as possible. No need to give people any reason to believe they were too responsible, after all.

"Sorry, what?"

"Do you want to come to my house for Christmas? You, George, and your brothers. I asked Uncle Henry and he said I could invite you."

"Well, we'd have to ask our parents."

Ivy nodded.

Fred honestly wasn't entirely sure what to think. On the one hand, Ivy was cool, so her guardian was probably alright too. On the other hand, everyone always talked about *Lord Peverell* in slightly hushed, awed tones. That didn't bode particularly well for Fred's slowly developing opinions of the man. To him it meant Ivy's guardian was most likely either boring or stuck up. He wasn't old, so that third option was out. But, as he kept reminding himself, Ivy was fine, and she seemed to really like her Uncle. So maybe he was okay too.

Fred went to say something else but Percy ran up to him suddenly, holding a letter in his hand.

"Do you know what mum is talking about in here?" Percy waved the letter in front of Fred. Since he didn't know what their mum had said, he did not, in fact, know what she was talking about.



“What’d she say?”

“She said she’s glad we’re staying with friends for Christmas and to make sure we behave ourselves. I thought we were staying here?”

Fred glanced at Ivy. She shrugged. “Maybe Uncle Henry already wrote your parents.”

Percy, noticing Ivy’s presence for the first time, said, “oh, hello, Potter.” He turned back to Fred. “So where are we supposedly going?”

Fred motioned towards Ivy. “Ivy and her guardian, Lord *Peverell*,” he stressed, knowing that Percy would be on board with any opportunity to suck up to someone as prestigious as that, “invited us to spend Christmas with them.”

Percy looked mildly shocked at that, but pleased. Percy was really too easy to convince, sometimes. “Well, that’s very nice of you,” he said to Ivy. “I’m sure we’d all be delighted.”

Ivy beamed, and Fred felt better about the situation. Even if Peverell did turn out to be like some of the people Dad had to work with, Ivy would be happy, and that was more important.

“Oh, I’m so excited. It’ll be so much fun to have more people there! And you’ll get to meet my godfather too. I get to meet him for the first time at Christmas, and I’m sure he’ll be great. We’re going to have so much fun!”

With that she practically skipped out of the room, leaving a slightly frozen Fred and Percy Weasley, who had suddenly remembered that Ivy Potter’s grandfather was, in fact, Sirius Black, the notorious not-actually-a-murderer whose innocence they had themselves played a tiny part in. The great ratscapade was not far from their minds. Not to mention the news a few weeks ago that said the-real-murderer-this-time had turned up dead. But it was fine. It was all fine. They’d be fine.

Both recovering from their slight moment of we’re-not-going-to-get-murdered-over-Christmas-are-we panic, Percy was suddenly struck with another revelation.

“Fred,” he asked, “how did Potter get into the Gryffindor common room?”

Fred looked at the entrance to said room. “I...have no idea.”

Percy began wondering who had let such an important secret out.

Fred wondered how he could get Ivy to share her secrets.

---

*December 9, 1991*

“Mr. Weasley, I was under the assumption that you and your brothers would be spending Christmas with us at the castle this year, yet none of you have put your names on the list. Has there been a change of plans I should be aware about?”

George looked up at his head of house. Honestly, why hadn't Percy already taken care of this. *He* was the prefect. That fact that this was in no way covered by a prefect's duties was conveniently ignored.

"Uh, yeah. We're staying with Potter and Lord Peverell."

"And have your parents given their approval for such a visit?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Professor McGonagall peered over her glasses at him for a moment, and then, apparently determining that he was in fact telling the truth, said, "very well. I hope you boys have an enjoyable Christmas." Then she smiled and continued on.

George sighed. They had gotten far more smiles than eye twitches from their head of house over the past week. They were obviously slacking.

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*December 22, 1991*

Albus Dumbledore placed the finishing touches on his gift for Ivy Potter. This would have been so much easier to do with the invisibility cloak, but alas, that was long gone. This would have to do. And he couldn't help but think that it was a rather good idea, if he did say so himself, which he did. After all, he was quite positive that Lord Peverell had not been an acquaintance of James and Lily, so he was unlikely to have many, if any, pictures of Ivy's parents to show her. Not like the ones now filling this lovely little photo album. Add to that an offer to tell her stories about her parents, and Ivy would no doubt be eager to meet with him and learn all about her heritage. Perhaps he could invite Sirius or even Remus to meet her and share some stories. Not too often, of course, since he didn't want her growing too attached to either, at least not yet. It was rather unfortunate that Sirius had been unable to gain guardianship of Ivy. And the poor boy had seemed so distraught. Hopefully that wouldn't negatively impact his ability to influence the Black heir further.

All of this would have been easier if he had managed to get Ivy to stay at Hogwarts over the holiday. He knew from the beginning that it was unlikely to happen, but one could always hope. He would just need to find a way to get her to encounter the mirror some other time. At least the Weasley boys were spending Christmas with her. He was rather fond of the Weasley family. They were strong supporters of the light, and would no doubt be a good influence on Ivy. Maybe he could suggest that Molly reciprocate the invitation over the summer holiday. He was sure Ivy would benefit from a strong mother figure in her life, and any time spent in a light family's home would be well worth any effort.

Yes, things might not be exactly as he would have liked, but all in all his plans, though changed, were progressing satisfactorily.

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Severus cast a quick tempus. Of course he wasn't counting down the minutes until the train left. He was just...excited for Christmas... That didn't sound particularly convincing even within his own mind. But still, two weeks of relative peace and quiet? And sensible adult

interaction? There were perhaps three or four people who he considered suitably sensible, and he was staying with one or two of them. Lucius was the fourth and second person, respectively. It really depended on the day.

His mind drifted back to the subject of many of his recent thoughts. *Henry Peverell*. Guardian of one Ivy Potter, said to be the most eligible bachelor in Britain, and almost completely unknown. For someone supposedly as prestigious as Peverell, no one seemed to actually *know* anything about him. Severus had been making subtle inquiries about Peverell for a while now, both at the behest of the headmaster and to satisfy his own curiosity and concerns, but it was hard to find any information about a man that no one had actually met.

He was responsible for proving Black's innocence and discovering Pettigrew's whereabouts, and he seemed to avoid spending time in normal Wizarding gathering places. He was spotted in Diagon Alley on occasion, but was reported to avoid crowds and groups of adoring women. How did a man who never went anywhere gain such a loyal following of...fangirls?

After learning the details (what little was available at least) of the circumstances of his guardianship over Potter, Severus had begun to research their whereabouts over the past couple of years, leading up to their return to England. A return, yes, because they had apparently hardly stepped foot in the country between Peverell's taking guardianship and Potter's letter of acceptance to Hogwarts. Severus had pressed Albus for details, and had finally learned that the quill hadn't even been able to write out an address for Potter's Hogwarts letter. That was only possible if they were behind very heavy wards, so clearly Peverell had not wished to be found. Yet he had allowed Potter to come to Hogwarts, and had, by all accounts, remained in the country since their return last summer.

So what was he hiding?

It was possible Lord Peverell was simply a very private man, but this seemed to border much too closely to paranoia for it to be that simple. At least that's what Severus had concluded. It was frustrating, not being able to learn anything particularly useful about the man, but Severus was patient. Perhaps it was time to enlist Lucius's help. Perhaps he had already looked into Peverell himself. It wouldn't surprise Severus in the least if he had. Who wouldn't want to know more about the man who supposedly held so much sway that he could simply walk into the head of the DMLE's office and demand the release of Azkaban's most notorious prisoner?

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*December 23, 1991*

Sirius cast another tempus, ignoring Harry's remark that it was the fourth one that hour and that the train would get here when it normally did. He was excited for Christmas and he had no use for that kind of negativity in his life.

He was about to meet his goddaughter.

Well, technically he had already met her, but she had been a baby then, so she wouldn't remember him. Sure, he had met his godson-from-another-universe, but that was different. Today was the day, and he wondered if the Hogwarts express had always been this slow.

---

Remus looked once more at the letter he had received a few weeks prior. He was nervous, and he was willing to admit that to himself. Who wouldn't be, when faced with the prospect of meeting your friend-you-thought-was-a-murdering-traitor, the orphaned daughter of your other best friends, and her guardian, a man rumored to be the most politically powerful man in Britain?

He hadn't had the courage to contact Sirius, but had been delighted by the letter he received from his friend. It gave him some measure of hope that Sirius did not blame him, even if Remus personally thought he should.

The accompanying letter, sent by Lord Peverell, was a little more disconcerting. He had invited Remus to spend Christmas with them. Nothing about the letter suggested that Peverell was aware of his...situation, and he was fairly confident Sirius wouldn't have revealed it. Thankfully, the full moon had already passed, so he wouldn't have to worry about that particular problem over Christmas at least.

He hadn't thought of any good excuse to refuse the offer, so he had accepted. It would be nice to see Sirius again, even if he would have preferred to do it in a different setting. And Ivy... Remus wondered who she resembled more. How was she enjoying Hogwarts? Had she been sorted in Gryffindor like her parents? Was she smart like Lily? Had she made friends? Was she safe from people seeking revenge on her for her part in destroying Voldemort?

Remus sighed. He would find out for himself soon enough. He just hoped that Christmas went well.

## Chapter 14

*December 23, 1991*

Percy was mildly annoyed. Anyone else would have probably called him extremely agitated, perhaps a little tense, frazzled, flustered, jumpy, anxious... But mildly annoyed, or maybe slightly irritated was all he was willing to admit to. And really, it was fine. It was all fine. He was only about to meet the most talked about wizard in England. And the most notorious one. Completely fine. And he had to make sure his three younger brothers behaved themselves for two whole weeks. Also fine. And for the love of Merlin, didn't twelve year olds know how speak at a lower volume for even a second?

---

Ivy watched Percy Weasley yell at a couple second years who were, admittedly, being a little loud. Still, he looked a little...tense? Flustered, maybe? If that's what being a prefect meant, count her out.

Her attention was involuntarily drawn back to Draco and his rant-about-Weasley part 4087-c.

"And why are they staying at your *house*? And why can't you come to my Christmas party? I know mother would have sent Lord Peverell an invitation. Surely you can ditch a bunch of Weasleys for *one night*?"

Ivy decided to have mercy on the compartment's other occupants. "Uncle Henry hates parties, and possibly people, or at least British people. It's hard to say. Plus we won't go to someone's house he hasn't met."

Draco pouted. Ivy knew he would deny that's what it was if she called him out on it, but there was really no other name for it.

"But if you come then he will meet my parents, and then you will be there too, and then I won't be stuck with..." Draco did not finish that sentence, which Ivy was certain was probably for the best. Usually if Draco managed to stop himself from saying something it was safe to assume it was for the best, given the things that tended to come out when he didn't manage to stop in time.

"But I still don't see why Weasley gets to spend Christmas at your house," Draco continued. "You're not even friends!"

Ivy rolled her eyes. "But I'm friends with Fred and George and Percy seems okay." Draco made a face at that. "And I'm sure Ron is nice enough once you get to know him." Draco made another face at that. He clearly did not agree, but Ivy could not quite find it in herself to care.

Deciding that more action was necessary to bring Draco's inevitable rant to a merciful end, Ivy turned to the person seated on Draco's right. "So, Greg. What are you doing for

Christmas?”

The boy’s short, quiet responses were insufficient for her purposes. Vince yielded mostly the same results, as did Millie. Theo’s answers were at least longer than the other three, but were equally quiet. It’s like he was still nervous around her or something. Out of all the Slytherin first years, he’s the one she had spoken to the least. Unfortunately Tracey wasn’t in there compartment. She would have talked enough.

Just then Pansy came back in. She had started in their compartment, but must have gotten bored or something, because she had left over an hour ago. But now she was back, and Ivy had learned that Pansy could outtalk nearly anyone if she set her mind to it.

“Hey Pansy, what are you doing over the holiday?”

An hour later Ivy was rather proud of herself. Pansy’s return and Ivy’s merciful intervention had been just what was needed. Sure, most everyone had tuned out Pansy about five minutes in, but Draco and Pansy had gotten into a bit of an argument that had proved far more entertaining than Draco’s ranting. Even Theo had put down his book in favor of watching the two go at it.

It was dark outside by now, and Ivy was getting excited for the train to reach the station. She hadn’t seen Henry in what felt like forever, and she was about to meet her godfather, who Henry had assured her was equally excited to meet her.

The rest of the train ride went by quickly, to Ivy’s relief. Just before they reached the station, Tracey and Daphne had come to say bye to Tiger, and they had dragged Theo out with them as they left, saying that he needed to convince Blaise to do something or other.

Not even ten minutes later they arrived at King’s Cross.

Ivy said a quick goodbye to her friends and rushed off the train. It took a moment to spot Henry, but when she found him she ran his way, completely ignoring the looks she got or the people she may or may not have sort of run into on her way. Finally, she was home.

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Percy honestly wasn’t sure what to think. This was the man who some said was the most politically influential wizard in the country? Percy had run multiple scenarios in his mind as to what to expect, but this wasn’t one of them. Lord Peverell, for all his name seemed to imply, was...normal. He had smiled widely when Ivy introduced the Weasleys to him, and had chatted happily the entire time. They had taken a portkey, and Percy could swear he heard the man mutter something about the devil’s creation.

The house too was nothing like what Percy had expected. He had assumed that someone of Peverell’s standing would have a large house at the very least, perhaps even a mansion of sorts. But this was...it wasn’t *small* by any means, but it was rather unassuming. Percy decided he actually quite liked it.

Then had come the introductions of one Sirius Black. Lord Black was obviously overcome with emotion at seeing his goddaughter for the first time since she was a baby. Percy felt like

an intruder, and noticed that his brothers appeared to feel the same. Thankfully, Lord Peverell escorted them inside, saying they'd let Ivy and Sirius have a moment.

Once inside, Percy was left to his thoughts for a moment, ultimately deciding that he wasn't sure what to think. So here he was, standing in Lord Peverell's rather modest living room, reassessing his world view and wondering what their holiday was going to look like.

Eventually Ivy and Black joined them inside, and it only took a moment before Percy decided Sirius Black resembled an overgrown puppy far more than a stuffy Lord of an Ancient and Noble House.

Sirius, as he insisted he be called, began telling them all about what he had planned for the holiday. He cheerfully showed them the quidditch pitch in the backyard, because, yes there was a regulation size quidditch pitch in the backyard.

Percy had never related to anyone quite as much as he did when he heard Ivy mutter, "Merlin, there's two of them."

Ron was obviously won over by both Black and Peverell at their obvious enthusiasm regarding all things quidditch. The twins quickly joined the quidditch discussion, and Percy and Ivy were left to fend for themselves.

After a few minutes Ivy rolled her eyes and grabbed Percy's hand, dragging him to another room explaining that if her uncle had found people to talk quidditch with it might be a while. She showed Percy around the house, ending with a room filled with books and all sorts of little odds and ends.

"I thought if you got bored you could come in here. There's all kinds of exciting things here."

Percy nodded his appreciation and began to look around. There were the usual sorts of books, on a number of topics, but what caught his eye was the large number of books that looked like something Charlie would enjoy if he were here.

He wasn't sure Hogwarts even had *quite* that many books on both dangerous magical creatures and plants. It was an impressive collection, to be sure.

Ivy showed him a few of her favorites, and he politely indicated that yes, they looked very interesting, and perhaps you can not show those particular books to the twins, please and thank you.

She didn't technically agree, but Percy thought he had made a compelling argument.

After a little while they made their way back to the living room. Quidditch was no longer being discussed, that much was apparent. Instead Lord Peverell was staring down a rather nervous looking Fred and George, while Ron and Sirius both looked on rather perplexed.

"What's going on?" Ivy asked.

Lord Peverell waved a hand in her direction without turning. "Shh. Just a moment. This is important."

Percy glanced at Ivy, but she just shrugged and plopped down on one of the sofas. No one else said anything for a minute, as Peverell continued to stare down the twins, who, despite their obvious discomfort, managed to maintain eye contact.

Finally, Peverell spoke, breaking the tense silence. “Fred, George, drink the tea, please.”

Percy was suddenly filled with a sense of dread mixed with alarm. What exactly was going on?

Peverell continued to stare down the twins, who slowly reached for the tea in front of them. They each took a sip, and Peverell looked triumphant.

“Perfect. Now, I’m going to ask you each a question, and I need you to answer completely honestly. And don’t worry, the truth serum in the tea is a fairly mild one.”

Percy very nearly groaned out loud. This was unlikely to end well.

Peverell turned towards the twin on his left. “What is your name?”

“Fred Weasley.”

Peverell stared at Fred for a moment, then nodded and turned to the twin on his right. “What is your name?”

“George Weasley.”

Peverell stared at George for a moment as well, then grinned and said, “brilliant! Alright, here you go.” With that he handed them each something that Percy was fairly confident was the antidote to whatever truth serum Peverell had used.

“That’s it?” Fred blurted out.

Peverell actually looked confused at that. “Yes? I had to make sure I knew which one of you was which. How else would I be able to tell you apart? For all I know you would have given me the wrong names or something. No, this way I know for sure.”

That gave the twins a moment pause, but then George asked, “wait so now that you know our names you think you’ll be able to tell us apart?”

It did not escape Percy’s notice that the incredulous look on Peverell’s face was matched closely by one on Ivy’s. “Of course. It’s not like it’s that hard. I just needed to make sure I knew which name to put with which face.”

Percy glanced at Ivy again, confirming that she seemed to be of the same opinion as her guardian. To be fair, it shouldn’t come as too much of a surprise to him to see that they were similar in at least some ways.



It took Ron less than twenty four hours to decide that this was a brilliant way to spend Christmas. Much better than staying at Hogwarts, for sure. He hadn't initially been of that opinion, but Sirius and Harry (or Henry? It got confusing with people calling him different things) were the best. His opinion of them, of course, had absolutely nothing to do with their enthusiasm for quidditch. Not at all. They were just really cool people. Who also happened to be big quidditch fans. Not to mention they had a quidditch pitch in their backyard. He was pretty sure it was Lord Peverell's house, but Sirius kept calling it his quidditch pitch and no one had corrected him.

Ron's views on Sirius and Harry notwithstanding, he was still a little confused about Potter. Or Ivy, as he was supposed to call her now he supposed. On the one hand, she was a Slytherin. On the other hand, she was pretty nice. She hung out with Malfoy, but he had also heard she yelled at him about the duel. She was friends with the twins, which Ron honestly didn't know should be considered a good thing or not. She was also friends with Neville, and Neville was alright, so chances are she was too. A lot of the other Gryffindors seemed to like her too. Even Wood, who was even more quidditch obsessed than Charlie was about dragons, if that was possible, spent time with her flying and trying to get her to play quidditch. Then again, it was entirely possible he had been hit in the head with a bludger at some point.

Still, Ron resolved to get to know Ivy better. Even if she insisted hanging around Malfoy all the time. He supposed that she might not have much of a choice. Who else would she spend her time with, after all? She was in Slytherin, so there couldn't be that many nice people to hang around. Maybe he could show her that he could be a better friend than that. Maybe then she'd be his friend and stop hanging around Malfoy so much. Yep. Great plan.

---

Harry had miscalculated. *He* was excited to see...well, technically "meet" Remus, and *Sirius* was excited to see Remus again, but he had assumed that Ivy would be excited as well. She had been eager to meet Sirius, after all. Perhaps it was his fault for thinking it would make a great surprise, and for not warning her that someone else was coming, but the meeting between Remus and Ivy had not gone well. Harry wouldn't go quite so far as to say it had been a *disaster*, but...

Sirius had thankfully whisked Remus off to show him around and no doubt catch up on a decade of missed time, while Harry had taken Ivy aside and asked her what was wrong and what was going on. She had clearly stated that she didn't understand why someone who was supposed to care about her hadn't bothered to check in on her at all until now. Harry had tried to soothe her over a bit, but he knew she had a valid point. Even he had felt that way to an extent, and she did not have nearly the same desperation as he had had to connect with her parents in any way possible.

Another thing that had not escaped Harry's notice (or Sirius or Remus's for that matter), was the way Ivy had stiffened when Remus mentioned Dumbledore. Harry desperately wanted to ask her about that reaction, but she had long since run off with the other kids to play snow quidditch. Harry had no idea what that was, but it sounded either dangerous or fun (or both, most likely). He would have gladly joined in, but he had a bit too much on his mind right now. A little less on his mind and he might have grinned at the fact that Ivy had been convinced to play quidditch (in any variety) without him.

What to do about Remus and Ivy. That was the first question. Harry didn't want to spend the entire Christmas holiday with a guilty feeling Remus and an upset or even shy Ivy. Ivy had been shy at first when they had begun traveling together, but as her confidence grew the shyness quickly left. It had never gone completely away, however, and Harry knew that the fastest way to bring it out in her was with any sort of connection to her life at the Dursleys. He didn't think she would hold Remus's actions (or lack thereof) against him forever, but if she felt that he had anything to do with her being at the Dursleys, it might take a lot more time and effort for her to warm up to him.

Suddenly an epiphany struck Harry. Did Ivy blame Dumbledore for placing her at the Dursleys in the first place? That would explain her reaction to his name. He had long since forgiven his own world's Dumbledore for that and many other things, but this was a different situation. Ivy had not mentioned any interactions with the headmaster aside from the meeting the first night at Hogwarts, and if that had been her only impression of him, and if she had somehow found out that he had placed her at the Dursleys, she would no doubt have taken that information rather poorly. Harry knew the headmaster had his reasons for what he did, but Ivy did not understand those reasons, nor was he inclined to ask her to. It would be her choice whether or not she forgave Dumbledore for that, but Harry hoped it wouldn't stand in the way of her developing a relationship with Remus.

Still uncertain as to what he should do exactly, Harry determined that he ought to ask Sirius. Sirius knew Remus better than perhaps anyone alive, after all, even after a decade apart. Sirius might not know Ivy as well yet, but he seemed to instinctively understand Harry, for which Harry was forever grateful, and he could offer another perspective on the situation. Yes, he would go to Sirius for advice.

Oh how he loved being able to do that.

---

Sirius listened to Harry's explanation and rubbed his forehead. He hadn't even thought about how Ivy might react to Remus, and her reactions to Remus's explanation (though rather poorly given, Sirius thought) that he had stayed away because Dumbledore had said it was unsafe for him to contact her had only increased his concerns regarding the headmaster. There was essentially no doubt left in his mind as to why precisely Dumbledore had done as he had. If his apparent plan had succeeded, Ivy's life would most likely resemble Harry's much more closely, complete with yearly trauma and near-death experiences. Sirius shuddered at the thought. No, they wouldn't allow anything of the sort to happen to Ivy. Harry had done an excellent job of raising her so far, and Sirius was determined to help in any way he could.

For all of Harry's admissions about the headmaster, both the one in his original world and the one here, Harry did not seem to regard Dumbledore with any great deal of disdain or anger. If it came down to protecting Ivy or keeping peace with Dumbledore, Sirius had doubt that Harry would do all in his power to keep Ivy safe and far from harm. And Harry's power was nothing if not incredible.

Perhaps Sirius would need a little more evidence of Dumbledore's machinations before he could confront Harry with the prospect that the headmaster might very possibly end up

opposing them more directly in the future. A man with such carefully laid plans was unlikely to give them up so easily.

But back to the current matter. Sirius had taken Remus off for a chat after the unfortunate first encounter with Ivy, and was not at all surprised when Remus looked like the weight of the world was on his shoulders. After enduring about thirty seconds of apology Sirius could not take any more, and had simply told Remus to stop being an idiot before grabbing him into a hug that lasted longer than he bothered to take notice of. He wasn't sure which one of them had held on tighter, but for that moment it felt both as if nothing had happened and as if everything had happened all over. Remus may have been able to grieve in a way that was denied Sirius, but he had also carried that grief alone for a long time. Now they were finally back together, and Sirius was not going to let anything ruin that, least of all a meddling old wizard. As much as he would have loved to curse the man for interfering with what could have been a much earlier relationship between Remus and Ivy, and tell him exactly where he could put his manipulative plans, it was much more important that he think through things first. No more rash actions. He had done that once and he had paid for it dearly.

No, this time he would act another way. He would see about getting Remus on their side, and he would help Harry as much as possible with finishing off Voldemort and protecting Ivy. He would keep his family safe, no matter the cost. It couldn't be anything greater than what he had already paid.

He had been raised a Slytherin, no matter how adamantly he had rejected the path his family intended him to take. Perhaps now it would be good for something after all.

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*December 25, 1991*

Sirius was officially the coolest person after. After Henry, of course. Ivy had been planning for months about how to wake Henry on Christmas morning, and the more people had been added to the list, the more elaborate her plot had become. She was rather proud of it at this point. She knew Henry would be expecting something, so she had been extra careful to make it *look* like she was going to wake him up one way, while simultaneously preparing to do it another way entirely.

The fact that Henry had warded his bedroom against at least seventeen types of liquids (Ivy didn't know any more revealing charms than that) had proven to her that her bait had been taken. In reality she had bribed Hedwig with a *lot* of bacon. Worth it.

Back to Sirius being the coolest person ever. She had gone to cook the bacon, in the middle of the night, of course, so as to not arouse suspicion, and Sirius had walked in on her. At first she was worried that her plan was entirely ruined, but then, before she knew it, she had an accomplice. And not only that, but he had offered to cook the bacon for Hedwig. Yep. Definitely the coolest. He had asked her what her plan was, and, seeing as he was willing to go along with her plan, she shared the details. He had agreed that all of it was rather brilliant (she had preened enough at that statement to make Draco jealous), but he had offered an alternative for the twins. When he showed her the trick he had in mind, she was quick to agree. Besides, if the twins decided to retaliate it wouldn't be against her. It was a win-win situation, really.

Armed with plots, plans, and far less sleep than was probably healthy, the two conspirators tiptoed silently to the first floor bedrooms. Ivy had to admit that Hedwig was probably the most intelligent bird in the world, and she finally relented, giving the owl half the bacon up front. With a satisfied hoot (quietly done), Hedwig flew into the door Ivy and Sirius had so carefully opened. Grinning, they turned towards the other doors.

They passed Ivy's room, and then Sirius's room, and then came to the room the twins were in. With a wink at Ivy, Sirius changed into a large black dog, and happily (though silently) trotted into the room. As soon as he made it past the door Ivy got out the materials needed to wake Remus. She wasn't entirely sure if this was a good idea, but Sirius had assured her that this was, in fact, the best idea of all.

Her supply consisted of several muggle pranking items, including an air horn, which Sirius labeled his favorite. He had warned her that Remus had excellent hearing, and so had advised her to cast a silencing charm with a timer. Technically he had offered to do that, but she asked how it worked, and when she got it on the third try he just looked at her and said, "that'll work."

Once everything was in position, she moved to the final bedroom, where Percy and Ron were asleep. Counting down from thirty in her head, she prepared for the last phase: the awakening. Thanks to Sirius they were going to be able to get everyone at once. It was perfect.

Seconds later that house came awake. Mostly with screams, but definitely awake.

Ivy wasn't sure what Ron was screaming about, since she had jumped on Percy, not him. Percy had yelled out, "knock it off Charlie," before realizing who was actually waking him. He had then caught on to the other screams and had rushed out the door. The twins were screaming, which Ivy thought was hilarious, and Sirius was laughing his head off, having already transformed back into his normal self. Henry had come out of his room shouting about traitors and finally Remus emerged, yelling at "Padfoot."

Ivy knew he was talking about Sirius, but she was surprised when the twins immediately stopped and stared at Remus.

"You know Padfoot," one of them asked. Ivy couldn't see which one had spoken.

Remus just gestured to Sirius. "Padfoot," he grunted. "The bloody menace."

Sirius took a bow.

Fred and George's eyes grew wide. Ivy briefly thought there were little hearts reflected there.

And so began the series of revelations that yes, Sirius was Padfoot. Oh, and Remus was Moony. Prongs was James Potter, and Wormtail shall never be spoken of again. Oh, right, he was that rat you helped catch that got sent to Azkaban and then died. Sirius looked positively gleeful at that last part. Ivy wondered if maybe he should have gotten a little more sleep after all.

The twins were awestruck, Percy looked like his pet had just died, which... Well technically that was kind of true, but Ivy didn't think that was the reason for his current greenness. Ron looked confused, but interested, Remus looked resigned, and Henry looked like he would love nothing more than to go back to sleep. Hedwig chose that particular moment to fly into the hall and land on his shoulder.

"Traitor," he muttered. Ivy giggled, and he sent a half-hearted glare in her direction before laughing himself.

"How did you get her to do that?" he asked.

"Bribery," she stated simply.

Henry rolled his eyes. "Only worked because she loves you."

Ivy grinned. "I know."

Operation wake-everyone-on-Christmas: Success.

---

Ivy was nervous.

She had laughed when Henry showed her the pensieve that he bought. "Entirely for my own purposes," he had said with a laugh.

He had finally conceded that she could use it too, *if* he got to view everyone's reaction to her sorting. She had readily agreed, and Henry, Sirius, and Remus had all come up laughing their heads off and barely able to put two words together.

But then Sirius and Remus had both given her their present. Together they gave her a large box, in which she discovered dozens of vials containing memories. When she had looked at them for an explanation, they had told her that they were memories of her parents. She didn't even bother wiping the tears away, choosing instead to first launch into Sirius's arms, giving him a huge hug, and then Remus's, who, though taken a little off guard, had caught her and held her close.

They explained that they had plenty more they could share, but they thought these would be a good starting place.

And now she was about to view the first of them.

Henry was going to watch them all with her, for which she was thankful. He had done his best to tell her everything he knew about her parents, and had managed to procure a few pictures of them, but he himself hadn't ever known them either, so there wasn't much more he could tell her.

This though? These were memories from two people who had known them for years. Who had been best friends with them and had loved them.

Ivy couldn't wait, but she was also nervous. What if they weren't like the idea of them she had built up in her head? What if it just made her miss them more? Or at least the idea of them. She didn't have any memories of her own about her parents, so she wasn't sure she actually missed them as much as missed the idea of what could have been.

Henry was, as always, supportive and comforting. She explained her worries as best she could, and he nodded.

"It's up to you," he said. "You can view them now, later, or over time. And maybe they won't be like what you're expecting, but that's okay. This is an opportunity to get to know them a little better. And I'm sure any questions you have...I'm sure Sirius and Remus would love to tell you anything you want to know."

He held onto her for another moment and she leaned into his embrace. She had missed this, the warm reminder that someone cared for her. Finally she nodded and stood. "Okay, I'm ready."

"You sure?"

"Yeah. Let's go see my parents."

With that he took her hand, and together they entered the first of many memories of her parents.

---

Remus watched as Sirius cast yet another revealing charm on the package.

"Are you sure you need to do that?" he asked. "I think you've covered everything."

Sirius shook his head. "Can't be too careful."

Remus chuckled. "Now you sound like Moody."

Sirius grinned. "CONSTANT VIGILANCE," he boomed.

A small yelp was heard from somewhere down the hall. Remus couldn't help himself. He burst out laughing, and Sirius soon joined him. Oh, how he had missed this.

"Maybe I'll get Harry to check it over too."

"What's he going to do that you haven't already?"

Sirius didn't respond for a moment, instead maintaining an intense focus on the package in front of him.

Suddenly he frowned, then cast one last charm over the package. As he watched the results, his frown deepened, until finally he was scowling.

"What is it, Padfoot?"

Sirius didn't look up. "Compulsion. Subtle, and well hidden, but it's there."

Remus sat up. That wasn't good. "Compulsion for what?"

"I'm not sure," Sirius said slowly. "Hey, go grab Harry, will you? I want him to take a look at this."

A few minutes later Remus returned with Harry in tow.

"What's going on, Sirius?" Harry asked.

Sirius gestured to the package. "It's got a compulsion on it. Took a while to find, and it's devilishly subtle, but... well, just see for yourself."

Harry took his wand out and began casting the same diagnostics as Sirius had. Arriving at the same one that had revealed the charm to Sirius, his eyes narrowed and he began casting spells Remus couldn't identify. Remus looked to Sirius to see his reaction but Sirius was focused solely on Harry.

"Can you tell who cast it?" Sirius asked.

Harry shook his head. "Not exactly. But not many witches or wizards would be strong enough to cast one as complex and well-hidden as this."

Remus noticed how Sirius's eyes narrowed at that. "What are you thinking, Padfoot?"

Sirius seemed to be debating something inside his mind, but he finally grimaced and said, "Dumbledore. Dumbledore could have done this."

"You think Dumbledore would have sent you a compulsion? To do what, exactly? I thought he had dropped the guardianship thing?" Harry seemed perplexed, and Remus could understand.

Sirius shook his head. "It wasn't sent to me. It was addressed to Ivy, with no sender. Hence..." he gestured vaguely, but they all understood what he meant.

A few minutes later, Remus decided that (a), Harry was an incredibly powerful wizard, (b), he never wanted to get on Harry's bad side, and (c), Dumbledore, or whoever had sent this package was going to be deep... he glanced around, just in case one of the kids was nearby and potentially within mid-reading distance. So maybe he was a little paranoid when it came to kids and language habits. Although anyone who had faced Lily Potter's wrath when her sweet little one year old's third word was a four letter word from the no-no list would be equally paranoid.

"Okay, I seem to be missing something here. Why would you think Dumbledore would try to place Ivy under a compulsion? And why here? If he wanted to place one on her wouldn't he just do it at Hogwarts?" Remus didn't think it was actually Dumbledore, but maybe playing devil's advocate a little would help them solve the mystery.

Harry seemed to be on the verge of a crisis (it was understandable, Remus supposed), but Sirius answered after a moment.

“If she was place under a compulsion during the holiday, it would give him an out if it were ever to be discovered. He would be able to shift blame for it onto Harry, which might give him enough evidence to bring up a custody hearing. He’s covering all his bases,” Sirius practically spit out.

Harry asked Sirius a silent question, and Remus caught the small little shake of Sirius’s head in response. Clearly there was something they weren’t telling him, but quite frankly he deserved that. Maybe eventually they would trust him, but for now he would do his best to help.

“So what do we do?”



## Chapter 15

*December 27, 1991*

“Sirius, why didn’t you want me to tell Remus?”

Sirius looked up. “I don’t know,” he said honestly. “I want to say we can trust him with this, but I have to know he’s not going to go running to Dumbledore.”

Harry nodded solemnly. “And you still think Dumbledore is the one behind the package?”

Even as he asked the question, he knew the answer. Too many things fit for it to be a coincidence.

“Yeah, I do. You mentioned James’s cloak in your first year. I think this is the next best thing in his mind. I’m fairly certain he still doesn’t know that Remus or I have been in close contact with you, or with Ivy, and he’s probably betting that he can win Ivy to his side using her parents. He wouldn’t expect you to be able to share anything about them anyway, so he probably assumed she doesn’t know much.”

Harry thought back to his own younger years and how much he had loved being able to glean even the tiniest bit of information about his parents.

“Do you think...” Harry couldn’t quite bring himself to say it.

“Do I think Dumbledore put a compulsion on you?”

Harry nodded, eyes staring at the ground.

Sirius sighed. “I don’t know. Maybe he did, maybe he didn’t. In a way it doesn’t matter. He manipulated your life so you would do what he wanted, fulfill your so-called destiny or whatever nonsense he was following, and whether or not he used some kind of magic on you to make you more cooperative is almost a moot point.”

Surprisingly, that made Harry feel a bit better. It *didn’t* matter what Dumbledore had or had not done. Not really. That part of his life was over. Now his focus was Ivy.

“And what about Ivy?”

Sirius rubbed his brow before responding. “Look, you’re a lot more forgiving of a person than I am. I think we firmly established that.”

Harry let out a wry chuckle. He had witnessed Sirius’s lack of forgiveness. He had prevented Sirius from killing Peter in his world, but he hadn’t been able to bring himself to do so here. Not now that he understood Sirius’s position a little better.

“You were able to forgive people,” Sirius continued, “including Dumbledore, for things that, frankly, most people never would be able to forgive. Myself included. But I’ve seen you with

Ivy, and I know you'll do anything to protect her. Including going up against Dumbledore if needed."

"You think it'll come to that?"

Sirius grimaced. "I don't think he's likely to give in any time soon."

Harry sighed. "You're probably right. Maybe once we get this whole Voldemort thing taken care of once and for all he'll stop. Has he contacted you any more about Ivy?"

Sirius shook his head. "No. Nothing recently. My guess would be that he's trying to get a better read on you first. You are quite the mystery of the British wizarding world right now, you know."

Harry groaned. "Don't remind me. I swear every day it's worse. Where do people come up with all these rumors anyway?"

Sirius went to answer but Harry put up his hand. "No, don't answer that. I don't want to know."

Sirius threw back his head and laughed. "You're going to have to face your adoring public sooner or later."

"Do you have to put it that way? And later is fine by me."

"You could always let Ivy set up a social calendar for you."

Harry made a face. "Why do you love tormenting me?"

"She did mention something about how you really ought to date more." Harry let out a strangled sound that Sirius completely ignored. "I think she might have said something about finding someone for you if you didn't do it yourself."

Sirius had the gall to laugh at the expression on Harry's face. "Where would she even... You know what, never mind. I have half an idea to stick her on *you*. I'm sure everyone would *love* to meet the new Lord Black."

Sirius's eyes went wide. "You wouldn't dare!"

"I would too! Besides, you started it. No way am I going to be dragged off into some kind of social event while you get to stay at home. If I'm going down, then you're going down with me."

"Well..." Sirius grasped for a retort. "Well maybe *I'll* be the one dragging *you* down with me."

"Not bloody likely. You would just find a way to get out of it. No, if I'm going, so are you."

"Fine."

“Fine!”

“Fine!”

“What’re you yelling about?”

Harry and Sirius both turned to see Ivy standing in the doorway.

“Nothing,” Harry reassured her. “Just telling Sirius that he’s going to have to come with me to social events and such.”

Ivy clapped her hands. “Oh perfect! I’ll let Draco know we’re coming.”

With that she turned around and skipped out of the room.

As realization over their newfound situation sunk in, the two men turned and looked at each other with expressions of horror.

“Did we just...”

“Yeah.”

“This isn’t going to end well.”

“Probably not.”

“It’ll be fine.”

“Speak for yourself. I’m *related* to Malfoy.”

“Only by marriage.”

“That doesn’t make it better.”

They both shuddered. Harry felt bad for a split second, but that feeling quickly faded. Maybe this would be his chance to get the diary... He wasn’t sure why he hadn’t thought of it before. Okay he did know, but he wasn’t ready to admit to himself or anyone else that he was too scared of the young female population of Britain to actually go to something like the Malfoy’s New Years Eve party.

Ivy would be happy to see her friends, Harry could nab the diary, and Sirius would be there as well. Maybe he’d be able to get a good pensieve memory out of this.

---

Draco ran through the manor in search of his parents. Christmas had been wonderful, as always, but now it was even better. Ivy was coming to his party. His family’s party. Same thing.

He nearly ran into his mother, but she didn’t even chide him for it. She just asked if everything was alright and he said it was.

“Ivy is coming to our party.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. She just wrote me. Apparently Lord Peverell decided they could come after all.”

His father, who he had not noticed was even in the room until just now, began coughing.

“Well that’s nice. So they will both be attending?”

Draco nodded. “Oh and she said her godfather would come too.”

His mother beamed. “Well it will certainly be nice to see my sousing again after all this time.”

His father coughed again.

“Water, dear?”

“I’m fine,” his father got out before excusing himself.

His mother rolled her eyes ever so slightly. “Well, I’m sure it will be wonderful to have more of your friends here.”

---

Lucius sat at his desk. On the one hand, he was finally going to have a chance to meet Lord Peverell. Despite the rumors that continued to circulate, no one actually *knew* anything about the man. Severus had asked for help in learning more about him, but so far Lucius hadn’t had anything to offer him. But now, he thought, as he viewed the *official* response sent by Lord Peverell, he would have a chance to observe the man, perhaps even lay the foundations of a future alliance of sorts. The man hadn’t appeared in the Wizengamot, but if he were ever to claim his seat, his name alone would bring him considerable influence.

So yes, meeting Lord Peverell provided a good opportunity. On the other hand... Lucius had known as soon as he heard of Black’s innocence that he wouldn’t be able to escape the man forever. He honestly had no idea how a man such as Black had been produced by his wife’s family. He was just so...Gryffindor. Yet Lucius knew better than to underestimate him. Even as a teenager when Lucius had been courting Narcissa, Sirius Black had held his own in any argument Lucius had found himself in. He was a Gryffindor, yes, but he had the skills of a Slytherin, at least when he chose to use them.

As much as he disliked Black, however, he would not do anything to disrupt his wife’s chance at reconnecting with her family. The Black were, for the most part, disowned, dead, or imprisoned. Narcissa had effectively lost nearly every member of her family she had ever been close with, and if Black’s release meant she had an opportunity to have at least one member of her family still in her life, he could put up with Black’s inevitable antics. Perhaps just from a safe distance.

Remus looked over his charges for the evening. Sirius, Harry, and Ivy were all headed to the Malfoy's of all places, and the rest of them were thankfully not required to leave with them.

"You know, you lot could come with us. I'm sure it would be fine."

Remus saw the four looks that mirrored his own and turned to Harry. "I think we're fine. Thanks."

"Right. Right. Okay. Well, we'll be off then." Harry continued muttering to himself as he walked to the door, Ivy following cheerfully behind him.

"Why do I have to wear this again?" Sirius asked, tugging at the collar of his shirt.

Ivy rolled her eyes. "It makes you look presentable."

"Plus if I have to wear it, you have to too," Harry added.

Remus watched as the three left the house, one walking cheerfully and the other two grumbling back and forth about "this is all your fault."

Once the door closed he turned back to the assembled Weasleys.

"Alright men," he said. "What's our first order of business?"

"Dinner?" the youngest asked hopefully.

"Right. We can manage that. I think. I've lived on my own. This will be fine. Just fine." He turned in the direction of the kitchen before glancing back. "Just in case, do any of you know how to cook?"

Four grimaces were all he got in response. Remus sighed. "Fine. This will be fine. How hard can it be?"

---

Forty minutes later Remus had learned precisely how difficult it could be. Who knew that chicken was so difficult? Between his own lack of cooking skills and the occasional almost-helpful suggestions from the boys, they had made an utter mess of things. At least nothing was on fire.

Oh. He spoke too soon.

Well, at least it was all in the pan.

He had spoken too soon again.

"Aren't there, you know, cooking spells and things like that?"

They all looked at Ron.

"I'm just saying. There's probably an easier way to do this."

Remus agreed. It was called a restaurant.

Percy volunteered to go look in the library for a cooking book of some kind, and the twins helpfully offered to put out the fire.

Knowing what he and his friends had been like at their age, Remus thought that maybe they should not be allowed near any fire, ever, so he sent them on the hunt for some type of food that didn't involve actually cooking.

Percy returned soon after with a book labeled "Household Charms for the Ignorant," which Remus thought was appropriate.

"Isn't your mom...you know, good at this?" Remus gestured to the disaster that was currently Harry's kitchen.

Percy grimaced and nodded. "Yeah. Really good."

"And none of you know because..."

"I think she tried with Bill and Charlie. Me too, actually. But once the twins started getting into things I think she gave up. We probably made a mess of her kitchen one too many times."

Remus wondered what Percy had ever done to get banned from the kitchen. He reminded Remus of himself in some ways, although he hoped he hadn't been quite *that* stuck up about life. That comparison brought to mind some of his own childhood mishaps and he suddenly felt he needed no further information.

"She doesn't make you help out or anything?" Remus hadn't known Molly Weasley well, but that didn't seem like her.

"Oh, she does. Just not in the kitchen. I think she specifically keeps us all busy so we don't invade her space."

Remus nodded. Understandable. "Well, you seem smart. I'm sure we can figure this out."

Percy puffed up a little at the praise and immediately set to scouring through the book.

Remus finished cleaning up their earlier attempts at cooking and wondered if he ought to have learned at some point. Probably.

The twins' heads finally emerged from the cupboards they had buried themselves in, and their arms were full of various food items. Remus decided they ought to only bother with the foods they could identify, or least read labels on, so a bunch of foreign looking foods and foods with labels in a variety of languages were put back.

"Spaghetti. We can do spaghetti."

How hard could it be? Boiling water was simple enough.

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It may have taken five of them, but they had managed to make dinner. The pasta was a little soft, and they had narrowly avoided a mishap with the pot on the stove, but in the end they prevailed.

Percy had found a charm to instantly bring water to a boil, and Ron had insisted that you weren't supposed to watch a pot of water. None of them had anything to refute that statement with, so they had ignored the pot until it became clear that the water was very nearly gone. In the end, however, no additional fires had been made, there was edible food on the table, and five wizards resolved to learn something about the previously under-appreciated skill.

A few weeks after the incident, Molly Weasley would read some of the most touching letters from her children she had ever received. They were similar in ways to ones she had received from Bill and from Charlie at some point after each had left home, but these letters were special in that they contained pleas from her children to help them learn how to cook. Maybe it was time to try again. They were older now, so perhaps they would learn something and be able to help her rather than risk setting the house on fire.

A few more weeks after that, Fred and George received a letter from their sister, telling them that it was all their fault. She wasn't sure how it was their fault, but she was sure they had something to do with it. It took them a bit to figure out what she was saying, but they eventually realized (with the help of Percy who they had reluctantly gone to), that she was their mother's guinea pig when it came to passing on her cooking skills. Ginny was apparently less than pleased with the arrangement, and promised to get even with each of them over the summer. Percy was certain this was the first time he had ever been threatened in a letter sent to the twins, and he wasn't sure he liked that development, and Ron decided that since he was the next youngest, he'd have the best chance of joining up with his sister against his brothers, so as to avoid her wrath. It was the smart thing to do.

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*December 31, 1991 Malfoy Manor*

At least Sirius was here too.

That's all Harry could think as he was introduced to dozens of people he probably wouldn't remember past tonight. Ivy, completely devoid of sympathy for his current plight, had run off with her friends, and he and Sirius had found themselves practically swarmed by people from the moment they entered.

In what was certainly a turn of events, he and Sirius both let a small sigh of relief at the sight of Narcissa Malfoy. Sirius dragged Harry (who went quite happily) over to his cousin and introduced them. Harry greeted Lady Malfoy with all the correct manners that had been drilled into his head by another Narcissa Malfoy and her sister (Andy, not the other, crazy one).

Harry was a little surprised to see Sirius so eager to greet Narcissa, but he supposed they were family, regardless of what sides they had fallen on in the past. Harry had heard Sirius complain about most of his family, but now that he thought about it, he couldn't actually think of a time when Sirius (either of them) had complained about Narcissa directly. Lucius, yes. But never Narcissa. Since Ivy was apparently set on being friends with Draco Malfoy, at

least Harry could be reassured that Narcissa was likely as great as she had turned out to be in his world.

Lucius, on the other hand...

When the man wasn't trying to kill him, it was actually quite a bit of fun to goad him. That might not have helped the whole now-he's-trying-to-kill-me-again thing, but that was neither here nor there. Sirius must have thought so as well, since he wasted absolutely no time provoking the man.

For all his Slytherin cunning Harry wasn't sure Lord Malfoy hid his emotions all that well. The man was gritting his teeth, but was obviously holding back from responding in kind. Harry noticed that Malfoy's eyes kept glancing over to where Harry stood. He wondered why, and then the thought struck him that Malfoy probably wanted to make a good impression on him. Oh, this was rich. Harry used every bit of his willpower to not let out a chuckle. Lucius Malfoy. Wanting to make a good impression on *him*. Oh how things changed. A perk of accidental interdimensional travel Harry supposed.

Right when it appeared that Malfoy was going to head in his direction, Harry was saved from the encounter by none other than Blaise Zabini's mother, whose name he couldn't recall for the life of him. At this point he couldn't even remember if he had already been introduced to her this evening.

After the customary introductions were made (that answered that question at least), Harry prepared himself for the likelihood that he would have to endure some amount of flirtation, assuming, of course, that she was currently in between husbands. To his surprise, and utter delight, the first words she spoke to him after the normal pleasantries were altogether different than what he had been expecting.

"You are friends with Lord Black, are you not?"

Harry nodded, and Madam Zabini hummed in response. "And is he quite single?"

It was at this moment, after preventing his mouth from hanging open, that Harry began to feel a sense of delight. As he had told Sirius, if he was going to be dragged to these sorts of things, he was taking Sirius down with him. And after all the teasing Sirius had done...

"Oh, yes, very single." She seemed pleased with this response. "Are the two of you acquainted?"

(Please say yes, please say yes, please say...)

"Yes..."

Cue mental notation of triumph.

"...But of course it has been such a long time."

Harry nodded seriously while inside cackling gleefully. Oh, it was on.



“And are you...single?”

Madam Zabini smirked a little at the underlying question. “Yes, my husband recently passed away.”

“I’m sorry for your loss.”

“You wouldn’t be if you had known him.”

Grieving widow indeed. “Oh?”

She offered no response, instead choosing to look intently in the direction of Sirius and Malfoy. Sirius must have felt eyes on him because he turned at just that moment and made eye contact first with Harry, and then with Madam Zabini. His eyes narrowed, and he excused himself from his conversation with Malfoy, who did not look at all upset to have the little chat brought to an end.

A moment later he appeared in front of them.

“Hello, Sirius,” Madam Zabini said, offering him her hand, which he dutifully kissed.

“Sabrina,” he said, as he raised his head again. Harry noticed that neither moved their hands with any haste. Interesting.

The next fifteen minutes were nothing short of a duel. It was the best part of Harry’s night so far, and he absently wondered if there was any popcorn available. The best part was that neither of them seemed to notice his continued presence, so he had a front row seat to the entire discussion, even when their voices became whispered and harsh.

They threw flirtations and insults at each other in equal measure, and Harry determined to give Remus the memory when he got home.

As their conversation began to wind down, Harry decided that now was as good a time as any to add his own bit to dialogue.

“So, how long have you two known each other?”

Both had the decency to look a little taken aback at the fact that they had conducted their entire verbal spar with such a close audience, but when Sirius saw the smug look on Harry’s face he gave a little scowl.

“Oh, we’ve known each other for ages,” said Madam Zabini, or Sabrina, as Harry was prone to think of her now. Some things you can’t witness without changing how you view a person.

“She was a year above me in school,” Sirius explained, beginning to look a little uncomfortable.

Sabrina snorted. Elegantly, of course, but it was there. “Is that what they call it now?”

Harry caught onto *that* insinuation fairly quickly. He grinned at Sirius, who was beginning to show signs of a slight blush creeping up.

“So, how’s your husband?”

Sabrina narrowed her eyes slightly. “Quite deceased, thank you.”

“Oh, another one? How many is that now?”

“Five.”

“And this one met a suitable end, I’m sure.”

There was no question, only a statement, but Sabrina nodded her agreement. “Nothing less than he deserved.”

Sirius’s mouth quirked up a little at that. “I would expect nothing less.”

The look they exchanged at this point, in contrast to their very recent near battle of words left Harry feeling like a bit of an intruder. He made excuses, but needn’t have bothered. Neither of them noticed him leave.

---

Escaping the party was less challenging than he had anticipated. He hadn’t been sure if he would be able to do so at all, given the number of people supposedly eager to speak with him (though he had far too much experience with that kind of attention to put any stock in it). But after a while the apparent novelty of his presence abated, for which he was grateful, and he made his escape.

He had a basic understanding of where the diary was located, but given his desire for this particular scheme to be over with as quickly as possible, he got within the general vicinity of where he believed the diary to be before casting a (rather overpowered) *accio*. Now, Malfoy certainly wasn’t stupid, so Harry knew better than to expect that to actually work, which it didn’t. At least, not in the way the spell was typically used. What it did do, however, was alert him to the precise location of the localized wards surrounding the diary.

In truth he could have made quick work of the wards, but he wanted to be able to put them back in such a way that no one would be the wiser. *That* required a slightly more delicate approach. He still remembered the look on Bill’s face the first time he had simply torn through a series of wards. He was pretty sure his own face had resembled a kicked puppy after Bill’s (rather lengthy) explanation as to why you didn’t just *do* that. Fleur had made it all better though, by providing them both with some sort of pudding that was French, unpronounceable, but chocolate and therefore delicious.

Hopefully the two of them would get together in this world. Perhaps he could help.

At last the wards were down, and the diary was retrieved. Tempted as he was to dispose of it right then and there, Harry knew deep down that it would be best to wait, rather than risk alerting anyone to his actions or to any accident that might happen. He didn’t think the

Malfoy's would appreciate their house burning down, regardless of whether not it was an accident or for a good cause.

Thankfully the wards were easier to reassemble than to take down, and it was not long before Harry was able to leave Malfoy's office, diary safely tucked away. He poked his head out the door, and checked to make sure there was no one in sight. That would have been awkward and inevitably led to questions he would rather not have to make up answers for.

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Having made it back to the party with no one the wiser by the looks of it, Harry resigned himself to spend another couple hours mingling with people he didn't know, or worse, a few people he did. His efforts to find Sirius were in vain, and someone eventually informed him that Lord Black had requested they let him know that he had left and would see him tomorrow. Traitor. Harry didn't see Madam Zabini anywhere either, so he had some idea what had prompted Sirius's departure.

Wondering if it would be bad form to find Narcissa and just stick by her side for the rest of the evening, Harry decided that the prospect of spending time with one of the maybe three people he felt he could have a decent conversation with in the room was worth any breach of manners that would come from potentially monopolizing his hostess's attention. Before he could make his way over to her, however, he was stopped by her husband, who Harry was much less eager to converse with. Besides, he *had* just broken into the man's office, and that made the situation a little awkward, even if only on his end.

After the customary small talk and inquiries and other usual conversational nonsense that was an unfortunate part of life, Harry managed to steer the topic to the one thing he could think of that wouldn't involve personal questions from his host. Lucius Malfoy may have never made it high on Harry's list (death attempts have a tendency to do that), but if there was one thing he knew, it was that Malfoy loved his family more than anything else. And so, Harry skillfully (in his opinion) turned the conversation to Draco. He felt he had a valid reason for doing so, since Malfoy Jr. was one of Ivy's best friends. Lucius seemed pleased with the inquiry, and Harry mentally patted himself on the back for the move.

In a rather short space of time Harry had learned more about young Draco Malfoy than he ever had before. He'd have to go to Narcissa to get the good, embarrassing stories, but Lucius was more than happy to talk about his son. Harry shared some of what Ivy had shared with him about Draco, leaving out her friend's tendency to rant for extended periods of time about a great variety of things. He instead focused on what Ivy had said about Draco being good at potions, a good friend, and yet another quidditch obsessed individual (Harry phrased it a little differently, because obviously that wasn't a bad thing).

In what was one of the stranger moments of his life in this new universe, he found himself laughing with Lucius Malfoy over their children's antics. Then he realized that he really did view Ivy as his kid. In a way it had always been like that, but at the same time, she was technically this universe's version of *him*. There was probably some kind of philosophical or psychological something or other to be analyzed, but Harry chose instead to simply embrace the feeling and ignore the question of whether or not it was weird that he was raising his alternate self while considering that same alternate self to be his child.

Then Harry made the mistake of making some comment about how he was glad Hogwarts was still standing, and that led to a mutual realization between him and Malfoy that they hadn't actually seen the kids all evening. Normally that wouldn't be a big deal, but it was getting late and there was too much sugar readily available for there to be any guarantees. Looking at each other and nodding, they set off together to check on the kids. More likely than not things were fine, but, well, it never hurts to check, right? Just in case?

In yet another surreal moment of the night, Harry found himself staring at the disaster zone that was the room the kids had apparently taken over. Some faces he recognized, and some he didn't, but there were at least twenty children of varying ages engaged in some type of mock battle. It didn't take long to determine the ringleaders. Ivy, of course, because who else would have had the idea in the first place, and Theo Nott, to both Harry and Lucius's surprise. The two children were apparently leading their respective "armies" against each other in what might possibly have been some type of reenactment.

"I don't think I've ever seen Theo that loud," Lucius remarked.

Harry glanced at him.

"He's normally the quiet one," Lucius explained.

Harry nodded. "Well, Ivy has a tendency to bring out..." The worst? Best? "...enthusiasm in others."

They both grimaced as Goyle tripped over a cushion and knocked his head on a chair arm.

"Well, they look fine," Lucius said.

Harry gave him a look that said he clearly did not believe the situation was fine.

"Well, no one looks injured," Lucius amended, clearly ignoring the injury they had just witnessed. "There's no blood, at least."

That was technically true, but Harry was still surprised that Lucius Malfoy, the poster child of pureblood elitism, was content to have his son and a score of other children wage war in his house.

"And you're sure this," Harry gestured to the overall destruction that filled the room, "is alright?"

Malfoy stared at it for a moment. "It's fine," he said, before turning around and heading back in the direction of the main ballroom. "We don't keep anything important in that room."

Harry could understand that, even if he was surprised that Lucius Malfoy was apparently the type of person to embrace such an idea.

As they arrived back in the Ballroom, they are greeted by Narcissa, who questioned Lucius with a look.

"Just checking on the children."

Narcissa smiled. “And how are they?”

“They’ve kept to the blue room.”

“Wonderful,” Narcissa beamed. “I’m so glad they found something to amuse themselves with.”

Harry personally thought that a mock battle reenactment or whatever was taking place in the ironically named blue room (honestly, hadn’t most of the things in the room been red?) went a bit beyond simple “amusements.” But maybe this was normal? His own past experiences with children he had recognized led him to think otherwise, but Ivy had probably had something to do with it, and it made sense that even pureblood, Slytherin children sometimes acted like...well, children. Chaos and destruction included.

At least there were no magical creatures for Ivy to...

Wait. He had explicitly told her to leave Tiger at home, right? He racked his brain for a memory of him doing just that, but could not think of one. There had been the don’t-bring-exploding-sweets talk, and the don’t-give-color-pellets-to-the-peacocks speech, but he couldn’t recall actually telling Ivy not to bring Tiger, and he was in no way prepared to assume that she would have taken it as a matter of course that you don’t bring your venomous snake to a house party.

With a quick apology to both Malfoys, he dashed back in the direction of the war...er, “blue room,” and thrust open the door. Twenty or so pairs of eyes suddenly focused on him.

“This is Henry,” Ivy helpfully said. Everyone present slowly nodded their heads in understanding.

Harry cleared his throat and chuckled nervously. “Umm, hi everyone. Hey, Ivy, could I talk to you for a second?”

The young Nott scion took that moment to call a dramatic ceasefire, and Ivy bounced over to where Harry stood.

“Hey, Ives, did you bring Tiger with you?”

“Of course. Tracey would have been sad if I didn’t.”

“Tracey would have... Okay. That’s fine. Perfectly fine. And everyone here is okay with him?”

“Oh yes. They love Tiger. Well, Linus not so much, but he knows not to be mean to Tracey now, so it’s all okay.”

Harry truly didn’t want to know, even though he knew he should probably ask. He would ask later. Some undetermined point in the future, perhaps. “Right. Okay. So where is Tiger now?”

Ivy pointed to a corner of the room where a (very young) Tracey Davis and Daphne Greengrass sat cooing over something that was undoubtedly Tiger. What was it with Tiger that set all the girls cooing over him? It was one of the great mysteries of the universe, Harry supposed. And had these people all been this...small in his world? Most likely, but then again he had been the same size. Now they just looked so tiny. It was a little disconcerting if he were to be completely honest.

He walked up to where the girls sat with the magical, highly venomous snake. "Are you two all right with Tiger?" He needed to double check, purely for his own comfort of mind.

"Oh yes. Tiger is the *best*," Tracey said. Daphne nodded her assent.

*§Yess, I am. And thesse oness are sso nisse. Sso ssoft and warm.§*

Harry rolled his eyes. *§You think anyone who petss you iss nisse.§*

*§Not everyone. Sstupid sshopkeeper wass not nisse.§*

Harry pinched the bridge of his nose, hoping the snake wasn't about to launch into another rant about the shopkeeper who kept feeding him the wrong things and petting him the wrong way. Then he realized what had just happened and looked up to see two pairs of wide eyes staring up at him. He smiled sheepishly, contemplating the ethics of obliterating a room full of children.

"You can *talk* to him?" Tracey spoke loudly enough that everyone in the room heard. Lovely.

"Umm, yes?"

Now, once again, all eyes were fixed on him, this time with the added benefit of several mouths hanging open.

No one spoke for a minute, but then Tracey blurted out, "that is so cool!"

Well that was one response he didn't normally get.

Ten minutes later he had answered dozens of questions. At least they all seemed happy and interested, instead of scared and horrified. That was something, at least. Yes, he had always been able to speak to snakes. No, he wasn't sure if he was descended from Salazar Slytherin (Harry mentally shuddered at the memory of Slytherin's face in the Chamber of Secrets). No, he couldn't command an army of snakes (Daphne looked a little more than saddened by that admission and he unconsciously took a step away). Yes, he agreed it was absolutely wicked.

Then the children began asking questions for Tiger, with Harry acting as translator. He may or may not have filtered out a few of the snake's responses, and made a mental note to tell Ivy which words should not be repeated. Ever. Where had the snake even learned some of those?

Someone mentioned Tiger hanging out in the fifth year boys dorm, and that question was answered.

It took the countdown to midnight for Harry to finally be able to extract himself from the group of snake enthusiasts. Ultimately it was Narcissa to the rescue, as she came to fetch everyone in for the countdown, and the children dutifully exited their war zone as Narcissa lazily waved her wand, restoring things back to their proper place.

Harry absently watched as the new year was rung in, and at the soonest polite time, took his exit, Ivy and Tiger in tow.

It had been one eventful evening, that was for sure.

## Chapter 16

*January 1, 1992, 1:00 am*

Harry carried a now sleeping Ivy inside and up the stairs to her bedroom. She didn't even stir as he placed her on her bed, transfigured her dress into a set of pajamas, and tucked her in. He closed the door softly and made his way downstairs, looking for the rest of the house's occupants.

"How was the party?" Remus's voice carried from inside the kitchen.

Harry walked in to find an impressive sugary disaster on the table. "What happened here?" He asked.

Four sheepish expressions was what he got in reply. Apparently Ron had fallen asleep already, his face not moving from its position on the table.

"We, umm, well, the thing is..."

"We tried making pudding."

Harry wasn't sure you could call the...blob on the table a "pudding," but he didn't want to be rude. "Well, it doesn't look so bad in here."

Percy grimaced and Remus cleared his throat, but Harry wasn't paying attention and so missed the indication that it might have looked worse at some point that evening.

"So, how was the party?" Remus repeated.

"Oh, it was fine. Sirius ditched me partway through. When he shows up feel free to prank him. I'm open to suggestions."

The twins perked up at that.

Remus chuckled. "I guess some things don't change. Who was it?"

"Sabrina Zabini."

The three Weasleys currently awake seemed a little startled at that information and looked between Remus and Harry, but relaxed when neither showed any discernible amount of concern.

"Makes sense," Remus said. "He never fell for anyone like he fell for her."

"They were together then? At Hogwarts?"

Remus sighed. "In a way, yeah. Her father married her off right after she graduated. They both knew it was going to happen, no matter how much they wished otherwise."



Harry, sensing that this might not be the best topic to discuss with the kids around, decided a change of topic was in order. "So, what did you guys do?"

The nervous laughter was not exactly reassuring.

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*Later that day*

"So. Saw Sabrina, did you?"

Sirius stopped in his tracks. Oops. Right. Remus. The one person who knew all the details from before. "Uh, yeah. Saw her last night."

"And this morning, by the look of it."

Sirius laughed nervously. "Yeah."

Remus just shook his head. "How is she?"

Sirius relaxed. "Good, good. Got rid of the last one."

"She really did do it then."

"Yeah."

"Think she'll do it again?"

Sirius shrugged. "Maybe. If she finds a good target she might."

"Think she'd consider retiring?"

Sirius knew what Remus was asking. "It was a long time ago, Moony."

"Doesn't look like it mattered too much."

"I don't know. So many things have changed, but..."

"Maybe some things haven't?"

Sirius paused and then huffed a little. "Yeah. Something like that."

"Well you never know. Maybe you can still be her white knight," Remus said, smiling softly.

"She doesn't need one now," Sirius scoffed.

"Then maybe she can be yours."

Sirius let out a laugh. "Yeah, that sounds about right."

Remus smiled. "It does, doesn't it."

Sirius plopped down in a seat across from Remus. They sat together in the silence for several minutes, each man absorbed in his own thoughts.

Finally Remus broke the silence. "Sirius, I know there's something you and Harry haven't told me."

"Remus..."

"Look, I get it. Just..." Remus sighed. "I'm sorry. I know that'll never be enough, but I'm sorry. I'm sorry for believing you would ever do that Lily and James, I'm sorry for running away, I'm sorry for not checking in on Ivy like I should have. I'm sorry. I understand if you don't trust me, and that's fine, but..."

Sirius held up a hand. "Stop. Just stop. Look, yes, you should have checked in on Ivy. I'm not going to argue that. But the rest? I don't blame you for that. How could I? We made Peter the secret keeper and didn't tell you. I thought *you* might be a spy, for Merlin's sake. I don't think any of us ever suspected Peter of being capable of that. And I do trust you, but I have to know where your loyalty ultimately lies now. The things going on now... It's not just me that's affected. Hell, I barely have anything to do with it. But it does affect Ivy, and I will do anything in my power to keep her safe."

"You think she's in danger?" Remus was visibly pale.

"Yes." Sirius rubbed his hands together. "I can't tell you everything, but Voldemort didn't die that night. He had...done things. Done things to make sure he wouldn't die. And because of that, given the chance he would try to get back at Ivy."

Remus leaned back in his chair and rubbed his hand over his face. "Does this have anything to do with the package? With your suspicions about Dumbledore?"

Sirius nodded. "Look, Harry will tell you everything if you ask him, I think. I just need to make sure that you don't go running to Dumbledore with it afterwards."

Remus closed his eyes, sighed, and pinched the bridge of his nose. "And you need to know if my loyalty is with you, or with Dumbledore."

"No. I need to know if your loyalty is to Ivy and Harry, or to Dumbledore."

"Ivy. No doubt about that. And you. Dumbledore has done a lot for me in the past, but seeing you now, after all this... I'll admit that as much as I don't like it, some things don't add up, even without taking into account the package for Ivy. When he initially told me to stay away, I didn't question it. But now... After what I've picked up about her life before Harry adopted her... Well, I don't believe Dumbledore would have been that negligent, and honestly, what was he thinking putting her with *Petunia*? Everyone who knew Lily well knew how much her sister hated magic."

Sirius nodded, willing to admit to himself that he was relieved. He honestly hadn't been sure if Remus would side with Dumbledore or not.

“I get asking about Ivy, but why Harry? Didn’t you just meet him? I know he presented the evidence that got you out of Azkaban, but I’ve never known you to be so trusting. What changed?”

Sirius grinned. “Not my story to tell. But I’ll see if Harry will come do the honors.”

Harry was brought into the room shortly, after reminding Ivy and a certain pair of twins that fires and explosions, or anything that might result in either of those, were an *outdoor* activity, and *not* a kitchen table activity, please and thank you.

“So what’s this about?” Harry asked.

Sirius guided him to the seat he had previously occupied and pushed Harry down onto it. “Story time.”

“Oh, got it. Umm, what do you think...”

“All of it.”

“Really? Oh, great. Okay, umm... Well, where do I begin. Err...”

Sirius turned to Remus. “This is Henry Peverell, originally born Harry James Potter, son of James and Lily Potter. He defeated a resurrected Voldemort, died, became the Master of Death, and accidentally wound up in this world where he found Ivy, figured out she was this world’s equivalent of him, and kidnapped her away from the muggles.”

“...What?”

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“You did WHAT?”

Harry squirmed in his seat a little, even though Remus’s glare was directed at Sirius. And Remus had been taking the story so well. It may have been shock, but you know, tomato, tomato. Wait. Weren’t those supposed to sound different?

“Hey, I personally feel that it was completely justified. Besides, Harry said I escaped Azkaban last time because of Padfoot,” Sirius argued. “Who knows if Peter would have thought up the same thing eventually. He was kind of an idiot, so no guarantees, but I wasn’t going to risk it.”

“Wait, you think I’m mad that he’s dead?” Remus asked.

“Wait, you’re not?” Sirius responded, clearly taken aback by the question.

“No, of course not. But how could you?” Sirius made to answer but Remus continued on. “How could you do that and not invite me?”

Harry and Sirius both gaped at him, Harry recovering first.

“I think,” Harry said, “we thought you might not approve, you know, of the whole murder thing?”

“Does it even count as murder if he’s already in Azkaban?” Remus inquired somewhat rhetorically.

“Uh, pretty sure it does, yeah.” Harry wasn’t sure what else to consider the...murder.

“It was revenge,” Sirius offered.

“Pretty sure that’s still murder,” Harry replied.

“A revenge murder that you didn’t invite me to,” Remus reminded them.

“I can make you another one?” Harry wasn’t sure why he had said that, but Remus seemed interested in the idea.

“Like an effigy?” Sirius asked.

“Uh, sure. Let me just, you know... I’ll be right back.”

Harry took off into the backyard. Like he had just told Ivy and the twins, activities that might involve fire and/or explosions belonged outside. He conjured up an effigy that looked remarkably realistic in his humble opinion. He animated it so it would move a little, and then called Sirius and Remus outside. Thankfully the kids were all on the quidditch pitch playing snow quidditch again, so no worries that they would witness...whatever this was going to be.

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“Well that was...”

“Yeah.”

“Did you know he could do that?”

“No idea.”

“I’m glad he’s on our side.”

“Me too.”

“Should we put out the fire now?”

“I could always dump it off at Grimmauld Place. Liven the place up for the new year.”

“No.”

“Oh, come on. It’s not even fiendfyre.”

“Still no.”

Remus trotted back over to them just then. “Well, that was lovely. Thank you for that, Harry.” With that he took off in the direction of the house, whistling as he went.

Harry and Sirius looked at Remus, then at the obliterated remnants of the effigy, and then at each other.

“Remind me to never get on his bad side.”

“Same.”

“Now. Grimmauld Place?”

“No.”

---

*January 4, 1992*

“And you have your coat?”

“Yes.”

“And both your sweaters?”

“Yes.”

“And your...”

“Yes.”

“I didn’t even finish.”

“But I’m almost all packed and the train doesn’t leave until *tomorrow*.”

Harry nodded. “Yes, but I don’t want you to forget anything.”

“I *won’t*,” Ivy sighed. “But if I *do* you can always just send it to me later.”

“But if you don’t have your coat than you’ll be *cold*.”

“I’ll ask Percy or Oliver or Marcus or someone to cast a warming charm.”

“Every time you go out? Wait, ask Percy and who?”

“Oliver and Marcus.”

“As in Oliver Wood and Marcus Flint?”

“Yeah. Do you know them?”

Harry didn’t have a great answer for that. “Since when are you friends with them?”

Ivy shrugged. "They go flying with me sometimes."

"Wait, like, *together*?" Harry was willing to admit to some differences between his world and this one, but some things were just too unlikely to happen, even in a different universe.

"No, silly," Ivy laughed. "They don't like each other. But they each go flying with me. Different days, of course."

"Right..." Harry needed more information. Who would know... Percy. Perfect.

---

"Percy, can I talk to you for a minute?"

Percy looked up from the book he was reading. "Uh, yes sir. What did you need to talk to me about?"

"I need to ask you about Ivy. She said she's friends with Oliver Wood and Marcus Flint. Do you happen to know anything about that?"

"Oh, yeah, right. Well, you see, they both decided that they wanted to be the one to get her interested in quidditch, so they kind of started fighting over her. They both like to take her flying, chase after a snitch, you know. Things like that."

"Right... umm, thanks."

"Uh, sure, no prob...lem." Henry Peverell was already out the door.

---

"Moony, Padfoot, we've got a problem."

"What? What happened? Is everyone okay?"

Harry winced. "Uh, sorry, Remus. Yeah, everyone's fine. I probably should have phrased that a little better."

"What's the problem?" Sirius asked.

"Ivy is being fought over by two fifth year boys."

"Okay, so who are we killing?"

"WHAT? No, no, we're not killing anyone, Sirius."

"Hold on, you said Ivy, our Ivy, the eleven year old, is being fought over by a couple of *fifth years*?" Remus did not look happy.

"Uh, yeah. But not like that, I don't think." Remus growled. "No, they're just fighting over her and quidditch. But still, she's eleven *now*, but she won't be, and I am NOT PREPARED FOR THIS KIND OF SITUATION."

“Breathe, Harry. That’s it. In and out. There you go. You too, Moony. Deep breaths.”

“How are you so calm about this?” Remus snapped at Sirius.

“Easy,” Sirius shrugged. “They put one toe out of line, we go in and end them,” he said, as if were the easiest solution in the world.

“Okay, back up. I am kind of freaking out over here, but that doesn’t mean we can go murdering people.” Harry thought for a moment. “Not those people anyway.”

Sirius sighed. “Fiiinne,” he said, “we won’t go murdering the teenagers.”

“*Thank you,*” said Harry. “But be serious for a second.”

“I’m Sirius.” “He’s Sirius,” They said at the same time.

Harry groaned. “Ha ha. Focus. Ivy. Fifteen year old boys. All of us taking turns to mildly freak out over the situation.”

“Well I already offered my suggestion.”

“And again, we’re not committing murder. Remus?”

“You umm, you ever given her the talk?”

“What talk... OH. *That* talk. Ah, no. That would be a no.”

“Well that might be a good place to start...”

“Great. Who wants to do it?”

“Well, you are her guardian...”

Harry did not appreciate that point being made by Remus at this particular moment. “Well, you’re her godfather, Sirius,” he offered.

“Oh no, not me. Mm-mm. Not a good plan. Pretty sure we’re trying to teach her something, not scar her for life.”

Harry and Remus both looked at Sirius and blinked. “Point,” Harry said finally. “Well, what about you, Remus?”

Remus shifted uncomfortably on his feet. “Um, well, maybe... that is... Maybe you could find someone else to do it? Like, a woman or something? That’d probably be better, right?”

Yes. Delegate. Solid plan. Ten points to Gryffindor.

“Okay, I’ll find someone. Maybe when she comes home for Easter? Yeah, that’ll work. But what about right now? What do we do now?”

“Well, you could always ask her about her friends. You know, find out who all her friends are, and see who she’s actually close to. I mean, she might not remember to tell you everything in her letters, right?”

“True. Oh, hey Sirius. Do you still have those mirrors? Might be good to send one back with Ivy.”

“Oh, good plan. Yeah, I’ll find them. I know I brought them here somewhere...”

Sirius wandered off in search of the mirrors, and Harry and Remus were left to continue brainstorming how to best deal with the newfound problem that was Ivy-is-in-fact-a-girl-and-someday-boys-are-going-to-notice-her as well as the Merlin-what-if-they-already-have issue and the none-of-us-are-prepared-for-this concern.

---

“Hey Ives. How’s the packing going?”

Ivy scrunched her nose. “Same as last time you asked me? Why? You all came in here to ask me about packing? You remember the train doesn’t leave until tomorrow, right? Pretty sure I reminded you of that an hour ago.”

Harry let out a nervous laugh. “Yeah, yeah it does. So, anyway, we all wanted to come talk to you and ask you about Hogwarts. You know, who your friends are and such. Figured it’s easier to hear about them now, so when you write in your letters we know who you’re talking about.” There. Totally subtle.

“Okay, what do you want to know?”

“Well, who are your friends?”

Ivy beamed. “Well, my *best* friends are Draco, and George, and Neville, and Fred...”

“Wait, why did you say George and then Fred?”

“He knows what he did,” Ivy said with a glare. Then her smile returned and she continued. “Then there’s Theo, and Blaise, and Seamus, and Vince, and Greg, and Oliver, and Marcus, and Thomas, and Dean, and Ron, and Percy, and Terry, and Justin, and Wayne, and Ernie, and...”

“Do you have any friends that are *girls*?” Sirius blurted out. Remus elbowed him in the ribs and he grunted.

“Oh, sure. Lots.” The three men breathed out a small, collective sigh of relief. “Of course there’s Tracey, and Daphne, and Pansy, and Millie, and Hermione, and Padma, and Katie, and Susan, and Hannah, and Megan, and... Well I supposed that’s about it. I don’t know everyone else very well yet.”

“And, just for curiosity’s sake, is there anyone you *don’t* like at Hogwarts?” Remus elbowed Sirius again.



“Linus and Zach.”

“Um, who?” Harry asked

“Linus Claridge and Zacharias Smith.”

“Okay, and why don’t you like them?” Harry had known Smith, and frankly that one didn’t surprise him, but he couldn’t remember a Claridge from Hogwarts.

“Well Linus was mean to Tracey, but he stopped being mean after she scared him with Tiger. The other girls helped I think. And then Zach is just really annoying.”

“Just remember, you can’t stick Tiger on people just because they’re annoying.”

Ivy nodded solemnly and Harry felt better. He was getting good at this parenting thing, earlier panic set aside and ignored for the time being.

Sirius looked like he was about to say something else, but Remus nudged him and spoke before he could get anything out.

“Well, it sounds like you have made a lot of friends so far,” Remus said with a smile.

“Oh yes. It’s been loads of fun.”

The three men eventually left Ivy to her own devices once more, and Harry began thinking where he had left that form for Castelobruxo. Just in case.

## Chapter 17

*January 5, 1992*

Ivy had left them alone for exactly twelve minutes. In hindsight, that was eleven minutes, forty-five seconds too long, but she had really wanted to find Thomas and ask him to translate this very interesting looking spell she had found in one of the books Henry had on the high shelf. Why he insisted on putting all the good books up there was beyond her. Didn't he know that that's where all the really good spells were? This one was in some kind of ancient language she didn't recognize, and Thomas was really smart about things like that, so she had taken it to him to see if he could translate it for her. He had looked so excited his face had gone a little pale, and he had asked if he could take the paper she had written it on and get back to her. She had readily agreed, of course, and was now almost to her own compartment.

The same compartment she had left Draco and Ron in for twelve whole minutes. Perhaps not the most brilliant move in her otherwise illustrious career as a human being.

Reminding herself that this was the sort of situation Henry had told her she wasn't allowed to use Tiger in, she breathed deeply, and then entered the war zone compartment.

Well, nothing was on fire, at least. Pity.

Poor Vince and Greg. They looked so distraught. Usually they could just stand there and not even do anything and they and everyone around them would be left alone. Assuming, of course, that no one actually knew them all that well. Ron, however, did not seem at all intimidated by the two, and they clearly had no idea what to do in this situation. Draco was obviously not helping them, since he was busy screaming at Ron, and as soon as they spotted Ivy they turned to her with pleading eyes.

"I'm back." Ivy's announcement did absolutely nothing to put a stop to the shouting match, which had reached an admittedly impressive volume at this point.

"I said, I'M BACK."

Both Draco and Ron turned to Ivy, mouths still partially open from where they had paused mid sentence.

"Hi, Ivy," they said together, before turning and glaring at each other.

"Soo... what are you talking about?"

"Nothing," Ron ground out, teeth clenched and a pout on his face that was closer to the color of his hair than it had been before.

Draco smirked at Ron, who crossed his arms in front of him, scowling. "That's right. Nothing at all."

Ivy rolled her eyes. Boys. “So basically you were arguing and Draco is winning at the moment?”

“Is not.”

“Is too!”

Ivy looked at Draco with a smirk of her own, and watched him momentarily shrink in his seat a little before collecting himself and saying in his snootiest voice, “Of course I’m winning. Not that we were arguing, but still, I was winning.”

“Mmhmm. And what were you not arguing about then?”

Now both Draco and Ron had pink tinged faces.

“Uh, nothing. Nothing important. Nothing to worry about,” Draco said unconvincingly.

Ron nodded his enthusiastic consent.

Ivy beamed. “Great. Then perhaps you should do something else. Like maybe... Oh, I don’t know. You could play chess or something? You both like it, don’t you? You both keep telling me how much you like it.”

The boys shot each other a suspicious look. “I’d much rather play with you,” Ron said.

Draco laughed. “No, you don’t. You really don’t.”

Curiosity momentarily trumping suspicion, Ron asked, “why not?”

Draco rolled his eyes and then smirked at Ivy. “Would you care to inform *Weasley* here why it would be in his best interest, no matter how pitiful that interest might be...”

“Hey!”

“...to *not* play chess with you?”

Ivy huffed. “I’m not *that* bad.”

“At strategy, technically no. At actually playing the game, yes.”

“I play the game.”

“You sacrifice your own players because it’s getting too boring.”

“It’s more exciting when they fight.”

“My chess set hates you.”

“It does not.”

“It won’t let me play with you anymore. Remember last time we tried? They wouldn’t move out of there spots no matter what I said.”

“Maybe it’s broken.”

“IT IS NOT BROKEN.” Draco calmed himself before continuing. “Besides, it’s not just my set. Blaise’s set mutinied against you after one game, Daphne’s set insulted you, then started insulting *me* because I was playing with you. Even Pucey’s set objected to you after the fourth move.”

“Not everyone’s set hates me. Theo’s set works just fine.”

“I don’t know what you did to Theo’s set but it loves you and ignores every rule of chess anytime you ask.”

Ivy smiled dreamily. “Yeah, that was a fun game.”

Draco looked mildly outraged. “It was not even a game! You told your pieces to charge and *they did*. Don’t you get it? They’re not *supposed to do that*.”

Ivy just shrugged. Draco hadn’t played chess with her using Theo’s set since the first time they had borrowed it. The only person that would play her using Theo’s set was Theo himself, and he ended up employing the same tactics. In the end their games looked a little bit more like a gladiatorial match and less like a game of chess, wizard or otherwise, but Ivy really couldn’t understand why no one seemed to enjoy it.

Ron, meanwhile, had begun to look slightly horrified at the obvious affront to the greatest game ever invented (in a non-sports category, of course), while Vince and Greg both looked like they would rather be anywhere else, if their slow movement in the direction of the door that Ivy was still standing in front of was any indication.

Draco stared at Ivy for a minute longer, one eye dangerously close to twitching.

“Um, Malfoy, would you like to play a round? I think maybe I’d rather play with you after all.”

---

“Hi, Neville.”

“Oh, hi, Ivy. How was your Christmas?”

“It was great. How was yours?”

“It was fine.”

“Hi, Dean, hi Seamus.”

Both boys waved to Ivy, not looking up from the game they were absorbed in.

“So, what’re you doing here?” Neville asked.

“Oh well Draco and Ron started a chess game and said they didn’t want me killing their pieces so I thought I’d walk around for a bit and see what everyone else was doing.”

Dean coughed and Seamus made an unfortunate move resulting in some cards exploding a little closer to his face than was preferable. Neville, having by necessity grown somewhat accustomed to the antics of the Weasley twins, didn’t even twitch.

“Sorry, they what?” was all Neville said in response.

“They started a round of chess. They were arguing over something and it was loud so I distracted them.”

“Um, that’s nice, I guess.” Or a terrible idea. Neville wasn’t sure which. “Are you sure you should leave them in there alone though?” A flashback to a certain duel being issued was at the front of Neville’s mind.

“I’m sure they’ll be fine,” Ivy said, waving her hand.

“Just then Hermione burst into the compartment. “*There* you are,” she said to Ivy, who looked at her in surprise.

“Who, me? Sorry, were you looking for me?”

“Yes. Did you know Ron is in a compartment with Malfoy?”

“Yes, they’re playing chess.”

“And are you sure they won’t, you know, get in trouble?”

Neville was fairly certain *cause* trouble would be the more appropriate question.

“Well, maybe, but it’s part of my new plan, you see.”

“What plan?”

“Well, I’m still working on the details, but I think Draco and Ron could be friends. They just need to spend more time around each other.”

Neville disagreed with all of that but kept his mouth shut.

Hermione frowned slightly. “I don’t know about that...”

Ivy waved her off. “It’ll be fine. But just in case, do any of you know the silencing spell?”

Hermione beamed. “Yes. It’s on page 127 of...”

Neville tuned out the following conversation as Dean and Seamus resumed their game and the girls began discussing the fifth year charm. Hopefully neither felt the need to go trying it on anyone, or, more specifically, him.

---

Thomas Harrington, fifth year Slytherin, top of his class (not including Percy Weasley who no one had counted since third year), and prodigy of archaic languages and writing systems, did not know where he had gone wrong in his life. Perhaps it was somewhere around the, “hey, Flint, where are you going with that little first year,” or maybe it was sometime closer to the “do you need any help with that, Potter?” Of course, it also could have been the “yes, I can read Sanskrit,” or the “no, you have to jab your wand forward a little at the end, see?” Regardless, he was now deeply entrenched in project keep-Potter-from-accidentally-killing-someone-especially-if-that-person-is-me, an operation of his own design.

And if the spell she had brought him earlier was any indication, it was going to be a lot harder than he was prepared for.

He supposed he could always make something up. He didn’t have to tell her the *actual* translation of the spell. He was smart, he was Slytherin, he could figure something out.

He had explained his predicament to Flint, who had helpfully replied that Thomas must not, under any circumstances, allow Potter to get hurt in any way that could affect her ability to play on the Slytherin Quidditch Team next year. Thomas had never thought he’d be able to relate to Percy Weasley in any way, but right now he understood why Weasley sometimes sought him out as a partner in Runes. He had always thought it was because they were both at the top of the class, but not he suspected it had something more to do with “no, Wood, adding that rune will *not* make the bludgers go faster,” which was closely related to “no, Flint, adding runes to the quaffle will not make it sting on impact.”

None of the other fifth years in his house seemed to understand the urgency of the situation. They only saw little Ivy Potter, first year student with a cool snake that liked their dorm room. Sure, there was the whole girl-who-lived thing, and yeah, some of the parents were still upset about the whole dark lord being vanquished by her as a baby incident, but come on. She was eleven, so obviously not a threat, and a Slytherin, so obviously not that bad.

But they hadn’t seen the things he had seen.

Like the one time she had asked for help with a third year spell she was trying to learn because she was “bored.” He had shown her the wand movement, and then she had cast it. Perfectly. *Nonverbally*. When she had noticed his face and asked if she had done it wrong, it had been all he could do to shake his head and say, “no. That’s fine. Just fine.”

Or the time where she had claimed boredom (he was beginning to sense a theme...), and had asked if he had any book suggestions. He had offhandedly suggested a particular book that contained certain weather related spells. How to mimic a rainbow indoors, make the lights resemble a sunset, and other nice things like that. Girls liked that sort of thing, right? Later that evening he had had to explain to his head of house the first year girls dorm looked like a hurricane had blown through. Technically it was because a hurricane had, in fact, blown through the room, though thankfully Ivy had missed pronounced one part of the spell so the “hurricane” wasn’t actually full size, but was closer to the size of a dinner plate. Still large enough to get everything wet and knock anything left in the open to the floor, but not enough to cause serious damage. He had forgotten about that part of the book.

And then there was the time...

A knock on the door roused him from his joyful reminiscing. Someone flicked the door open, and in stepped Ivy Potter for the second time today. Thomas had never been happier to be an only child. He could only imagine what it would be like to have to deal with this all the time. And again with the sympathizing with Percy Weasley. And wasn't Ivy friends with the Weasley twins? Who had failed to put a stop to that right away?

"Uh, hey Ivy, what can I do for you?"

"Hermione and I were looking at the silencing charm, and I was wondering if you could show us how to do it?"

"Sorry, you and who?"

"Hermione. Granger." Ivy jabbed a finger over her shoulder pointing towards the girl standing wide-eyed behind her. Ah. Gryffindor. First year by the looks of it, probably a muggleborn or something.

"Uh, yeah, sure." Thomas began to demonstrate the charm's movements.

"Oi, Potter. Whatcha doing here with a filthy little mudblood?"

Thomas watched both girls' reactions. The little Gryffindor looked frightened, and was pressed up firmly against the wall opposite the compartment door. Ivy, on the other hand, just looked at Hyslop for a moment as if puzzled by something, then turned back to Thomas and asked, "Could you show me one more time?"

Thomas obliged her and demonstrated the complete wand motion.

"Thanks," she said cheerfully. Then she promptly turned to Hyslop, cast the charm perfectly, then proceeded to cast several additional charms nonverbally, most of which Thomas recognized, and all of which he was both confident and thankful he was not responsible for her knowing. She gave a little harumph, turned on her heel, and stalked out of the compartment.

"Don't forget I have dibs for Tuesday," Flint called out after her as she dragged her Gryffindor friend away.

Thomas glanced around the compartment. Flint seemed completely unperturbed by the entire situation, not even glancing at Hyslop. Eric Pyrites, the compartment's fourth occupant, was staring open-mouthed at the door, completely ignoring Hyslop who was frantically motioning at them, no doubt in an attempt to get someone to undo Ivy's handiwork. Unfortunately for him, it would take nearly twenty minutes before anyone bothered to pay attention to his pleas, and another forty minutes before they were finished.

"Bloody hell," Pyrites muttered as they finally undid the last hex.

Flint scoffed, Hyslop whimpered, and Thomas rubbed his hand over his face.

How had he gotten himself into this again?

---

“Hermione, are you okay?” Ivy hadn’t stopped pulling her friend along until they were far away from the fifth year Slytherin boys, but now she wanted to make sure Hermione was alright.

Hermione nodded. “I’m okay. Are you sure you’ll be alright though? Won’t they try to get back at you?”

Ivy shook her head. “No. I don’t think so. If he tries I’ll just make his life miserable,” she said with a smile.

Hermione gave her a wary look and nodded. “Well, if you’re sure.”

“I am,” Ivy said cheerfully. “Come on, let’s go tell George.”

“Why are we telling George? And why not Fred and George?”

Ivy scowled. “He knows what he did.”

“But I…” Ivy pulled Hermione forward again before she could inform Ivy that *she* didn’t know why Ivy was upset with Fred.

---

“And so then I hexed him.”

Ivy got three matching grins in response. As the unofficial third Weasley twin, Lee was bound to approve as much as George and Fred. And approve they did, giving her a warm round of applause that she graciously accepted with a bow.

“So, how is our dear little brother faring in the snake car?”

Ivy stuck out her tongue at Fred and turned to George. “You can tell the person that slightly resembles you that Ron is fine, and he and Draco are playing a game of chess.” Fred stuck his tongue out at Ivy and George rolled his eyes.

“Do you think they’re still playing?” Hermione asked.

“Well, we haven’t heard any screams so yeah, probably,” Ivy said cheerfully.

“How did you manage that?” George asked.

“Oh, well they were shouting at each other about something so I distracted them by suggesting they play chess, because they both like it, and Ron said he’d rather play with me, but then Draco said he wouldn’t want to play with me, which is completely unfair, I mean, it’s not my fault if the chess pieces decide they don’t like my methods. Anyway, they decided they’d play chess together instead, so then I went and found Neville, and then Hermione came, and then we found Thomas, and then I made Hyslop cry, and now we’re here.”

“Wait, did you really make him cry? I didn’t see that.” Hermione didn’t sound particularly distraught at the prospect.



“Well, I assume I did. I’ll ask Thomas tomorrow.”

“Well if anyone dies before we get to Hogwarts, we’ll know who was responsible,” Fred teased. Ivy stuck her tongue out at him again, he responded in kind, and soon they were making a variety of faces at each other.

“Well I think it is a great way to promote interhouse unity,” Hermione said.

Ivy stopped making faces for a moment to respond. “I think it’ll be funny to see their faces when they realize they’re actually friends.”

The three boys laughed, while Hermione looked slightly put out.

---

*January 6, 1992*

Pansy stomped up to Draco, who had so far been enjoying a nice, quiet breakfast.

“She’s corrupting you,” Pansy huffed as she sat down and grabbed food from Draco’s plate, completely ignoring his protests.

“Get your own... You know what, forget it.” Draco pushed his plate over to Pansy and grabbed a different one. “Who is corrupting me?”

“Potter.”

“What did Ivy do?”

Pansy rolled her eyes as she grabbed another muffin off of Draco’s plate.

“The basket is right...”

“She had you playing nice with *Gryffindors*. The Weasley twins are bad enough, but Longbottom is basically a squib, Granger is a know-it-all mudblood, and Weasley is loud and never chews with his mouth closed.”

“Why would you even know that? You can’t see that from here.”

“I notice things, Draco. And Potter is corrupting you.”

Draco saw Pansy going for something on his *new* plate, and pushed the second plate over to her. “Just take it,” he said, putting his face where his plate had just been.

Pansy accepted the plate cheerfully and commenced picking at all the delicious looking things left on either plate.

“Hi, Pansy.” Draco looked up to see Ivy there, obviously unaware that Pansy had just been badmouthing her.

“What do you want, Potter?”

“I was wondering if you would go with me to talk to Lavender and Parvati.” Pansy made a face but Ivy carried on. “They wanted to know about the hair charms we were talking about before Christmas but you know *way* more about that than I do.”

Draco could literally see the conflict of emotions on Pansy’s face.

“Fine,” Pansy said finally. “But only because I am obviously the better choice to explain things like that.” She gave Ivy a once over that Ivy either missed or didn’t seem to care about. Probably the second one.

Ivy just grinned happily before dragging a disgruntled Pansy off the bench and away from Draco’s stolen food. He began to reach for a piece of bacon left on the first plate, but Ivy reached back suddenly and grabbed it. “See you in class, Draco,” she said as she pulled Pansy in the direction of the Gryffindors.

Draco huffed and wondered why it was his lot in life to have friends who insisted on eating *his* food. He finally gave in and grabbed a *third* plate, and began, once again, to enjoy a leisurely breakfast.

“Hey, are you finished with that?” He looked to see Greg eyeing his plate hopefully.

Draco sighed, wondered why him, and pushed his plate over. “All yours,” he said.

---

Ivy watched contentedly as Pansy, Lavender, and Parvati began discussing hair with an enthusiasm that rivaled Neville and Ivy’s discussions about man-eating plants.

Hermione, watching the three with a suspicious look on her face, turned to Ivy and asked, “is this another one of your plans?”

“Yep,” Ivy said proudly, noticing that Hermione was really good about keeping her eye twitch under control.

“Hey, Ivy,” Ron interjected, “do you know what happened to Fred?”

Ivy frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Well he’s not here this morning.”

Ivy and Hermione both turned to where George sat with Lee, the other twin noticeably absent.

“Why would Ivy know? She’s not even in Gryffindor?”

Ron shrugged. “They just seem to always know where she is, so I figured maybe it went both ways.”

Ivy scowled. “It doesn’t. Not yet.”

“O...kay... But, do you know where he went?”

“How do you know it is Fred that’s gone anyway?” Hermione asked.

Ron beamed. “Well they kept trying to trick me, and I thought maybe I couldn’t actually tell them apart after all, but then Ivy told me how to tell them apart for sure, and then Harry gave them a truth serum to make them tell the truth about which one was which so now they can’t fool me.”

“Harry?”

“Uncle Henry,” Ivy explained. Hermione nodded in understanding.

“Well, I don’t know, but maybe he felt the shame of his actions and decided to not show his face. Or maybe they’re starting their new prank.” Ivy shrugged. “Who knows.”

Ron’s face fell. “Another one? Wait, are they trying to get me again?”

“Not you, I don’t think,” Ivy said, frowning. “Mostly everyone else. They wouldn’t tell me the details but I think I figured out what they’re doing.”

Rona and Hermione both looked at her for a moment.

“Well?” Hermione demanded.

“Oh, I can’t tell you. George asked me not to.”

“What about Fred?” Ron asked.

“He doesn’t count.”

“Well why not?”

Ivy scowled. “He knows what he did.”

With that she turned around and walked off.

“Wait, what did he do?” Ron asked Hermione.

“I have no idea.”

---

*January 10, 1992*

“Has anyone had any problems since the beginning of the new term?”

Severus was bored. He wouldn’t admit it, of course, but did the staff meetings have to take so long...

“Well, I did have a new student show up in my class. I wasn’t informed that anyone wanted to transfer in, but he did fine on the assessment quiz I handed out that covered the information from last term.”

“Oh? And who was the student?”

Most of the staff looked curious. It wasn't usual for someone to want to transfer *into* Ancient Runes, after all. Usually this was the point at which students began asking to be transferred *out*. Severus was also curious, but his it better than his colleagues.

“Um, let's see. Ah, here it is. Weasley. The one in third year.”

“Which one, Bathsheda?” Minerva asked. “There are two of them after all.”

Babbling looked confused at this. “Are there? He mentioned something about how so many people mistook him for being a twin. Does he really have a twin then?”

Great. Just what he needed at the beginning of the term. Another mess courtesy of the Weasley twins.

“Yes, there are most definitely two of them,” Albus said with that stupid twinkle in his eye. Did the man practice in the mirror or something?

“I seem to have only had one in my classes this term.”

“Same here.”

“Me too.”

Severus wanted to roll his eyes. Of course, he had only had one Weasley in his class as well, but he had taken it as the miracle it was and had not bothered to try to correct it. One down, one to go in his opinion, ignoring the fact that it was technically a required class for them until they completed their fifth year. Merlin, that was a long time away. But had no one else noticed it this entire time?

“Has anyone else had a Weasley pop up in their class new as of this term?” Minerva asked with a small frown.

Two hands were raised.

“Who has had one, and only one, of the Weasley twins in their class this week?”

The hands of every professor who taught a third year class went up, with the exception of Minerva and Filius.

“Well it seems as if they are taking the opportunity to explore new classes. Perhaps they are trying to work together to obtain their greatest academic potential.”

Seriously? Did Albus hear what came out of his mouth sometimes? And did he honestly think anyone would buy it?

By the number of heads nodding around the table Severus was beginning to wonder how much longer he could put up with this. How could so many intelligent people act so idiotically sometimes?

Minerva cleared her throat. Thank Merlin for that woman. Her sense was the only thing standing between Severus and the loss of his sanity sometimes.

“As...optimistic an outlook as that may be, Albus, I believe this is more likely an attempt to prank the staff of this school. Bathsheda, what name did Mr. Weasley give you? His first name, that is.”

Babbling glanced at her papers. “Frederick George, but he said he goes by his middle name.”

“He gave me the same name,” Septima added, frowning, “but he said he went by Fred.”

Minerva gave a little smirk. “I think I understand the situation then. Rest assured it will be dealt with. Now, how do they appear to be doing in your classes? Do they seem to be keeping up?” She directed her questions at the three professors who had had a Weasley show up only this term, and smiled when all three indicated that there seemed to be no problems with their ability to understand the material or keep up with the subject matter.

“Very well. Thank you. I expect the rest of you will see both twins once again come Monday.”

Severus groaned. Was that entirely necessary?

---

*January 13, 1992*

“What do you think McGonagall is doing over there with Weasley?”

“I don’t know. Looks like she’s giving him something.”

“Yeah but she’s *smiling*.”

“McGonagall smiles.”

“Are you sure, Cedric? Are you *sure*?”

“Well, everyone’s got to smile sometime, right?”

Cedric received no response. After a minute his fellow Hufflepuff leaned over again and asked, “Do you suppose it had anything to do with the twins skiving off?”

“Maybe. Does it matter?”

“No. Hey, which one is it then?”

“Which one what?”

“Which one’s been skiving?”

“Oh, both. They’ve taken turns.”

“How’d you know that?”

“I can tell them apart.”

“Really? How? Which one is McGonagall talking to then?”

“Oh, that’s Fred. And they look a little different up close, but right now it’s easy. You know Potter?”

“Uh, yeah? What’s she got to do with anything?”

“Well, she’s friends with the twins. Except she’s mad at Fred for some reason, but no one knows why. So if you see her scowling at one of them, that’s Fred. If she’s happy, that’s George.”

“That...has got to be the strangest way to tell them apart. What happens if she gets mad at the other one instead?”

Cedric shrugged.

Out of curiosity both boys turned around and looked over the Slytherin table until they spotted Potter, who was glaring at the Gryffindor table as she ate her breakfast.

“Yep, that’s Fred then alright.”

“Hmm. Hey, did you hear what she did to Hyslop?”

“You think that actually happened? I mean, she’s a first year,” Cedric said.

His friend shrugged. “Don’t know. But either way I heard he’s been avoiding her all week.”

“Well it couldn’t happen to a nicer person.”

“Agreed.”

---

“Thank you for coming, Mr. Weasley. Have a seat.”

George sighed and sat down, knowing this was never going to have lasted long.

“Now. I have heard a few things regarding your apparent choice of classes, as well as your absences this past week.” McGonagall peered over her spectacles at him and he may or may not have shrunk in his seat just a bit. There was a reason they had both gone to her class still.

“I cannot, of course, condone the absences, but I have rearranged your schedule to accommodate your new interests. Unfortunately it seems that there is no way to fit Divination in there as well, so I’m sorry to say that will be one class you will not be able to attend.”

George took the paper she handed him and looked it over. *Runes*? He had only meant to go to that for a week, maybe two if their plan held up that long. Now he was *in* the class?

“Um, Professor, really sorry about skipping class this week, but, um, *Runes*?”

McGonagall smirked at him. Oh, she was good. “Professor Babbling assured me you appeared to be sufficiently caught up in the course material and said she had no reason to doubt your ability to keep up with the class going forward.”

Well, *Runes* wasn't *that* bad...

“Wait, Arithmancy? I didn't even *go* to that one.”

“Then I believe you have some studying to do, Mr. Weasley.”

George gulped and nodded.

---

“How did this go so wrong?”

“Might have been when we decided to ask Peverell for books on Ancient *Runes*.”

His brother ignored him. “I mean, the plan was solid. Skive off classes for a couple weeks, see how many people we could convince that there's only actually one of us, then, after we've done that for as long as possible blackmail Percy into making us polyjuice, then bribe Ron into taking it. It was foolproof!”

“Except McGonagall isn't a fool.”

Fred sighed a dramatic sigh. “Too true. But she doesn't honestly expect us to take up *Runes* does she?”

George nodded. “And Arithmancy.”

They both shuddered.

“I can't believe McGonagall outpranked us.”

“We have a reputation to recover.”

“Well said, brother of mine.”

“We could always prank the boys annoying Ivy.”

“Trying to get back on her good side then?”

“I didn't even *do* anything.”

George knew his twin far too well to believe that and gave him a look that acknowledged that fact.

“Okay fine, I may have done a *little* something, but honestly, it wasn't that bad.”

“Well we could always prank her until she comes around.”

“Do you think that would work?” Fred asked eagerly.

“No,” George deadpanned. “Remember who her uncles are?”

Fred grimaced. He did, in fact, remember who her uncles were. While they had been ecstatic to meet their heroes, they were now slightly more wary about Ivy’s ability to win a prank was should they initiate one.

“So, Hyslop then?”

George grinned. “Hyslop.”

---

*January 16, 1992*

Severus resisted the urge to bang his head against the table. After years of teaching he thought he was fully prepared to tackle any problems the ~~small-idiots~~ children could cause. The combination from hell that was the Weasley twins and Potter was seriously testing that conviction.

“And Hyslop is *where* exactly?”

“Hospital wing, sir.”

“And he is there because...”

Harrington shifted in his seat a bit. “Well, you see, he upset Ivy on the train, and she hexed him, but we got it undone, except now he’s been avoiding her, and the Weasleys decided they didn’t like him upsetting her, so now they’re going after him, and now some of the Hufflepuffs have taken to glaring at him anywhere he goes and now he’s paranoid that Ivy has created an army of Hufflepuffs set on destroying him.”

“And who does this Hufflepuff army supposedly consist of?” The last thing he needed was the upper year Hufflepuffs deciding to retaliate against his Slytherins. They were frequently underestimated in his house, but Severus knew better than to discount the house of badgers.

“The first year girls.”

“The... Hyslop is having a nervous breakdown over a few *Hufflepuff first years*?”

“Uh, yes sir.”

Severus sighed.

“And Ivy and the Weasley twins, sir,” Harrington added unhelpfully.

“And what prompted this... war?”

Harrington looked distinctly uncomfortable. “Corvin called one of Ivy’s friends a... mudblood.”



“Who?”

“Granger, sir. I believe she’s in Gryffindor.”

Severus nodded. So Potter was friends with the little know-it-all. Was she determined to befriend the entire lion house?

“Is Hyslop injured or not?” He could deal with the Potter problem later. Much later. Preferably with firewhiskey on hand.

“I don’t believe so, sir.”

“Then what is he doing in the hospital wing for Merlin’s sake?”

“He said he as sure he was going to end up there anyway, so he might as well go now.”

Severus groaned. By the concerned look Harrington was giving him it had been out loud.

“We will be having a house meeting tonight. I will inform the prefects but please spread the word.”

Harrington nodded and then dashed out the door as soon as Severus indicated he was free to do so.

---

“Draco, did you feel that?”

“What?”

“An eye twitch. It happened again.”

“What did you do this time?”

---

“Weasley, can I speak with you for a minute?”

Percy looked behind him to see Harrington looking rather disturbed. “Uh, sure. What did you need to talk to me about?”

“Potter.”

“Sorry, what?”

“Potter. Ivy. I need your help.”

“I’m not going to convince Wood to give up his flying times...”

“No, not that. I need your help getting her and your brother to get along again.”

“ ... ”

“Your brother? Now of the twins? The one she’s mad at?”

“I’m sorry, you want *me* to help *you* get Ivy to make up with *Fred*?”

“Yes! Good, you understand.”

Percy did not understand. “And this is important because...”

“Because Hyslop is close to a nervous breakdown, and ever since the hurricane incident I *know* that I’m somehow going to be held responsible, even though I swear I didn’t teach her *any* of those, and someone said your brothers were only doing this because Ivy was mad at one of them and they’re trying to make it up to her, but I can’t take this anymore!”

“Sorry, did you say *hurricane*?”

Harrington waved him off. “It wasn’t that big of one. It was fine.”

Percy wasn’t sure if he wanted to know more or not.

“Anyway, will you help me?”

“Uh, sure.”

“Thank you,” Harrington practically shouted, before running in the same direction he had originally come from.

Percy watched him go, trying to figure out how a first year was capable of causing so much trouble for the fifth years of her house, and how Percy had gotten himself mixed up in the problems of the Slytherins.

---

“Oliver, I need your help.”

“What? What about?”

“Ivy. Some of the Slytherins...”

“I am NOT giving up my flying times. We have a schedule. It’s perfectly fair and I am not giving up a single slot.”

“What? No. Not quidditch or flying or whatever. No, I need your help getting my brother to apologize to her.”

“Which one? And what’d he do?”

“No idea, but apparently Hyslop nearly ended up in the hospital wing.”

“Then why would we try to get him to apologize for Merlin’s sake?”

“Because that’s how Fred was trying to apologize.”

“And that’s...bad?”

Percy felt the twitch coming. “Yes, it’s bad.”

Oliver didn’t look particularly convinced. “So whydaya need my help? Aren’t they your brothers?”

“Yes,” Percy said through gritted teeth. “But maybe they’ll be more likely to listen to you. You’re their quidditch captain.”

Oliver nodded seriously. “I’ll see what I can do. Can’t have this affecting their practices after all.”

Must everything in the Merlin forsaken school come back to quidditch? It was a silent, rhetorical question because Percy knew what the answer would be should he ask it out loud.

---

“...And that’s why you need to apologize.”

The twins looked at Oliver speculatively. “Did Percy put you up to this?”

“Yes.”

“And you’re agreeing because...”

“Can’t let you do anything to jeopardize our quidditch prospects, and you already both went and added two more classes. Why’d the bloody hell didya do that?”

“It wasn’t on purpose,” George muttered.

“And you!” Oliver pointed at George, blinked, and pointed to Fred instead. “You! What’d you do to piss Ivy off anyway?”

“*Nothing.*”

Oliver leveled a glare in Fred’s direction that proved entirely ineffective.

“Look, it’s not a big deal, alright?”

“It better not be. Fix this, Weasley.”

The twins watched their captain stalk off muttering about Flint’s tricks and “no way am I falling for that.” Neither had any idea what he meant by that.

---

Ivy was still glaring at...well, Draco supposed it was Fred. Her being mad at one of the twins sure was making it easier to tell them apart. Most of the student body was watching the interaction with poorly disguised interest. Draco wasn’t even trying to disguise his own interest. They were *finally* going to learn what had cause the fallout.

“I’m sorry I put raisins in your ice cream.”

That was *it*? Everyone had been making a huge deal over some *raisins*?

“And I’m sorry I said they were chocolate chips.”

Ivy’s glare dissipated, and several grumblings were heard, probably from people who had been expecting, or maybe hoping, for something a little more... dramatic.

“You’re forgiven,” Ivy said with a smile, and not even thirty seconds later she and Weasley were deep in conversation, laughing over something as if they hadn’t ever been at odds.

If that was how Ivy reacted to *raisins*, Draco determined to never, *ever*, get on her bad side. Of course, Hyslop was another argument in favor of that decision. He was fairly certain the house meeting tonight had *something* to do with that. He really hoped Ivy didn’t get into too much trouble. He also hoped she never overheard Pansy call Granger a... He glanced around. Better to just not think it. He liked his limbs in tact, thank you very much.

---

“Furthermore, I would advise you to each think carefully before so blatantly insulting members of the other houses, particularly in front of those with connections who might take particular offense.”

He knew literally every Slytherin assembled in the common room knew exactly what he was saying. Make Potter mad at your own risk, because he was too tired to deal with this right now. And also, remember her guardian is that one powerful Lord that no one knows very much about except that oh yes he’s a parselmouth and may or may not have given his adopted child a venomous snake and taught her dangerous hexes and curses.

“Potter, stay behind.”

The other students shuffled off, a few giving Potter wary looks. He saw Flint pick up a snake that must be Potter’s and level a glare at Hyslop, who shuddered and darted off in another direction.

He looked down at Potter, who, somehow, had managed to keep a look of perfect innocence throughout the entire house meeting.

“Potter, in the future, please come to me or to another professor, or to a prefect if you have an issue with another student.”

“Okay,” she said far too cheerfully. Merlin, maybe she should have been a Hufflepuff. Then Severus remembered Hyslop’s paranoid ramblings about her building a Hufflepuff army and thought that maybe the sorting hat had done the Wizarding world a favor.

“As there was no evidence of your... annoyance with Hyslop, there will be no punishment or further talk of this. And five points to Slytherin.”

“What for?” She said, tilting her head to one side.

“For impressive spellwork,” Severus said with a single raised eyebrow.

Potter beamed up at him and skipped off towards the girls dorm rooms.

He needed a drink now, choosing to ignore the fact that he might have encouraged her more than anything. Still, the fact that she had left so evidence behind was impressive, and things were, for the most part, a little calmer between Gryffindor and Slytherin right now, aside from this whole incident, of course. Still, nobody had died, Hyslop, despite his newfound paranoia of tiny Hufflepuffs, would be just fine, and no one had even accused his Slytherins of acting maliciously. Even better, Potter and the Weasley brat number nine, or whatever one he was on now, had finally made up, thus bringing the escalating conflict to a blessed end.

---

“So, *Corvin*,” Marcus said, drawling out the other boy’s name. “Seems you learned your lesson about Potter.”

Hyslop gulped. “Don’t insult her friends?”

“NO, you idiot. DON’T DISTRACT HER FROM QUIDDITCH! She missed our flying appointment yesterday because she was too busy glaring at *Weasley* who was too busy trying to make it up to her by going after *you* to notice it wasn’t working.”

“Wait, how is this *my* fault? Those menaces nearly landed me in the hospital wing!”

“You were turning purple, not bloody well dying. Besides, yOU BLOODY WELL STARTED IT!”

At that moment the self-preservation instincts on one Corvin Hyslop kicked in, and he decided against further antagonizing the Quidditch Captain who made up for his lack of height relative to Corvin with sheer muscle mass. Also, he was holding Potter’s snake, who had recently been coming to the fifth year boys’ dorm room with its usual frequency, but had also been demonstrating a distinct dislike of Corvin in particular.

“Alright, alright, I’ll go apologize,” Corvin grumbled out, before seeing the look on Marcus’s face and deciding now was as good a time as any.

---

“So I’m sorry for calling your friend a... erm, for calling her that.”

Ivy looked at her second least favorite person at Hogwarts. Claridge had been mean to Tracey again so he currently held the number one spot.

“It’s not me you have to apologize to, you know.”

Hyslop looked like he had swallowed a lemon. “Fine,” he finally spat out.

“And I’m sorry I made it feel like your socks were on fire.” She wasn’t really sorry, but she thought she should at least put forth the effort since he was trying so hard.

An eye twitch was all she got in response. She should keep better track of these. That had to be at least the ninth one today.

---

*January 19, 1992*

Hermione watched nervously as the fifth year Slytherin approached the Gryffindor table. At least she was relatively safe here, among so many witnesses and a head table full of professors eyeing the situation with unabashed curiosity.

“I’d like to apologize Granger, for calling you a... for referring to you in...the way I did.”

“Apology accepted,” she managed to squeak out. Without further ado Hyslop trend on his heel and stalked back over to the Slytherin table. She glanced over and saw Ivy, who was giving her a grin and a thumbs up. She had been worried that Ivy would get in trouble, but clearly that was not the case. Hopefully this would be the end of that. She really didn’t like the fact that so many people were still staring in her direction. A few of the older Gryffindors were looking at her in near shock, and a few of the other first years were looking at her in awe. She rather wished they would just look somewhere else.

---

“How’d she do it?”

Draco looked up at Pansy. “Who did what?”

“Potter. How did she make Hyslop apologize? And why’d he go apologize anyway? All he did was call Granger a mu—“

Draco put his hand over Pansy’s mouth quickly to prevent her from saying the newly forbidden word. “Don’t say it, Pansy.”

Pansy rolled her eyes and shoved Draco’s hand away. “Why not? You’re not seriously scared of Potter, are you? I thought you were supposed to be *friends*.”

“We don’t use that term, Miss Parkinson,” a voice from behind them said.

Pansy squeaked as they turned to see one of the sixth year prefects standing there.

“Why not?” Pansy blurted out before Draco could stop her.

“Because it is beneath us as Slytherins, who ought to be setting an example of manners and behaviors becoming the proper wizards and witches we claim to be.”

Pansy looked momentarily horrified but Draco thought it was a valid argument. At least maybe they’d be able to prevent another fiasco.

---

“Do you think he bought it?”

“Bought what?”

“What I said in the letter to.”

“Oh, the one to Lord Deverill about your stance on muggleborns?”

“Yeah, that one.”

Sirius shrugged. “No idea. What’d you say again?”

“Well I wasn’t sure what to say, so I just made it up as I went, said something about acting like proper wizards and such and how the term mudblood was beneath me. I tried to sound as stuck up as possible.”

Sirius laughed. “Harry, you basically just insulted the pride of any pureblood witch or wizard who uses that term. I’m pretty sure they’re going to buy it.”

“What? They? What do you mean?”

“What, you don’t think he’s going to keep it to himself, do you?”

Harry was about to say that yes, that’s exactly what he thought, but Sirius continued.

“Come on, Deverill just got a letter from Lord Peverell, Britain’s most eligible bachelor and favorite gossip topic. Of *course* he’s going to show it off to everyone. Have you written letters to other members of the Wizengamot?”

“No,” Harry grumbled.

Sirius waved his hand, indicating the complete validation of his statement. “He’s going to show it off to anyone he can, because now *he* knows something about you that the rest of them *don’t*.”

“Is that why the Daily Prophet printed that I am a Parselmouth?” Harry didn’t bother waiting for a response and instead groaned. “I’m going to get dragged to the Wizengamot at some point, aren’t I.”

“Yep,” Sirius said, entirely to cheerfully.

“Well, if I go, you’re coming with me.”

Sirius’s face immediately fell. “Well, on second thought, it’s not like there’s any *rush*...”

## Chapter 18

*February 13, 1992*

If Remus had harbored any doubts about Dumbledore's apparent desire to use them all as chess pieces for his so called "greater good," well, this was enough to remove all doubt. And if the man persisted he would be tempted to show him just where he could shove his "greater good."

"My dear boy," the headmaster had said. He was thirty one for Merlin's sake.

"Oh, we must keep Ivy from going dark..." Right. Because eleven year olds are evil.

"Have her guardianship changed..." Because you tried so hard to actually meet Peverell.

"Concerns over the discovery that he is a parselmouth..." Mmhmm, because being labeled "dark" means you're evil. Got it. Thanks for that.

"Best to stay away from her for now..." Sure. When hell freezes over and the devil takes up knitting.

"Keep her safe..." Malleable, you mean. Screw you, you old bastard.

"Unfortunately may prove a danger..." At that point Remus had seen red, and if Dumbledore had been paying closer attention he would have seen Remus's eye color change ever so slightly.

At one point in time Remus would have felt guilty over the headmaster's words. He knew all too well the danger he posed, but now he could see nothing but lies and manipulations. Little doubts began creeping into his mind about Dumbledore, the famed leader of the light. Questions at the back of his mind that he did not care to think too much on. Had he been another "project" of Dumbledore's? A way for him to gain a loyal follower or show off how well the light could "reform" the dark?

Remus could admit to himself that recent revelations had clouded his view somewhat. He knew he may be seeing things now that weren't even there, and he wanted to be careful. No sense in making the man suspicious, after all. Even if Remus personally thought the man had lost it, Albus Dumbledore was still the leader of the light, the Headmaster of Hogwarts, the Chief Warlock, the Supreme Mugwump, an extremely powerful wizard, and an intelligent man. It would do none of them any good to give him any reason to go against them. Not until they were ready to absolutely destroy him. Er, unless. If, not when. He was getting a little ahead of himself there.

---

Severus was done with classes for the day. Only sixty six days left of classes, then exams, and then the school year would be brought to a merciful end and he would have an entire seventy two days (mostly) to himself before having to deal with the miniature demons again.



Not that he was counting or anything.

This lovely train of thought was interrupted by the sight of someone stalking down the hall. Normally that wouldn't attract his attention, but this was not a student, and was, in fact, one of the people he wished to see very least in this world.

Remus Lupin. Technically not *quite* as bad as Black or Potter, but Lupin had nearly killed him so Severus thought some trepidation at the quickly shrinking distance was warranted.

Lupin did not appear to be paying much attention to his surroundings. In fact, he was headed straight for Severus and hadn't even looked up from the ground.

As Lupin neared Severus cleared his throat, and the werewolf looked up, surprised. "Oh, hello professor."

Severus searched his face for any sign of annoyance, derision, or scorn, but found nothing.

"What are you doing here, Lupin?" Snape said it in his most biting tone, but still did not elicit a reaction.

"I just had a meeting with..." Lupin's eyes flashed dangerously and Severus took an unconscious step back. "A meeting with the headmaster."

Interesting. What had been the discussion that had evoked such a dangerous response from the man in front of him?

"I see," Severus drawled out. "I suppose you will be leaving now." He moved to continue on, and hopefully forget the past three minutes entirely, but Lupin held out a hand and stopped him.

"How is Ivy doing?"

"Fine."

"She hasn't been giving you any trouble, has she?"

Severus raised an eyebrow at that. "No."

Lupin actually looked relieved at that. "She said you're one of her favorite professors, but I just wanted to be sure. Besides, as her head of house I'm sure you have had to deal with more of her...antics than others. Well, thanks for letting me know. See you around, professor."

Severus sincerely hoped not. As much as he would like to forget the last three and a half minutes, some of what Lupin said was worth reflecting on. Lupin had obviously been in contact with Ivy. Potter. He meant Potter.

And he would have come in contact with her through Black most likely, which meant Black was also in close contact with Potter, and thus with Peverell. Lucius had mentioned Black arriving to the New Years Eve party along with Peverell, so a close acquaintance at least could be assumed. But for Remus to refer to Potter in that way made Severus suspect that

they were on friendlier terms than had been suspected. Certainly more than the headmaster seemed inclined to believe.

And wasn't that interesting, the way Lupin's eyes had changed slightly when speaking of the headmaster. Was there some falling out between the headmaster and his former golden Gryffindors?

It was one more thing to add to his list of facts and conclusions regarding Peverell. The man was still unknown to him, but the information he had gathered thus far was proving to paint a most interesting picture.

---

Remus was still upset. He had meant to leave directly after his meeting was finished, but he had unconsciously found himself wandering the halls, heading in the direction of one of his favorite spots from his student days. He really ought to leave before he ran into anyone else.

On the other hand... Well, he was already there. Might as well. Now where had Harry said it was again?

---

Harry sighed. The sigh of a man condemned.

"Who died?" Sirius quipped.

"Me."

Sirius rolled his eyes. "Come on, it can't possibly be that bad."

"Yes it can."

"They're goblins, not demons."

"Says you," Harry grumbled.

"Haven't they helped you with, well, everything?"

"Yes," Harry ground out.

"And you still don't want to go to them because..."

"Because they're bloody terrifying, is what."

"Yeah, I know. They're scary when they're mad."

"No, you don't get it Sirius. It's when they're *happy*. That's when they're truly terrifying."

Sirius leveled him an unimpressed look that clearly stated he did not believe Harry.

"*Happy*, Sirius."

“Some Gryffindor you are,” muttered Sirius, yelping at the stinging hex that soon followed.

---

“I told you.”

“I’m sorry. I will never doubt you again.”

“I told you,” Harry said again in a singsong voice.

“Absolutely terrifying.”

“Mmhmm.”

“Yes, you were right. Happy now?”

“Indubitably.”

“Let’s just get this over with, shall we?”

“After you,” Harry said, gesturing towards the door the head goblin was leading them to.

“You sure you need me for this? I’m sure you can handle this on your own.”

Sirius got a small shove in the direction of the door in lieu of a verbal response.

---

“And so that’s why we need a duplicate philosopher’s stone that doesn’t actually do anything but will trick someone long enough for us to go in and murder a dark wizard that should technically have died a long time ago. And also probably a Hogwarts Professor. Still not sure if we can separate them out.”

Harry would maybe have expressed their idea a little more...less murder-y sounding, but at least Sirius got the general gist of it.

“We will do it on one condition.”

Ooh. Conditions. The goblins hadn’t given any of those before. Maybe there was hope yet.

“We want to deal with the thief ourselves.”

Harry opened his mouth and shut it again. So they wanted Quirrell or Voldemort? Or both?

“The dark lord remnant is all yours.” Well that answered that question. “But we want the thief. *Alive*,” the goblin stressed.

“Right. Any suggestions on how to...” Harry waved a hand. It was a very useful gesture when you didn’t know exactly what to say.

“You’re the Master of Death. I’m sure you can figure it out.”

Harry went to protest that he didn't know of anything the title was actually good for, and if there was some kind of "special power" that came with it he sure as hell hadn't found it, but the goblins had congregated and begun conversing in the language Ivy said he was probably not ever going to pronounce correctly. To be fair, he wasn't sure he actually *wanted* to understand what they were saying. Ignorance is bliss and all that.

"So they want Quirrell, but not his Voldiesite? Know of any way to do that?"

"No clue."

"I guess we could try...selective murder?"

"Could you stop calling it that?"

"Okay, selective liquidation of the Moldysshort's remaining assets?"

Harry made a face at Sirius. "Why would you... never mind. How do you suggest we go about this... selective dispatchment of... oh forget it. How do we kill Voldemort and not Quirrell?"

Sirius grinned triumphantly. "Close enough. Think there's any way to draw it out?"

"Like an infection?"

"Yeah, kind of. I mean, he's basically a parasite in the back of Quirrell's head, right? So if you can find some way to separate the two..."

"Move it to another container, destroy that one."

Sirius snapped his fingers and pointed at Harry. "Precisely. Now, how did they take care of the one in Ivy? Something like that could work, right?"

"That... is actually brilliant. Yeah, something like that could work. Then we just treat it like another horcrux."

"Just treat it like another horcrux, he says. And I do have my moments, you know. Like the time... Or... Well... Oh, or maybe when..."

"Don't hurt yourself, Padfoot."

Sirius shoved Harry, who shoved back, and the two continued their semi-serious ("Don't even think about it, Sirius.") fight until the head goblin cleared his throat. His grin was sufficiently terrifying that the two wizards sat down, suitably chastised.

"If you would place your memories of the events in your world here, we will compare them to what has happened here thus far and use them to construct a suitable replica of the stone."

Harry felt the eye twitch coming. He tried to think back on all his past interactions with the goblins. Had he ever *actually* said he was from another world? He didn't think so, but then again it probably didn't matter. The goblins always seemed to just *know* things.

Eventually he did as requested, being sure to only give the memories that were absolutely necessary.

Satisfied, the head goblin grinned, and both Harry and Sirius shivered. The goblin obviously found this amusing, since his grin grew.

“And you’re sure this will work?”

A few of the other goblins looked mildly offended, and Harry now how to wonder if there was something worse than a smiling goblin. Deciding they were equally terrible, Harry thanked them for their help and pulled Sirius out of the bank as fast as could be considered at all appropriate.

---

“Well, that was... enlightening.”

Harry shot a glare at Sirius. “I told you.”

“Yeah, yeah, you did. Several times. So, what now?”

“What do you mean, what now?”

“Well what else are we going to do? It’s a beautiful day...”

“It’s February, it’s freezing, and it looks like it might rain.”

“... There are people to see, places to go, things to do.”

“Not interested.”

“Oh, come on. You can’t remain a hermit forever.”

“Yes I can.”

“Nope. Not going to let you.”

Sirius looked far too smug. Definitely suspicious.

“I’m just... I’m going to go to... Flourish and Botts. There. Yes. And get some... books for Ivy. That’s it.”

“What books do you need to get for Ivy?”

“Fiction. Definitely fiction. Something with absolutely no spells to learn.”

“Huh?”

“Did you know she learned to conjure a hurricane?”

“She *what*?”

“Mmhmm. Bad things happen when she’s bored. Last thing I need is another Montréal incident.”

“What happened in Montréal?”

“Not important.”

“O...okay, well you do that then. I’ll just... Ooh, quidditch. Yes, I’ll go look at the quidditch shop.”

Harry looked longingly in the direction of said store, but determined that it was more important to get away from Sirius’s scheming before he got any brilliant ideas of exposing Harry to wizarding society. Besides, any efforts to keep Ivy from getting bored counted as a noble cause in his opinion. So the bookstore it was. Hermione would be so proud.

He had found a section of fiction that looked promising, although he might not go for the one about the kid who adopts a dragon. No need to go giving her any ideas, after all. Searching for a book that would be less likely to significantly shorten his own lifespan, he was a little surprised by a small “hello” that came from somewhere behind him.

Turning around he spotted a long girl that looked remarkably like... Wait, no. Couldn’t be, could it?

“Um, hello.”

“What’s your name?”

“Harry.”

“Oh, I’m Luna. It’s nice to meet you.”

Harry smiled. It looked like Luna would be Luna in any universe out there, a fact he was thankful for. “It’s nice to meet you too.”

“It’s my birthday today.”

Harry tried to remember the date. Well, would you look at that. “Oh, so it is.”

Luna nodded and smiled at him. “So you do know. I was wondering if you might. You seem like you’re good about remembering things sometimes.”

At one point Harry had been used to the things he heard Luna Lovegood say. In his defense, however, he had never met *this* Luna before, she was eleven, and this was the second time just today that someone had alluded to his... unique past. It was mildly disconcerting. And what did she mean *sometimes*. He had a very good memory. Except for when he had forgotten about Sirius for two years... Okay so maybe she had a point.

Luna watched him closely, looking for something, though he could not tell what.

“I suppose you’re too old for me, aren’t you.” Luna sighed.

*Maintain composure. This is Luna. It's all fine.* Harry managed a nod and Luna sighed again.

“Well, we can be friends then at least, yes?”

“Of course we can,” he said, smiling at her with the slightest tinge of relief.

She beamed. “Oh good. I was so looking forward to making a friend today. Does this mean we can go get ice cream now?”

“Well, it is your birthday.”

This was fine. It was all fine. But how did she always seem to *know* things? He sincerely hoped she and Ivy became friends. He could see that turning out very well. Luna was a sweetheart at any age, and had the best ideas, and...would give... He suppressed an eye twitch. No, it would be fine. There was no way Ivy would get any ideas from Luna that might lead to madness and mayhem, right? Right. Of course not. Think optimistically. That's the spirit. Ice cream!

---

“Oh, look who's alive and finally gracing us with his presence.”

“Huh?”

“The bookstore? Ring a bell? What did you do, read the entire quidditch section?”

“What? Oh, no. Just went for some ice cream afterwards. It's Luna's birthday today.”

“You went on a date and didn't tell me? What kind of godson are you?”

“WHAT? No. No. Not a date. I just ran into her at the bookstore, and she wanted ice cream and, well, it is her birthday today.”

“Mmhmm. And when did you meet her, hmm?”

“Today.”

“Wait, what?”

“Today. At the bookstore. I met her at the bookstore and today's her birthday and she wanted ice cream.”

“You took some girl you had just met out for ice cream because she said it was her birthday?”

“No. It's Luna. Luna Lovegood. Remember me telling you about her? Anyway, we met, and she *knew* things, Sirius. She always knows things. Still haven't figured out how she does it. Anyway, we met, and she reminded me that today was her birthday.”

“Right... So just to be clear, this wasn't a date?”

“She's ten, Sirius. Well, actually I suppose she's eleven now. It's her birthday.”

“So you said.” Sirius sighed. “Well, go ahead and dash all my hopes, I guess.”

Harry shot him a quizzical look. “Wait, you’re... upset I wasn’t on a date?”

“Yes! I feel bad leaving you here all alone every time I go see Sabrina.”

“THAT’S where you’ve been going?” Harry was deeply offended by that admission. “You said you were ‘researching.’”

“I was.”

“Wha... eww. Sirius,” Harry whined.

Sirius laughed, then laughed harder at the glare Harry sent him.

“Sorry. Couldn’t resist.”

Harry rolled his eyes and Sirius blew a raspberry in his direction.

“Come on, can’t you at least act like an adult?”

“But I’m not an adult.”

“Yes you are.”

“Azkaban doesn’t count.”

“You were an adult *before* Azkaban.”

“Debatable.”

“What’s debatable?” Remus asked, entering the room.

Thank goodness. Now someone reasonable. “Sirius being an adult.”

Remus nodded solemnly. “True. It’s hard to argue for it when there’s so much evidence to the contrary.”

Sirius launched a pillow at Remus’s face, which made everyone in the room burst out laughing at Sirius inadvertently proving Remus’s point.

“So, how was this mysterious ‘business’ of yours?”

Remus rolled his eyes. “There was no ‘mysterious business’ as you call it. I just had a meeting with Dumbledore.”

Mirth gone, tension up. Both Harry and Sirius shot concerned looks at Remus, who sighed.

“Don’t worry. I didn’t fall for any of his... arguments. In fact, it was probably good our little interview,” Remus spat out the word, “ended when it did, because Moony was getting ready to rip into him right then and there.”



“That bad?” Harry asked. Remus nodded.

“So. What did the dear, esteemed headmaster have to say?” His tone was almost sickeningly sweet, but Harry and Remus were both reminded in that moment that Sirius was plenty dangerous in his own right.

Remus told them what had transpired during the meeting, and Harry noticed that Sirius’s wand hand twitched perhaps even more so than his own.

“Oh, that reminds me. I made a little stop on the way out.”

With that Remus reached in his bag and pulled out the diadem, dropping it unceremoniously on the coffee table.

“All yours, if you would care to do the honors,” Remus said, gesturing to Harry.

Harry nodded, and grabbed the diadem. “Better move this outside.”

Remus and Sirius followed Harry out to the quidditch pitch and watched in mixed awe and horror as he went about destroying the horcrux. Harry burned it with fiendfyre, and both had to admit that his control of the cursed flame was impressive. The snake that erupted from Harry’s wand was not large, but it opened its jaws wide and seemed to swallow the horcrux whole. Satisfied that the task was complete, Harry released his hold on the flame and it returned to his wand, leaving the charred remains of Ravenclaw’s diadem in its wake.

It was unlike anything Sirius or Remus had ever seen, and both were horrified at the thought that this is what Harry had dealt with at such a young age, as well as angry at the thought that Dumbledore might have one day expected this of Ivy.

“So, that’s it then. Only one more left, besides Quirrellmort?”

Harry looked up. “Oh no, just Quirrellmort. Diary’s already taken care of.”

“What?”

“When?”

Harry looked a little sheepish. “Sorry, I think I must’ve forgotten to mention it? I got it at the New Years Eve party at the Malfoy’s. Snuck in and nabbed it. Figured it was as good an opportunity as I was like to get.”

Remus let out a low whistle and Sirius chuckled. “Well, that takes care of that then. So we’re down to just the one?”

Harry nodded. “Just the one.”

## Chapter 19

*February 22, 1992*

“Wait, where are you going?” Draco looked anxiously at Ivy. What was she doing?

“I’m going to go sit by Megan.”

“Wait, you can’t sit there. That’s the *Hufflepuff* section.”

“I didn’t see a sign.”

“What? No, of course there’s not a *sign*.”

“Then how do you know that’s the Hufflepuff section?”

“Because that’s *where all the Hufflepuffs are*.”

“Well maybe it’s really the Ravenclaw section but none of them knew that. Because there isn’t a sign.”

Draco’s eye twitched but his further protests fell on deaf ears. Of course, being the good friend he was, he couldn’t abandon Ivy to the nefarious schemes of the Hufflepuffs. They were far too nice. They must be up to something.

---

Ron looked over the stands in search of Ivy. He knew more about quidditch than *Malfoy*, and he was determined to prove it. But she wasn’t anywhere in the Slytherin section of the stands, and neither, for that matter, was Malfoy. Suddenly he caught a glimpse of Malfoy in...the Hufflepuff section? What was he doing there? And was that... \*gasp.\* It couldn’t be, could it? No. It was! Malfoy was sitting with Ivy in the *Hufflepuff* section? Oh, he was good. But no way was Ron Weasley going to let Draco Malfoy show him up. Not in this. He started to move in the direction of the Hufflepuffs, but decided better and grabbed the two nearest first years he could grab hold of.

---

“Hey! What are you doing? Let me go!” Hermione didn’t particularly care for quidditch herself, but she was determined to stick it out, and Ronald Weasley of all people was dragging her away for some unknown reason.

He mumbled a reply but she couldn’t quite make it out. She shot a glance at Neville, who had the unfortunate distinction of also having been pulled away by Weasley, but he just shrugged his shoulders, obviously confused as well.

She huffed. “I can’t understand you. Why are you pulling us away?”

Weasley slowed down just enough for her to hear his reply. “I need you to go to the Hufflepuff section with me.”

“Erm, okay. But, why are we going over there?” Neville asked.

“Because Ivy is there and I know more about quidditch than *Malfoy* does.”

Hermione thought she heard Neville mutter something along the lines of “why me,” but she might have been mistaken. It was a little difficult to hear at the moment.

She herself had no problems sitting with Ivy, or in the Hufflepuff section, and so, deciding that it wasn’t worth being put out any more by Weasley’s rude behavior, she snatched her arm away and walked towards her friend by herself. Weasley seemed confused, but just shrugged and followed her, still dragging Neville behind him.

---

Pansy looked around for a glimpse of Draco, but did not see him anywhere. She knew he would never willingly miss a quidditch game, so something was obviously wrong. A moment later she spotted him. Oh yes, something was definitely wrong. Why was he sitting with the Hufflepuffs? Oh, and was that... *Granger*. What was *she* doing there? Oh, this would not do at all.

“Come on,” Pansy said. “We’re moving.”

“What?” “Why?” Blaise and Theo looked at her in surprise.

“Because Draco is over there and we need to save him.”

“Save him?” Blaise mouthed to Theo, who just shrugged and shook his head.

---

“Ooh, Parvati, look! Everyone is sitting over by the Hufflepuffs. Oh and look, Pansy is already there. Come on, let’s go.”

And so Lavender and Parvati too made their way over to the Hufflepuff section.

---

“Hey Padma, why is everyone sitting over there?”

Padma looked to where her friend was pointing and saw her sister and several other first years of various houses sitting together in the Hufflepuff section. “I have no idea,” she said.

“Do you think we ought to go over there too?”

“Sure. I don’t see why not.”

And so two Ravenclaws joined the growing group of first years, though they were soon joined by the other first years in their house, who were afraid they had accidentally missed some sort of memo.

---

“What are all of them doing here?”

Justin looked over at Zach, who was *this close* to getting on his last and final nerve.

“I believe they’re watching quidditch.”

“I *mean*, what are they doing *here*? This is the Hufflepuff section.”

“Funny. I didn’t see a sign,” he said dryly.

“Hey, that’s what I said!”

Justin turned around and came face to face with Ivy Potter. He laughed. Of course she had something to do with this. He turned back to see Zach scowling and rolled his eyes. Maybe it wasn’t too late to find someone else to sit next to.

---

“Hey, mind if I sit here?”

Theo looked up to see one of the Hufflepuff first years gesturing to the seat next to him. He shook his head and the boy sat down. What was his name again?

“I’m Justin.”

Well that was helpful.

“Theo,” he said.

“Well it’s nice to meet you, Theo. Welcome to Hufflepuff.”

Theo laughed. “Sorry for invading.”

Justin grinned. “Not a problem. Besides, maybe this way we’ll scare the Gryffindors into thinking everyone is going for Hufflepuff.”

“Hey, I heard that!” Theo couldn’t identify the speaker, though it was obviously one of the Gryffindors.

Justin rolled his eyes. “Ignore Dean. He’s very... invested in quidditch.”

“And you’re not?”

“Not really,” Justin laughed. “I’m mostly just invested in not having to listen to Zach complain for the next hour or two.”

Theo glanced down the row at Zacharias Smith who was obviously less than pleased at the number of fellow classmates surrounding him.

“Yeah, I can understand that,” Theo said, grinning a little. He knew Smith. That was all that needed saying, really.

---

---

Oliver glanced up into the stands as his team walked onto the field. Ivy had promised she would be here, and he was determined to hold her to it.

Finally spotting her, he turned to the closest Weasley and asked, “neither of you pissed off Potter again, did you?”

The twin who Oliver was now fairly certain was George by the affronted look on his face said, “Of course not. You and Flint ganged up on us, remember?”

Oliver did remember. It had turned out that Flint was good for something after all, and they had declared a momentary truce in an effort to strike the fear of the quidditch gods into *anyone* who might interfere with Potter’s future in quidditch, whether that be by distraction, discouragement, or the introduction of anything that might be considered a conflicting interest. It had only been partially successful, since most of the people they had tried to talk to had run off before they had had the chance to properly threaten them. What had not occurred to Oliver, but had occurred to a few students who had avoided him and Flint for a day or two, was the fact that it was so highly unusual to see the two of them together without any indication of a coming scuffle or shouting match, that it was deemed safest to just avoid them both entirely until whatever strange potion they were on wore off. Besides, practically the entire school knew what the one thing they agreed on was, and *no one* wanted to get in the way of that. So really, it was probably unnecessary for the two quidditch captains to have done anything at all, since the fear they had hoped to instill was already properly present in most of the student body by this point. Of course, this had not occurred to either of them, and so Oliver did not actually have any of those thoughts or realizations.

“Why’d you assume we did something anyway?”

Oliver gestured up to the stands where Ivy was sitting.

George took a look. “Huh.” He nudged his brother who had come up beside him and pointed out Ivy sitting in the Hufflepuff section.

“Wasn’t me!”

Oliver and George both rolled their eyes.

“Any idea why she’s up there then?”

At that moment Katie came up behind them and laughed. “She’s probably just sitting with friends.”

The boys all frowned. “You mean she’s not cheering for Hufflepuff?” Oliver asked. After all the work he had put in... Slytherin he could reluctantly understand. Gryffindor he held out an optimistic hope for, but Hufflepuff? He would have to convene with Flint to strategize. No way could they let the Hufflepuffs take this away from them. This was between him and Flint, a way to settle their long time rivalry once and for all, not to mention the satisfaction of being the one to convince Ivy to play. So no. There was no way he was letting those happy, smiley Hufflepuffs get all the credit.

“I’m sure she’s cheering for you,” Angelina said, rolling her eyes. “Come on, we’ve got a game to win.”

---

“Oh look at that. How sweet. All the first years are sitting together.”

Severus did share Pomona’s sentiment, but decided that it probably had something to do with Potter, and since it was occurring in the Hufflepuff section and no one appeared to be injured, it was not really his problem.

---

This was not exactly what Ron had planned, although to be completely honest he hadn’t had much of a plan to begin with. He just knew that whatever plan he might have eventually formed, this was not it. How was he supposed to show Ivy that he would be a much better friend than Malfoy if she kept talking to so many *other* people.

Well, if he couldn’t talk to her, he could at least keep Malfoy away from her.

---

Draco clutched his sides as he laughed and struggled to breathe. The Hufflepuff team really was pretty bad, and at least *someone* appreciated that fact. Weasley was hilar... Wait.

He looked at Weasley, who looked back with a similar expression of horror. With a curt nod they shared acknowledged their mutual desire to never speak of this again.

---

Ivy looked over at Draco and Ron. Oh yes, this was coming along nicely.

“I honestly didn’t think this would work,” Hermione whispered.

Ivy grinned. “Of course it did. Well, I guess it’s not done yet, but still, it’s coming along nicely, wouldn’t you say?”

Hermione nodded and Ivy grinned. The look on their faces... Yep. Totally worth it.

---

Oliver wished it had not taken so long, but at least they had won. Honestly by the end it didn’t even matter who caught the snitch, since Gryffindor was up by so much, but his seeker had eventually found it, making him feel marginally better about his choice. Too bad he was a sixth year and wouldn’t be around for much longer.

Suddenly he was very nearly pummeled by a small hurricane that turned out to be Ivy.

“You did so great!” she shouted, jumping up on him and giving him a big hug.

“Hey! What are we? Chopped liver?”

Ivy stuck out her tongue at George. “I was getting to that.”

“So you weren’t cheering for Hufflepuff?” Oliver needed to be sure.

“Of course I was. They weren’t very good, but I didn’t want any of them to feel bad.” She said it like it was the most obvious thing in the world, and Oliver felt like he could live with that.

Walking towards the changing rooms with a koala-like Ivy still attached, Oliver noticed a grumpy looking Flint looking their way and flashed a smirk. Flint narrowed his eyes and Oliver grinned widely. Yep. He had definitely won today.

---

*February 25, 1992*

“Hey, Percy, which one of these do you think Ron would like better?”

Percy looked up from his textbook and saw Ivy holding up two... Well, he wasn’t entirely sure *what* they were.

“I have no idea. Maybe you should ask the twins?”

She nodded solemnly and Percy breathed a sigh of relief.

Wait a second.

“Wait! How do you keep getting in here?”

---

Neville looked up to see Ivy skipping through the Gryffindor common room. It was a testament to the ever increasing frequency of this sight that only a couple of the older students even looked surprised to see a Slytherin first year running around their common room.

“Hey, Ivy, what’re you doing?”

“Oh, hi Neville. I was just looking for Fred and George. I wanted to ask them about something for Ron’s birthday.”

“Oh, is it like what you gave me?” Dean asked, coming over to where Neville sat.

Ivy shook her head. “No. I didn’t think he’d like something like that as much.”

“Well what is it then?”

Ivy showed them.

“Um, what is that?” Ivy was holding up... something. Neville just had no clue what that something was.

“It’s a chess set.”

Neville and Dean looked at the thing Ivy was holding skeptically.

“Are you... Are you sure?” Dean asked.

Ivy nodded. “Of course I am. So. Which one do you think he’d like better?”

“Is there a big difference?” Neville could not see one, but that didn’t mean one did not exist. And to be honest he was still rather skeptical that either thing was in fact a chess set.

“Well, this one had mini dragons that will destroy your opponent if you ask nicely, and this one has little pieces that fly around and try to knock other pieces off their brooms like in quidditch.”

Dean sputtered, saying that that was *not* the point of quidditch (based on his own observations Neville felt otherwise, but chose to remain silent), but Neville caught onto one other thing Ivy had said. “Destroy your opponent’s pieces, right? The dragon destroys their pieces?” Internally Neville was thinking *please say yes, please say yes, please say yes*.

“Mmhmm, sure. Anyway, what do you think?”

Neville, not feeling at all reassured, felt the flying one was the safer of the options and gave his vote for that one.

“Well dragons sound pretty...”

“NEAT. Dragons sound neat,” Neville said, cutting Dean off. “But obviously flying pieces are so much cooler, right Dean?” He leveled his best glare at the boy, who did not seem to be picking up on the hint.

“Oh yeah, flying is cool. But the...” Dean let out a little yelp as Neville kicked him in the shin.

“You’re probably right,” Ivy said. “Well. Thanks guys! This has been a big help.”

---

*March 1, 1992*

“Happy birthday, Ron!”

Ron grinned at Ivy as she plopped down across from him. “Thanks!”

She put a package not he table in between them. “This is for you. I wanted to give it to you now so I could watch you open it.”

“Oh, okay. Thanks!” Ron wasn’t sure why she was doing this, because chances were high she’d end up in the Gryffindor common room later anyway. No one had owned up to ever having let her in, or given her the password, yet somehow she kept turning up. It bothered Percy to no end which of course made it hilarious.

He inspected the contents of the package for a minute. “What is it?”

“It’s a chess set.”



“Are you sure?”

“Yes, silly,” Ivy said, rolling her eyes. “Here, let me show you. You just have to open it like this.”

She pressed one part of it and it opened to reveal... oh, that was a chess set. How about that.

“Thanks, Ivy.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Hey Ivy, are you ready to...” Malfoy, who had just come up to the Gryffindor table, completely ruining Ron’s morning, gasped. “Is that the Montrose Magpies commemorative chess set?”

“Mmhhh. It’s for Ron’s birthday,” Ivy explained. “Sorry Ron,” she said sympathetically, turning back to him. “They don’t make Chudley Cannons one.”

“That’s because you have to actually *win* sometimes to have a commemorative set made,” Malfoy said haughtily.

Ivy rolled her eyes. “I *know*. Which is why you won’t be getting a Caerphilly Catapults set for your birthday either.”

Malfoy sputtered and flushed a little pink, and suddenly Ron’s day was good again.

“Say, Ivy. How come it looks like...” Ron gestured to the unique exterior, which resembled absolutely nothing he had ever seen and certainly not a chess set.

“Oh, I was messing around with another set, testing its destructive capabilities, and it sort of... melted. Sorry about that.”

A few spaces over Neville choked on something he was eating and had to have Seamus pound his back a few times before he recovered.

“Oh that’s okay. It looks cool.” It was an honest assessment. It did look cool. It just didn’t look anything like a chess set.

Malfoy tapped his foot impatiently. “Come on Ivy, can’t we go flying now? Flint said I could go with you two today.”

“Oh, I thought I’d see if Ron wanted to play a round of chess first. Try out his new set, you know?”

Malfoy looked horrified at that thought. “You can’t corrupt his set on his birthday! I won’t let you. Come on, Weasley. Let’s play chess.”

Ivy shrugged her shoulders and scooted over a bit to allow Malfoy room to sit down. Ron absently wondered if Malfoy was actually aware he was sitting at the Gryffindor table. Probably not, but he wasn’t going to be the one to tell him.

---

Draco had to admit, this chess set was pretty cool. And as far as chess opponents went, Weasley wasn't half bad. That fact was obvious, since Draco would never bother playing with some stupid Gryffindor unless they were actually *good*. Or, that is to say, not completely terrible. Weasley wasn't good he was just, not terrible. Yeah. That was it.

Ivy was still sitting there, but thankfully was not trying to give the chess pieces any ideas. A few other students poked their heads around every now and then to see what was going on, but otherwise they had been left alone.

That is, until he heard a very familiar voice laughing from just down the table. He looked up to see Pansy laughing with two of the Gryffindor girls. Patil he knew, and he thought the other one was the one that had two colors for a name, although he couldn't really recall what that might be.

Why was Pansy sitting there? She didn't even like Patil, did she? Well, at least she hadn't. Malfoy was so distracted by the sight of Pansy Parkinson sitting at the Gryffindor table that he completely missed the fact that it was now his turn. Weasley cleared his throat and pointed at the chess board, but Draco could only nod and go back to looking at the girls laughing a little ways away.

Weasley, now noticing the reason for Draco's distraction, craned his neck around to see for himself what was going on.

A moment later they exchanged a look of horror, and both instinctively turned to look at Ivy, who was sitting there, presenting an air of innocence that Draco knew had to be entirely fake.

He and Weasley exchanged another look, and Draco mouthed the word "later" to him, which was received with a nod. They needed to strategize, and Ivy was clearly somehow the culprit of this calamity.

Just then the two banes of his existence that also happened to bear the last name Weasley walked up to where the trio sat, looked around in what might possibly have been shock, and each handed something to Ivy, who accepted their offerings with a smug look that completely undid any earlier attempts on her part to look innocent. As the twins left Ivy got up and followed them, and Draco and Weasley slowly returned to their game, both mildly unnerved by what they had witnessed.

---

"I can't believe you did it," George said. Fred was too busy laughing to contribute much to the conversation.

"Told you I would," Ivy said with a smug grin.

"Yeah I know you said you would, but I didn't think you *actually* would."

"Did... see... faces..." Fred managed to get out in between wheezes.

Ivy beamed.

“Alright, so who’s next on the list?”

“Well Oliver and Marcus haven’t tried to injure each other recently, so I’d say that one is going well. Percy and Thomas get along fine. I always see them whispering and glancing my way though, so they might suspect something. Alright, let’s see.” Ivy pulled a piece of parchment out of her bag. “George, if you would do the honors.”

George obliged and pulled out his wand, saying the password and watching as a number of names began appearing on the paper.

“Okay, so here’s what I’m thinking...”

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*March 5, 1992*

“I need your help.”

The other three students looked to Hannah in surprise.

“Um, sure. What do you need help with?” Susan asked. It wasn’t common for Hannah to ask for help with things, and certainly not to their quiet little Herbology study group.

“I need to know where the Ravenclaw dormitories are.”

“Um, why do you need to know that?” Millie asked. Neville felt it was a fair question.

“Because Terry told Padma, who told Anthony, who told Ernie, who told Justin, who told Megan, who told me, that Ivy was in there yesterday and one of the older students asked her how she got in there, and she said ‘what, like it’s hard,’ and now I need to know if it’s hard.”

Neville wasn’t sure he followed that logic.

“What would be hard about it?”

“Apparently the password for Ravenclaw is a riddle, and you have to answer it.”

“Oh, that does sound hard.”

“But we don’t *know* that. Maybe it is, maybe it isn’t. But we need to find out.”

“Why?” Neville felt he needed a bit of clarification first.

“Because it’s important.”

“So where is Ravenclaw?”

“No idea.”

“Me neither.”

“We could go ask someone?”

“We can’t ask a Ravenclaw.”

“Why not?”

“They might get upset.”

“Oh, that’s true. We don’t want that.”

Neville followed all this with growing trepidation.

“We could ask Thomas,” Millie said.

“Who’s Thomas?” Susan asked curiously.

“Thomas Harrington. He’s a fifth year in my house. Ivy seems to always ask him questions and he’s really smart.”

The girls all seemed to agree this was a good idea. Neville did not agree, but could not think of an argument in time, so was also dragged along to go find a fifth year Slytherin that might be willing to tell them the location of another house’s dormitories. Because there was absolutely no way this was going to go wrong.

---

Thomas flopped down on his bed facedown and groaned. Despite his very thorough analysis of his life choices thus far, he still wasn’t completely sure how he had gotten to this point.

“What’s wrong with you?” Eric asked.

Thomas let out another muffled groan.

“Come on, OWLS aren’t for a bit yet. Surely it can’t be that bad.”

Thomas propped himself up a little before flopping dramatically onto his back. “OWLS are fine. They’ll be fine. It’s all good. Life is fine.”

“Okay... So not OWLS.”

Thomas heaved a dramatic sigh. He wasn’t normally a dramatic person, but this felt like an appropriate moment for such theatrics. Who knows, he might die before he had another chance.

“I know I’m probably going to regret this,” Kenneth said from his own bed, “but what is causing you such distress, dearest Thomas.”

Thomas shot him a glare. “Shut up, Burke,” he said, though the Slytherin prefect just smirked. Prat.

Giving one final, dramatic sigh, Thomas stared at the ceiling and spoke. "I just lied to a bunch of Hufflepuffs."

Marcus and Eric both burst out laughing and Kenneth gave him a clear look of disdain. "That's what had you so upset? You lied to some Hufflepuffs?"

"Not just any Hufflepuffs. *First year* Hufflepuffs."

"I'm out," Corvin said suddenly, throwing his book on his bed and exiting their room. Everyone else just rolled their eyes.

"And what was this oh so terrible lie you told?" Burke said with growing amusement. Bastard.

"They asked if I knew where the Ravenclaw dormitories were."

"And you said..."

"I told them I didn't know."

"How is that a lie?" Eric asked.

"Shut up, Pyrites," Kenneth drawled. "Obviously Harrington here knows all about the Ravenclaw rooms, don't you."

Thomas went red and refused to look Burke in the eye. "It was Ivy," he blurted out.

"Potter? What's she got to do with it?"

"She was there, and somehow these Hufflepuffs got the idea that they need to go too."

"And you lied to them because..."

"Because she's corrupting them! I don't how she did it, but she's corrupting them."

"Of course she's corrupting them. We're Slytherins. It's what we *do*..." Kenneth said sarcastically.

"Ha, ha. I'm serious. She's going to have any army by this time next year, and *I'm* the one that's going to have to take care of it."

"How do you figure?" Eric asked.

"I just do," Thomas said, staring at the ceiling. This was his fate. This was his life now. He just hoped he survived.

"So, when you say Hufflepuffs, who exactly are we talking about?"

Thomas wasn't sure why Marcus cared, but he indulged the question. "Um, Bones, I think? And that Longbottom kid Ivy's around a lot, and, umm, Bulstrode, I think, and, oh, what's the other girl's name. Abbott, I think. Yeah, that's it. The other one's Abbott."

Marcus burst out laughing again. “You...” He kept laughing. Thomas’s glare did nothing. “You’re worried about Ivy corrupting the little Herbology club? Over this?” Still laughing. “You have any idea what kind of books she keeps giving them?”

Thomas wondered several things at the moment. First of all, how did Marcus know all of this? Second of all, how did he not? Third... Was this... yeah... this was probably going to haunt him in some way.

“You do realize only a couple of those are even Hufflepuffs, right?”

“It’s the principle of the thing,” Thomas practically shouted, and Eric raised up his hands in surrender.

Marcus, still laughing, got up and walked to the door. “That’s my girl,” he said, still laughing as he made his way out of earshot.

Thomas felt betrayed by every single one of his roommates. Did none of them understand what was at stake here?

This was useless. He needed to find someone who understood. Someone who could commiserate with him.

---

“And so I *lied*.”

Percy was understandably concerned. He could already imagine the chaos. “We have to do something,” he said.

Harrington nodded. “But *what*? She’s going to corrupt the *Hufflepuffs*. I’m only sixteen. I can’t have ‘failed to stop an army of Hufflepuffs from forming’ on my record.”

Percy personally didn’t think that was the most relevant issue at the moment, but he was dealing with a distraught Slytherin and he honestly didn’t know what to do in this type of situation.

Just then the subject of their discussion walked up to them.

Harrington shuddered slightly, and Percy took it upon himself to ease his fellow student’s worries. “Hi, Ivy. What are you doing?”

“Oh, just looking for a book I was telling Millie about, but I can’t remember the name of it.”

“Oh, well what’s it about?” Percy didn’t understand why Harrington was frantically nudging his foot under the table.

“It’s about magical fungi and their uses.” The nudging got harder and Percy shoved back under the table.

“Did you ask Madam Pince yet?”

“No, not yet. She’d know though, wouldn’t she. Thanks, Percy!”

After Ivy was out of earshot Percy turned to Harrington. “What was that about?”

“Do you realize what book she was looking for?”

“Wait, why didn’t you just tell her if you knew?”

“You really want me handing over a book on magical fungi and their theorized uses in modern warfare to Ivy Potter?”

“Oh, I see your point.”

“Yeah. Come on. If we hurry we can get it before she does.”

Percy nodded in agreement. That sounded like a good idea.

---

Irma Pince looked at the two fifth years in suspicion. *It’s always the quiet ones*, she thought, as they checked out their questionable choice of reading material.

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*March 18, 1992*

“Alright, I’ve got *Famous Wizarding Battles of the Norse Conquest* and *100 Sumerian Curses and Their Practical Uses for the Modern Day Militarist*. What about you?”

Percy glanced again at the titles in his bag. “Er, I’ve got *1001 Deadly Microbes and their Magical Uses*, *A Beginner’s Guide to Siege Warfare*, and *Untraceable Potions, Vol. 1*.”

Harrington nodded. “Good. Alright, I think that covers this week’s list. Any others you heard about that you think we need to check out?”

“No, but Madam Pince was giving me the strangest look. Any idea what that might be about?”

“She did the same to me, and I have no idea. We always turn the books in in excellent condition.”

“Exactly! I don’t know why she seemed to think I’d possibly *do* something to them.”

“Maybe she’s just worried we’re not spending enough time studying.”

Percy nodded. “That could be. Hey, speaking of which, what did you think of chapter nineteen in Elderkin’s treatise...”

---

*March 23, 1992*

“But we have *exams* and we need to *study*.”

“Why are you telling me this, Granger? I do plenty of studying.”

“Well I was *trying* to tell Ivy, but I couldn’t find her anywhere.”

“Then tell her later,” Draco said. “Besides, we have plenty of time to study for exams. They’re not for a long time.”

“They’re only ten weeks away! We need to start studying now or we’ll never have time to get everything done.”

Draco rolled his eyes. He couldn’t believe he was doing this, but... “Look, Granger. You’re one of the smartest people in our class. *You’re going to be fine.* And Ivy will study.” He noticed the incredulous look on Granger’s face. “Eventually,” he amended. “So no need to stress about it now. Besides, you’ll have the entire Easter break to study all you want. Go do something fun. And no, making a study schedule does not count,” he added, sensing what she was about to say. He shooed her away and she went, looking a little put out but not as frantic as she had been a minute ago. Ivy owed him big time.

“Found her,” Longbottom pointed out unhelpfully.

Draco looked to see some Weasley or other carrying Ivy on his back as he ran full speed down the hall, everyone else darting out of the way to avoid being run into.

“Fred Weasley, you come back here right now,” someone yelled, chasing after them. Was that? Oh, yeah that was definitely Wood. And he did not look happy. There was someone else though... *Flint*? Draco decided he did not care to know what was going on and would rather not even chance being implicated in whatever was happening.

“Come on, Longbottom. Let’s go.”

Longbottom thankfully did not protest, though he looked a little confused as to why Draco was suddenly pulling him down the hall.

“Where are we going?” he eventually asked.

“Studying,” Draco said, not being able to think of any other excuse at the moment.

---

Draco rubbed his forehead. He felt like he understood his godfather on an entirely new level now.

“But why does it matter which way you stir it?”

“I don’t think it does.” Brave words coming from the boy who blew up his cauldron at least once a month.

Some mild bickering commenced as Draco considered what had led him to this moment of being in an unfortunate study group with every. single. Gryffindor. first year. The boys, that is. Draco wasn’t sure he could handle the entire Gryffindor first year group without major reinforcements. Even this was seriously testing his composure.



“Enough,” he yelled out, earning himself a glare from Madam Pince, who he quickly muttered an apology to as he winced. Merlin, the lions were rubbing off on him. “Alright, here’s why it matters, because yes, *Finnegan*, it does matter.”

And so he spent the next hour lecturing the Gryffindor boys about the intricacies of potions, all the while wondering how he had gotten himself into this particular situation. Somehow, he was sure it was Ivy’s fault.

“Okay, that makes sense,” Weasley said when Draco finished. “But what about this one.” He pointed to one out of their textbook that happened to be the exception to half a dozen different rules. Why was that even *in* this book? It’s not like it was an important potion or anything. Who used the Snuffling potion anyways?

Draco noticed all eyes on him, obviously waiting for him to answer. He banged his head down on the table. This was going to be a long afternoon.

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*March 28, 1992*

Despite his best efforts, Draco had somehow ended up in a study group with the Gryffindor boys for the fourth time this week. At least this time had dragged the Slytherin boys with him, since if he had to suffer they might as well suffer with him. Ivy was conveniently nowhere to be found, and Pansy had been busy planning something with Patil, Brown, and Daphne, and there was no way Draco was getting mixed up in whatever *that* was.

So here they sat, four Gryffindors, five Slytherins, sitting at the Hufflepuff table in the Great Hall (neutral territory and all that), studying together for some Merlin-forsaken reason.

Today’s topic was Herbology. Not Draco’s particular favorite, but one that Longbottom was apparently actually useful in. Weasley, Finnegan, Theo, and Greg were all apparently out of their depths when it came to Herbology. Blaise would of course never admit to a weakness in any subject, and Vince was surprisingly comfortable with it. Thomas seemed to not care about it, much like Draco, but neither did he seem too concerned.

An hour later Draco had a newfound respect for Longbottom, and a glance at his fellow first years told him they felt the same. He was now beginning to understand why Longbottom wasn’t in Hufflepuff. There was no way a *Hufflepuff* would know all the different plants that could kill you in under thirty seconds. That just wasn’t a Hufflepuff sort of thing to know. Right? His mind went back unbidden to a certain conversation with a certain girl in a certain robes shop, but he ignored it. Ivy wasn’t in Hufflepuff, and Draco thought that maybe the sorting hat was rather smart, and that is was probably for the best that Ivy was in Slytherin with him instead of with those poor Hufflepuffs.

---

“It seems your houses have been getting along quite nicely as of late.”

Severus glanced sideways at Filius’s smirk and then at Minerva whose mouth twitched a little. They obviously did not hold the same suspicions as he did. Something was up, and he was determined to figure it out before it ended in disaster.

“Are you sure you don’t need to worry about them?” Burbage asked, gesturing to the group of Gryffindor and Slytherin students seated at the Hufflepuff table.

Severus thought they should all be worried, as well as watching Ivy Potter’s every movement, but every time he brought up something along those lines he was waved off. “Well, there hasn’t been any blood yet, so yes,” he said sarcastically. Minerva rolled her eyes at him and Filius obviously caught the sarcasm, but Burbage seemed genuinely concerned.

“Is that likely then?”

No one answered her, and Severus couldn’t help but feel a little vindicated at the thought that even Minerva and Filius didn’t have an easy assurance to the contrary. At the same time he wondered where he had failed, as so many of his Slytherins had apparently formed friendships of sorts with Gryffindors. Why couldn’t it have been the Ravenclaws? Or even the Hufflepuffs? Why did it have to be those blasted Gryffindors that always plagued him?

He could feel James Potter laughing at him from the afterlife and he scowled.

# Chapter 20

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*April 1, 1992*

It was barely five in the morning when Ivy snuck into the Gryffindor tower. She made her way silently up the stairs in search of her accomplice.

“Did you bring it?” A low voice whispered from the shadows.

Ivy held up her packages and nodded. Lee grinned, and the two of them made their way silently to the third year boys’ room.

“Which one do you want?” Lee asked. Ivy shrugged. “Okay, I’ll get Fred, you get George.”

Ivy nodded and they got into position. She tossed him one of the bags.

“One, two three,” he mouthed, and they poured out the contents onto the sleeping twins.

The twins’ yelps at being hit with the icy sludge woke up the rest of their room, as well as a few students from other rooms. A bleary eyed Percy stumbled into the room for a minute, took in the scene, noticed Ivy standing there looking as innocent as she could muster, and just shook his head and left.

Ivy gave Lee a fist bump and shouted, “Ten points to Hufflepuff!”

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A few hours later Ivy was sitting in the Hufflepuff common room waiting for Justin and Megan to be ready to go to breakfast, when Cedric Diggory walked up to her and said, “You know, the twins are looking for you.”

Ivy nodded. “You didn’t tell them where I was though, did you?”

“Of course not. Hufflepuffs look out for each other, after all” he said with a wink.

Ivy beamed. Her goal in life had been achieved; she was now an honorary Hufflepuff.

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*April 6, 1992*

“Do you have to make friends with every single first year?” Draco personally thought he should have been plenty, seeing as he was an excellent friend, but *no*. Ivy just had to make friends with all the rest of them. It was also Monday and morning and he hadn’t eaten yet, so he was feeling a little grumpy.

“No,” Ivy said.

“But why? I mean... Wait, no? Does that mean you’re not friends with all the first years?”

“No. Most of them, yes. But not all of them.”

“Really? Wait who are you not friends with? Oh, Smith, right?”

“Yeah, not him. He’s kind of rude. And he goes on and on about how great his family is and the world is beneath him... hey...”

Draco did not like that look on Ivy’s face. He knew that look.

“...maybe you should be friends with him.”

Draco took great offense to that statement. “Hey, I’m not that bad. Pansy!” He looked across the table at his *other* best friend. “Tell Ivy I’m not that bad.”

“You kind of are,” Pansy said, the traitor.

Draco’s protests were ignored, and he felt betrayed at the fact that his two best friends were conspiring against him. They were obviously teasing him, which he didn’t mind *that* much, but did they have to do it together?

It took Draco a couple days to realize what had happened that morning, and when he did, he couldn’t decide whether to be happy about it or terrified. On the one hand, his two best friends were now friends with each other (finally). On the other hand, those two friends were Ivy and Pansy, and this did not bode well for Draco, Slytherin, Hogwarts, and potentially the Wizarding World, but especially Draco, and no he was not being dramatic (shut up, Blaise).

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*April 15, 1992*

Severus added yet another entry to his dairy that absolutely no one would ever know about, and another check to his running tally of times he had prevented Potter from getting seriously injured. Seventeen had to be some kind of record, and it was still only her first year. Merlin, he was going to need to retire after this.

Why couldn’t she have gone home for Easter? He had been looking forward to a small break, but instead not only was she still there, but her entire posse had stayed as well, which did absolutely nothing for Severus’s blood pressure levels. He suddenly had a greater respect for Minerva and her ability to see her students through graduation alive and relatively uninjured. He couldn’t quite accuse Potter of behaving like a Gryffindor, but Merlin she was the most Gryffindor-like Slytherin he had ever seen. It was a terrible combination and no one should be able to pull that off.

And what was he doing? He, who had lied to the Dark Lord’s face on multiple occasions, who had gotten out of near death situations on more than one occasion, and had successfully secured himself a place in wizarding society when so many others in his position had ended up in Azkaban, been disgraced, or forced to buy their way out of their predicament. And yet here he was, slowly losing his sanity to the antics of one eleven year old girl.

But it wasn't just her, was it.

No, it was everything connected to her. Sure, her own antics were something he conveniently ignored as much as possible, but someone was bent on causing her harm. He had made a vow to protect her, and protect her he had, even though it seemed to be happening with much a greater frequency than even he had anticipated. And what bothered him most was that he had still been unable to uncover the person or persons responsible. As suspicious as Quirrell's behavior regarding the stone had been, Severus hadn't been able to find any indication of an interest in Potter, and his observations of the other staff members had not yielded any suspicions on his part. It would have been difficult for someone outside of Hogwarts to interfere to that extent, and Severus had no good way of looking into that possibility given his own relative restriction to the Hogwarts grounds.

It was possible it was a student, though the sophistication of some of the methods used made him doubt that, which was good since he had originally suspected it might be a member of his own house seeking some misguided revenge. Surprising, though not unwelcome, was the way his house had warmed up to Potter over the year. At first he had been concerned about Potter being in the same house as many children of former death eaters, but as the year had gone on she had made an admirable impression on her fellow Slytherins, and had made some formidable allies, particularly among the older students, which had firmly dissuaded anyone else who might have been inclined to cause her trouble.

Of course, the rumors surrounding her guardian may have also played a part in that. Ever since it had become common knowledge that Lord Peverell was her guardian, respect for Ivy Potter had shot up drastically. Some of the rumors seemed far fetched or outright ridiculous to Severus, but he couldn't discount any of them entirely until he knew for certain otherwise. He had done that when he had heard Peverell was in fact a Parselmouth, but then Lucius of all people had been able to confirm that fact.

That information had left Severus both concerned and perplexed as he tried to reconcile the various facts and rumors with what he knew of the man's actions and views. But what did he really know of the man? What did *anyone* really know of him. That was the problem, and Severus hated not knowing.

He flipped back to his ongoing list of facts and speculations regarding Lord Peverell.

*-Parselmouth*

*-Dislike of term 'Mudblood'*

*-Stance on Muggleborns: unknown*

*-Political views: unknown*

*-Blood: Pureblood, suspected*

*-Loyalty to Dark Lord: unlikely*

*-Well informed - possible spies or sources of information inside Hogwarts and/or Ministry*

*-Aloof, but at apparent ease with members of both light and dark factions*

*-Believed to be on good terms with: Black, Lupin, Deverill, Malfoy, Weasley, Zabini*

And what a mix that was, Severus thought to himself. Unfortunately, that was the extent of his list. Of course there were a few other things, but he couldn't bring himself to even write those things down. Like how he had instructed Potter on the answers Severus had asked in the first potions lesson of the year. How had he *known*? There was no way he could have known, right? But he must have anticipated Severus asking those questions, and that meant that he knew. But how much did he know? That was the question that bothered Severus the most. Lord Peverell rarely appeared to be involved in the wizarding world, but when he did, whether it be in instructing his ward in questions he knew Severus would ask, or in securing Black's freedom, he seemed to always know exactly what was going on. And if he anticipated the roundabout way Severus would express his grief over Lily's death, let alone the existence of such grief, what else did he know?

Severus could admit that he was rather intimidated by the man who had managed to remain so generally removed from the wizarding world yet was clearly capable of precise intervention when it suited him. To cause such a massive upheaval as he had done with Black's release, and then simply withdraw again, only to be seen occasionally in the Alley or at the one society event he had attended?

And this was the man Albus was determined to go against. Severus could not understand why the headmaster was so intent on removing Potter from Peverell's care and influence. If the man knew more about Peverell than Severus did, he sure hadn't given any indication of it. It certainly wouldn't be the first time he had hid something, as this year in particular had clearly shown, but Severus honestly believed the headmaster didn't know any more than he did, which, in a way, made Albus's determination to be against Peverell that much more concerning. And then there was Severus's brief encounter with Lupin...

Severus was fairly confident in his belief that both Lupin and Black were firmly on Peverell's side, and *not* on Dumbledore's. The reasons for that he could not say, but he didn't think it would be too much of a stretch to say that it had something to do with Potter.

And it all did come back to Potter, didn't it. Dumbledore was only interested in Peverell as far as it concerned Potter, it seemed, and both Lupin and Black would be unlikely to side against Dumbledore for any other reason. And he had no doubt that they were against Dumbledore, which meant they knew something. Perhaps he was going about this the wrong way. Perhaps, instead of looking into Peverell, he needed to look into Black or Lupin or both. It was a rather unpalatable idea, but since nothing else had yielded satisfactory results thus far, it could be worth a shot.

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*April 17, 1992*

Albus Dumbledore put the finishing touches onto plan 49-C. It was all in his head of course, since the walls literally had ears. And eyes. And the ability to end up in other locations and spill secrets to any number of undesirables. But his plan was nearly complete, and this one didn't even involve framing anyone. He was rather proud of himself.

None of his other plans had worked thus far, hence the need for this most recent version. He had nearly given up at one point on a rather bleak looking Thursday, but he had quickly scolded himself and had gone back to planning the best way to stage an encounter between Ivy Potter and Voldemort.

Ideally he would have tested Ivy a little more by this point. He needed to know her priorities so as to best predict her reactions to the events that might occur. She had received the photo album he had sent, and when he hinted at it she had expressed her thanks. Unfortunately he must have made the compulsion spell a little *too* subtle, since it did not appear to have the desired effect. He still hadn't been able to get her in front of the Mirror of Erised like he had hoped, but the fact that she was spending the Easter holidays at Hogwarts made him optimistic that he might finally have a chance to do so.

Of course, nearly everyone else had stayed as well, so that did put a slight damper on that plan.

But no matter. The rest of his plan was moving along nicely. She spent plenty of time with the Gryffindors, which was just as he would have wished, and she seemed the naturally curious type, which was also beneficial for his plans.

She was, perhaps, a little more intelligent than he would have liked, and no doubt time in Slytherin had strengthened her resolve to question things, which was also not to his liking. Still, there was time, and this plan was rather good, if he did say so himself, which he did, because it was.

Now if he could only deal with Peverell...

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*April 20, 1992*

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Witches and Wizards of all ages..."

"Welcome to the first annual Hogwarts Olympus."

Ivy elbowed George. "Oh right. Olympics. (Sorry Ivy)."

A cheer went up among the assembled students, and Professor Flitwick clapped his hands with especial enthusiasm.

"Now, I'm sure you're all wondering what events we have in store for you," Fred said.

"Well, unfortunately Dragon wrangling was vetoed," George said with theatrical dejection, "but worry not! For in its place we bring you..."

Ivy began a drum roll.

"Broom Racing!"

"Self explanatory."

“Drooble’s Best Blowing Gum Bubble Blowing Contest!”

“Also self explanatory.”

“Black Lake Diving!”

“Biggest splash wins!”

“Astronomy Marathon!”

“Stay awake the longest and name as many objects as you can at the end.”

“Fireworks Competition!”

“Build your own and impress us all.”

“Snowball Competition!”

“Make sure to bring your own snow!”

“Snitch chasing, since Wood said he’d strangle us otherwise!” Oliver Wood and Marcus Flint both nodded with satisfied smirks on their faces.

“Dodgebludger!”

“Where everyone’s a beater and if you’re hit, you’re out.”

“Demon summoning... oh wait, sorry, no, that one was vetoed as well.”

“Ultimate Exploding Snap!”

“Ten times the size, ten times the explosive prize.”

“Food Chain Transfigurations!”

“Construct the most realistic king of the food chain you can!”

“Win with the most screams!”

“Not-quite-in-the-forbidden-forest-because-McGonagall-said-we-can’t-go-there Scavenger Hunt!”

“So step right up and sign up for the events *you* think you can win.”

“Team events are on your left, individual events are on your right.”

“LET THE GAMES BEGIN!”

Everyone cheered and several students rushed towards the front where the sign up sheets were. Ivy was excited. She and the twins had been working on this for months and it was



finally time! She gave Professor Flitwick a thumbs up, which he returned along with a grin. This was going to be great.

---

This was terrible. How those three menaces had gotten Filius to sign off on this was beyond his comprehension at the moment, but somehow he had been dragged into it as well. Oh sure, it was all in the spirit of “interhouse unity” and “promoting school spirit,” but wasn’t there some way to achieve that that wasn’t so... involved?

“Um, Professor Snape, sir?”

He groaned internally and turned to face the student who had decided to bother him.

“Are you the one in charge of the transfiguration contest?”

“Yes,” he said, gritting his teeth.

“Oh, okay, um, do you know when it’s going to start?”

Severus raised an eyebrow. “As you would know if you had bothered to pay attention to the paper you signed up on, it begins promptly at six pm.”

The student flushed a little and stammered, “Oh, uh, right. Sorry, sir. Thank you.” The boy practically fled before he had finished speaking. Severus smirked to himself. At least he still had that.

His smirk vanished as he saw one person he’d much rather not face at the moment come up to him.

“Good morning, Severus.”

“Minerva,” he said, dipping his head in greeting.

“How does your event look?”

He leveled her a glare that had absolutely no effect and sighed. “Remind me why *I* got stuck with the transfiguration event again? Shouldn’t this be yours, since you’re *the transfiguration professor*?”

She didn’t even react to his most biting tone. “Because *you* were specially requested.”

“Wait, what?”

“Potter had the list all worked out of which event she wanted which professor to supervise, and she specifically requested you oversee this one because, and I quote, ‘Professor Snape isn’t scared of anything.’”

Severus suppressed the warm fuzzy feeling deep inside in favor of annoyance at the smug look on Minerva’s face. He scowled, but she still had no reaction. Damn, he was losing his

touch. Or, more likely, she had just known him for far too long for his withering looks to have any effect. He wasn't sure which was worse.

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"Do you think we should have asked someone else to referee the snowball fights?"

Fred watched as Professor Quirrell got yet another snowball to the back of his turban, this one courtesy of George. "Nah. I'm sure he's fine." He was not sure, but this was honestly the least likely event to rattle the poor man's nerves, or so he had thought. Maybe the bubble blowing one would have been better after all...

"Well, I hope he's okay," Ivy said. Then she frowned. "Why doesn't he just put a shield charm around his head so he doesn't get hit?"

Fred opened his mouth and then closed it again. "I have no idea."

Ivy shrugged her shoulders. "Well at least this one only goes for another..." They looked at their matching pocket watches they had gotten for this special occasion. "Forty minutes."

With a synchronized motion that they had definitely *not* practiced beforehand, their watches returned to their pockets and they both settled in to watch the remaining teams battle it out.

"I'm not really sure who I should be cheering for," Ivy said with a small frown.

"Well, George and Lee have a pretty good team going."

"Theo is really into it."

"Yeah, I didn't know Nott could be so..."

"Loud?"

Fred nodded. He was certain he had never seen the kid speak above a quiet whisper.

"He's always like this when engaged in glorious battle."

"He does this... often?"

Ivy shook her head. "Not really. Oh, but remember what I told you about New Years Eve?"

"Huh. Yeah. It's always the quiet ones, isn't it."

Ivy nodded. "That's what Uncle Henry said too. Except then he said that couldn't be right because I'm not quiet."

"Well I guess it takes both kinds..."

"Do you think Theo and I could take over the world?"

Fred looked at her warily.

“Hypothetically, of course.”

“Yes. You probably could. Please don’t. Unless I get to be minion number one. Then go ahead.”

Ivy wrinkled her nose. “Why would I need minions?”

“Every person taking over the world needs minions.”

Ivy giggled. “And what if someone else gets to be minion number one.”

“Nope. No one else. I called it. I have dibs on being minion number one.”

They both laughed and Ivy shoved Fred a little, who responded by staging a dramatic fall. Their attention was drawn back to the game in front of them as one snowball hit its target with a particularly loud thud.

They both winced. “That had to hurt.”

“Do you think Professor Quirrell’s okay?” Ivy asked.

Fred looked at the spot in the exact center of the back of his head that had been hit. “Sure. Yeah, yeah. I’m sure he’s fine.”

---

Severus backed away slowly from the beaming student he had declared the winner of the transfiguration contest. The girl had made an impressively realistic dragon, complete with anger issues and fire breath. Just another reminder to not underestimate Hufflepuffs. Or at least underestimate them at your own peril. Out of what Severus would have considered to be the top ten transfigurations based on the criteria, the four scariest all belonged to Hufflepuffs. There was something deeply wrong with that.

One of his sixth year students had done a lion, and at Severus’s glare had defended it saying that lions were scary. Severus had not been impressed.

At least his part in this madness was at an end.

---

“How’d the exploding snap competition go?”

Ivy hadn’t watched that as she had been busy helping set up for the Astronomy marathon that would take place that evening.

Fred and George stared off into the distance. She waved a hand in front of each of them. “Are you okay? What happened?”

“I can’t believe he did it,” George said.

“Me either,” said Fred.

“Who? What happened?”

Fred gave her a look as if it was too terrible a thing to even speak of. She rolled her eyes and looked at George, who was the *slightly* less dramatic of the two (by a tiny margin, but a margin nonetheless).

“Percy,” he managed to say. “Percy won the exploding snap competition.”

Ivy couldn’t help herself. She burst out laughing.

“It’s not funny, Ivy,” Fred said. “It’s terrible! How could we not see that? How could we not know our *brother*, our... *Percy*.” He shook his head.

“I’ve never seen him that competitive,” George said, and they both shuddered.

Ivy rolled her eyes again. Number three hundred forty seven by her count. It was almost a new record.

---

*April 21, 1992*

George looked up bleary eyed and still half asleep. “Is it over yet?”

“Not yet,” Lee said.

George groaned. “Remind me why we decided to watch this one?”

“You said it was a good excuse to stay up all night,” Lee said, chuckling.

George groaned again. “I take it all back. I am never doing that again.”

Lee laughed and George responded with a rude gesture.

“Oh, hi Ivy,” Lee said.

George’s head shot up. “What? Where?”

Lee burst out laughing again and George scowled. “Not funny.”

Lee obviously didn’t believe him as he was now holding his sides, still laughing. George grumbled and turned back over. “Wake me up when it’s over,” he mumbled.

---

“Are we really doing this?”

Wood nodded vigorously. “Yes. We’re doing this. And we’re going to win.”

“And *why* are we doing this?” Marcus wasn’t sure there existed a reason good enough to jump into the Black Lake at seven in the morning in April.

“Because Ivy asked us to.”

Okay, so maybe there was one reason.

“And she said she’d compete in the snitch catching one if we did this.”

Marcus nodded. “Right. Well then. Shall we?”

Wood nodded and the two of them too off running.

“FOR QUIDDITCH,” they shouted as they threw themselves off the platform and into the freezing water.

---

“Did you know they could do that?”

Draco shook his head. “I didn’t know Daphne even *liked* flying.”

“Me either,” Theo said.

“Where’d they even get brooms?”

“No clue.”

“Daphne borrowed Pucey’s and Patil borrowed Higgs’.” Well, wasn’t Blaise just a wealth of information.

Theo scrunched his nose. “How’d they do that? I thought they’d both be racing themselves?”

Blaise shrugged. “Nor sure. Pretty sure Daph had something on one or the other of them.”

“What about Patil?”

“Oh, Daphne and Padma have been hanging out a lot recently. Also, I’m pretty sure Padma is why Daph has anything on them anyway.”

“So there were threats involved?”

“Probably.” Blaise did not seemed concerned about that at all, and the other two boys decided to just go with it.

The two girls finished first and second by a very narrow margin for the first and second year group, and Draco’s mind immediately went to Quidditch and the chances of convincing Daphne to try out. She’d make a decent chaser, he thought.

“Won’t work,” Blaise said, as if reading his mind.

“What won’t work?”

“Getting her into quidditch. It won’t work. She’s good at flying but she hates playing quidditch.”

Draco pouted. Sure, just smash his dreams to pieces, why don’t you.

---

Severus and Minerva shared a glance, and each took a small step away from their colleague. What Filius lacked in height he was clearly making up for in enthusiasm. About the Weasley twins. And fire. And things going boom. This did not bode well for Severus's peace of mind.

Evidently Minerva thought so as well, and Severus knew that there was hardly anything in the world that so much as fazed Minerva McGonagall.

"Are you sure you have this in hand, Filius?"

The half-goblin grinned, and it was mildly disconcerting. "Oh yes, I have this well in hand, thank you Minerva. Now, if you want the best view I would recommend sitting just over there..." He pointed to an area that was unnervingly close to the stack of hastily made student fireworks that were about to be set off.

Hard pass.

---

*April 22, 1992*

"Hi, Hagrid. You ready for today?"

"Oh yeah. Got everything all set up and ready to go."

"Perfect! Need any help?"

"Nah, I got it. Thanks, Ivy."

She beamed and ran off to find her co-conspirators. It was the last day of the games, and so far everything had gone well. She hadn't actually participated in any of the events herself, but today she would be competing in the snitch catching challenge. Technically Oliver had signed her up, even though she had assured him she would do it. Then Marcus signed her up as well, so she had had to make sure she was only actually registered once. Apparently they really cared about this event. It was sweet, and they had jumped in the lake, so it was only fair.

But first was the scavenger hunt. To the disappointment of Ivy, Fred, George, and Hagrid, Professor McGonagall had put her foot firmly down and said that it couldn't take place *in* the Forbidden Forest. And so, with great reluctance, it was taking place *near* the Forbidden Forest. Hagrid had measured the exact boundary and everything.

Once that was done they would have the snitch catching one, where every practice snitch they could find would be set loose at the same time. The goal was simple. The person to catch the most would win.

The final event would be the Dodgebludger, a game of their own invention. Everyone participating would be given beater bats, and the team left flying would win. They had strategically gone straight to Madam Hooch with that suggestion, and said it would be good beater practice for quidditch hopefuls. It was also at the end in case anyone got seriously

injured. Madam Pomfrey hadn't particularly approved of the idea, but that stipulation caused her to relent just enough for them to get approval from the others.

Teams of six and a dozen bludgers flying around at once? No way that would go wrong.

---

"That's our girl."

They each gave Ivy a fist bump as she hopped off Marcus's broom.

"How many did you end up with?"

"Thirty seven."

Wood whistled. "Not bad."

"What'd the next kid have?"

"Nineteen."

Marcus grinned. Their work was going so well.

As Ivy left Marcus turned to Wood. "Alright, phase 9-L is complete."

Wood nodded. "Phase 10-A is a go."

---

"Come on, I don't hear out congratulations."

Ivy rolled her eyes. "Congratulations. It's not that big of a surprise though, is it?"

"Hey," George protested. "We worked hard for that."

"Yeah, and only three people ended up having to go to Madam Pomfrey so I'd say that's a double win," Fred added.

"Yes, but you two are already clearly the best, so it wasn't that much of a challenge, was it?"

Fred and George beamed and they linked arms on either side of Ivy.

"Well, when you put it like that..."

Ivy laughed. "Hey, do you think next year they'll let us have dragons?"

Fred laughed as well. "We'll be lucky if they let us have it at all."

"Well, we better start now then," George said cheerfully.

Ivy grinned. "Maybe Professor Snape has some ideas."

The twins laughed at that.

“You ask him, Ivy.”

“You go right ahead and ask him.”

---

*April 23, 1992*

“Hey Ivy, where are you headed?”

Ivy glanced up but continued walking. “Hi Neville. I’m not really sure. I just felt like going on a walk, I suppose. Want to come with me?”

“Sure,” Neville said happily.

---

“What is it doing here?”

“And why is it in the middle of the room?”

“I don’t know. It looks kind of weird, doesn’t it.”

“Yeah.”

Neville took a few steps closer and then froze.

“Neville, are you alright?” Ivy was worried. His face had gone quite pale and he stood in shock as he looked into the mirror. She glanced between him and the mirror but couldn’t see anything.

Moving closer to where he stood she too looked in the mirror and gasped. “Neville,” she said softly, “what are you seeing?”

“My... My parents. I see my parents.”

She nodded. “Neville, I don’t think this is a normal mirror.”

He looked at her frantically. “What do you see? Do you see your parents too?” He looked both worried and hopeful at the same time.

She felt a twinge of guilt but decided she needed to get him out of there. “Yeah,” she said, “I see my family.” It wasn’t exactly a lie, even if wasn’t exactly the truth.

He looked longingly at the mirror for another moment, but finally allowed himself to be pulled away. As they were walking away Ivy noticed the strange inscription on the mirror. She’d have to ask Henry about it. And make sure that Neville didn’t come back.

---

Across the room, hidden from sight, Albus sat, now satisfied with what he had accomplished. It had taken several charms to get Ivy in front of the mirror, but now he knew for sure, and he felt a small surge of victory. He would be able to influence her after all, he thought, now that



he knew for sure that her greatest desire was her parents. Many of his worries dissipated for now, he returned to his office in high spirits. Now he had some more plans to finalize.

## Chapter End Notes

There has been not as much plot the last couple chapters, mostly because I didn't want to have a huge time skip, but also because I thought it'd be fun to just write some shenanigans. It was very fun, and shenanigans shall continue, because how could they not, but after this there will be a bit more plot at least for a while. It's getting closer to some of the things I've had planned for a while that I'm excited about, so... Yep. I'm enjoying doing this, and thank you to everyone who has read it and left comments or kudos. I love reading your guys' comments, and sorry that I don't respond that much, but I really do like reading them. Thanks!

## Chapter 21

*April 24, 1992*

“Say, Hagrid, what is that exactly?”

George looked at where his brother was pointing. That had to be the largest egg he had ever seen.

“Oh that? Er... nothing. It’s nothing.” Hagrid chuckled and was not all convincing in his reassurance that it wasn’t anything of interest.

“Mmhmm. That’s a really big egg. Where’d you get it?”

Hagrid opened his mouth, closed it, and then opened it again. “Well, you see, there was this fella...”

---

“I never thought I’d see a dragon hatch before.”

“You know we’re going to have to tell her about this.”

“You do realize that’s a terrible idea, right?”

“Of course it is, but it’d be worse if she found out and knew we didn’t tell her.”

George grimaced. Fred was right. If Ivy found out they had seen a baby dragon, said baby dragon was still available to see, and they hadn’t told her about it, they would be dead. Dead and gone.

“Fiiiiine. We’ll go tell Ivy Hagrid has a dragon.”

---

“This is all your fault,” Draco snarled at Fred, who didn’t look the slightest bit bothered, much to his annoyance.

“How do you figure that?”

“You’re the one who told her while I was still standing there! Couldn’t you have at least waited for me to leave?”

Fred assumed a face of complete innocence. “How was I supposed to know you weren’t interested in seeing one of your kind? Your kinsfolk, if you will.”

Draco went to chase after Fred but the older boy was too fast. “Come on, Dragon, time to go meet your little brother.”

---

“Come on, Neville. Let’s go see the dragon!”

Neville had the distinct impression that things like this would have been a lot less common if he had sorted into another house like Hufflepuff or something. Still, he had to admit that he was *mildly* curious, so... He gave in and followed Ron.

---

“Oh, well I’ve never seen a baby dragon before.”

Draco wanted to point out that none of them had, and that was the reason they were all being dragged along in the first place. Technically he was the only one being physically dragged at the moment. Everyone else seemed to be going of their own accord. Crazy Gryffindors.

“Wait, where are you all going?”

Draco’s hopes soared at the sight of Pansy. Yes! This was his ticket out of this little misadventure.

“We’re going to go see a dragon,” Granger said matter-of-factly.

“Oh, I’m coming too then.”

And just like that Draco’s hopes were dashed and he resigned himself to be forever in the company of people with death wishes. A baby death wish, in this case, but a death wish nonetheless.

---

“Wait, when did you three get here?”

Susan, Terry, and Theo all just shrugged, and Draco decided then and there that no Hogwarts House was safe from insanity. It was everywhere, and it was inescapable.

---

Hagrid opened the door and cast a bemused gaze on the nine little first years beaming up at him. Well, eight were beaming. The little Malfoy kid did not look nearly as pleased to be there. Of course that just might be the kid’s natural expression, and he really couldn’t fault the poor kid for something so out of his control.

“We’re here to see the dragon,” Ivy said with a huge grin, which Hagrid quickly matched.

“Well come in, come in. Let me get ‘im for ya.”

The thought that maybe a baby dragon wasn’t the best thing to show a bunch of first years, especially a group that contained ‘where-do-you-find-a-Cerberus’ Ivy Potter, didn’t cross Hagrid’s mind, so excited was he to share his enthusiasm for the small creature with all the eager looking students.

After they had all oohed and awed for several minutes, one of the little Gryffindors raised her hand, and after a moment he remembered the girl’s name. “Um, yes miss Granger?”

“How are you supposed to keep a dragon in your house? Won’t he get too large? And also, your house is made of wood. The dragon will burn it down for sure.”

That could be a problem...

“Ooh! I can write Uncle Henry and see if we can adopt it!”

---

*April 25, 1992*

Sirius watched as Harry finished reading Ivy’s most recent letter. He was excited to hear all about the week’s events, and especially about the snitch catching contest, which he was confident his goddaughter had excelled in.

Harry put the letter down and proceeded to say the longest drawn-out expletive that Sirius had ever heard. He was quite impressed how long Harry managed to hold that out for.

“That bad?”

Harry leaned forward and let his head bang on the table, then let it thump a few more times for good measure.

“Okay... Well, what’d she have to say?”

Harry groaned. “Mirror,” he said, holding up one finger. “Dragon.” He held up a second finger.

Sirius was a little confused. Didn’t the dragons happen in his fourth year? And... seventh year? And something about a couple years later going to Romania... That was actually a lot of dragons. “Okay, sorry. Drawing a blank here. What dragon?”

“Hagrid’s dragon,” Harry said, not moving his head from off the table.

“Ah. *That* dragon.”

Harry grunted but still didn’t move.

“So that one’s not too bad then, is it. Okay, so mirror? The one you saw your parents in?”

Harry’s head came up and he groaned. “Yep. That’s that one. I really thought we had avoided that particular incident.” He then proceeded to let out an impressive string of curse words. James would be so proud.

“Alright. What do you want to do?”

Harry grimaced. “Take care of the dragon. We have to do something about the dragon. If we don’t either it’ll burn something down, get Hagrid in serious trouble, or it’ll end up in my backyard.”

Sirius agreed those were all likely outcomes to the situation.

“And the mirror... How’d she end up in front of it anyway? Last time I only found it because...” Harry’s face darkened and Sirius felt the little cackle of power that emanated off of him. “How much you want to bet our dear esteemed headmaster had something to do with this?”

Sirius was most certainly not taking that bet. “Um, probably, but I have to admit I’m a little surprised that that’s what you’re going with right away. Anything happen I should know about?”

Harry was still scowling. “By this time the mirror was already long gone and the stone was placed inside. There is no reason for Ivy to have found it unless she was meant to go looking for it. Besides, why would she go wandering around? That’s not like her. For all the chaos she causes she doesn’t wander aimlessly, and by now I’m sure the twins have shown her everything in Hogwarts.”

Sirius could understand his logic, even if he was somewhat surprised at its occurrence. “Okay, so say Dumbles did somehow get her in front of the mirror. How do you suppose he did that?”

Harry looked positively furious. “Same way he tried to in December.”

Sirius sighed and rubbed his hand over his eyes. He had the sudden feeling that *he* was going to be the one holding *Harry* back in this particular instance. He wasn’t sure he’d do a very good job at it. He wasn’t sure if he even wanted to.

“So what do we do?”

Harry bounced his leg in agitation for a moment before replying. “We up the timetable. We already had it planned for the end of May, so we just bump it up a little. Go to the goblins, get the fake stone, kill Quirrell, switch them out, and voila, one dead dark lord and one perfectly safe Ivy.”

“Alright. I’ll go get Remus.”

“I’ll write Charlie and then go to the goblins in the morning.”

Sirius sighed and nodded. Time to see if their plans would hold up.

---

*April 28, 1992*

Charlie Weasley reread the letter in his hands for the... well actually he had lost track but it had been a lot of times. Despite rereading it so many times, however, the existence of the letter was still a mystery to him. Sure, Lord Peverell had explained that he was a friend of Charlie’s younger brothers and all that, and Charlie knew that’s where they had gone for Christmas, but that still didn’t explain the slightly cryptic request to come grab a baby dragon from Hogwarts. Oh, and bring friends because dragons are little... Charlie couldn’t make out all the words there but he got the general idea.

Charlie had a few choices in front of him. One, he could ignore the letter and go about his life, two, he could write back and ask for more details, and three, he could just shoe up and do what Lord Peverell had asked. Well, baby dragons were pretty cute...

Now as far as friends went... Who would not question anything and just show up in Scotland unannounced to retrieve a most likely highly illegal baby dragon? He spotted Gaines and Warren walking a little ways off. Americans were up for that sort of thing usually, right? Perfect.

---

"Dude, you know I'm not actually a cowboy, right?"

Charlie did not see what that had to do with anything. "Uh, yeah?"

Chad Gaines clapped his hands. "Great! Then I'm in."

Charlie exhaled in relief and turned to Warren, who looked at the other two for a moment before sighing and throwing his hands up in the air. "Fine. I'm in too I guess."

Gaines slapped Warren on the back and said, "Of course you are, Matt. We have a reputation to uphold."

Warren glared at Gaines who returned his glare with a grin.

"Uh, sorry, what reputation?" Had they done this sort of thing before? That would be a big help.

"Hmm? Oh, just that everyone here has certain ideas about Americans, and we've done our very best to uphold each and every one of those," Gaines said.

Warren rolled his eyes. "What he means is he likes getting called 'cowboy' even though he probably couldn't tell you the difference between the cow and the horse."

Gaines grinned unapologetically. "Well we can't all be farm boys, now, can we."

"I'm from *Chicago*."

"Yeah, Chicago, *Kansas*."

"Doesn't mean I know how to handle every kind of livestock out there."

"But you do."

"But that's not the *point*, is it."

This all meant absolutely nothing to Charlie. "So, you both still in?"

"Yes." "Yes."

---

May 4, 1992

“And you’re sure this will work?”

At the silence that followed Harry brought his head up and realized his mistake. Oops. Don’t offend the goblins. They don’t like that. Muttering an apology, he gathered his things and the fake stone and rushed out, shivering as the offended look gave way to a grin. There was just no winning with them, was there.

---

May 9, 1992

Ivy’s scream woke up the rest of her roommates.

“What happened?” “Are you okay?” “Who died?”

Everyone rolled their eyes at Tracey’s question.

Pansy noticed the blood first and said, “that’s *it*? You woke us up for *that*?”

“I *screamed* because I don’t know how it *got there*,” Ivy said indignantly. “That’s not where the blood is supposed to be.”

Realization hit Daphne first. “Oh, is this your first time?”

“First time what?” Ivy asked quizzically.

“Your first time... You know what? Maybe you should go see Madam Pomfrey. I think she could explain things better than me.”

Now all the other girls were nodding solemnly, and Ivy began wondering what kind of secret ritual or rite of passage this was. Whatever it was, it was weird. And mildly uncomfortable, she thought, glaring at her traitorous midsection.

No one else seemed inclined to expound on this singular occurrence, but Pansy finally rolled her eyes and grabbed Ivy’s hand. “Come on,” she said. “I’ll take you up there.”

Ivy went to protest that despite the evidence that she had been engaged in some kind of nighttime battle she could in fact get to the hospital wing herself, but decided it was entirely possible Pansy just wanted to have an excuse to avoid Draco this morning. He was still kind of mad about the whole nearly-getting-his-hand-bit-by-a-dragon-because-Pansy-insisted-he-hold-it thing.

---

That poor dear. Poppy couldn’t fault her guardian either. That poor man, trying to raise the girl all on his own. Of course there would be some things that he might forget about, or simply not know he needed to do. Miss Potter had taken it all very well, and had asked several questions, which Poppy always took as a good sign.

Unfortunately the poor girl was experiences some rather strong cramping and other less than pleasant effects of her present condition, so Poppy had given her a nice little remedy and a mild sleeping draught. Much better to sleep it off a bit, and it was Saturday after all, so it wasn't like she would miss anything too vital.

---

"Dude, shouldn't we have come at night or something?"

"Chad, this is really not the time..."

"No, it's fine. It's all fine. We'll just go see Hagrid, pick the dragon up, and be off. No problem." Hopefully there wouldn't be a problem anyway. It was sadly mid morning and if this went wrong there wasn't exactly anywhere to hide.

"Umm, just wondering out loud here, but is there a reason there's so many kids gathered there?"

There was indeed an impressive number of students gathered around Hagrid's house. That... might be a problem.

---

"I *missed* it?"

"It wasn't that great anyways," Draco muttered. No one payed attention to him.

"In our defense, we thought he would come at night or something, you know, illegal dragon and all."

Ivy glared at George, who shrugged apologetically.

"You could have come and *gotten* me."

"You were in the hospital wing!"

"I wasn't dying!"

"We didn't know that!"

Ivy gasped. "You thought I might be dying and you didn't come *see me*?"

George, deciding this was a most excellent moment to drag himself and Fred out of the hole they were digging before it grew any larger, said, "Well we would have, except Charlie came and..."

Oh. Maybe that wasn't the best direction to take this.

---

*May 10, 1992*

"I am a terrible parent," Harry said, putting down the letter from Madam Pomfrey.



“I make it a point not to argue until I have at least one or two facts, so what makes you say that?”

Harry handed him the letter. After skimming it over Sirius made a face. “Okay, agreed.” Harry groaned. “But to be fair would any of us even know how to explain that?”

Harry opened his mouth, closed it, and realized that no, he actually had no idea how to explain that particular set of life facts.

Sirius continued. “So, we failed, but we can still fix this, right? We’ll just enlist some help. Someone who knows things and can explain them.”

“Thanks, Sirius,” Harry said dryly. “Your elocution, as always, astounds me.”

Sirius stuck out his tongue. “Just watch. I’ll find someone. Right now. I’ll find someone right now.” He stood, nodded, muttered something to himself, and marched out the door.

“Just be back by the morning,” Harry called after him. “We have a murder to commit tomorrow.”

---

Sabrina Zabini counted down in her head how long it would take Sirius to realize they were not alone. Twelve, eleven, ten... When he had shown up in her house absolutely frantic she was sure someone had died. Or possibly become undead. But no, it was just Sirius freaking out because Lord Peverell was freaking out because they didn’t know something about how to raise an eleven year old girl. Two, one...

Right on cue Sirius’s face went beet red. “You didn’t tell me you had company.”

Sabrina laughed. “You have eyes, darling, I assumed you could see for yourself.”

Sirius scowled but didn’t say anything else.

“Well ladies? Shall we help the poor man out?”

Narcissa looked amused and at her smirk Sirius went even redder, if that was possible.

Anthea laughed lightly. “Of course we’ll help,” she said. “I’ve had plenty of practice giving this talk, now is as good a time as any to give another one.”

Sirius looked at her in mild shock. “*Now?*”

“Why not?”

Sirius fidgeted. It was cute when he was fifteen and it was endlessly amusing now. “Lady Greengrass, I’m sure there’s no need...”

Anthea cut him off. “There is no time like that present. Shall we?”

Sirius couldn't come up with an excuse apparently, so he finally offered Anthea his arm and together they walked towards the floo, Sabrina and Narcissa close behind.

Sirius cleared his throat. "I just... I just need to let Harry know we're coming. The wards and..." He cleared his throat again and stuck his head in the fireplace, ignoring the three smirks still directed at him.

---

Harry looked at the three women with no small amount of trepidation. His experience with those types of looks being directed at him usually spelled something unpleasant. Like that one time that Fleur, Narcissa, Katie, and Luna had formed the oddest task force of all time and forced him shopping. He shuddered at the memory. That had not been a pleasant day. Luna had finally taken pity on him and helped him escape their clutches, but still. This look never meant anything good.

"Well, it seems there is only one thing to do."

When this was over Harry was going to learn absolutely everything there was to know about Lady Greengrass. He needed to be forewarned if she decided she was going to kill him or something. He honestly had no idea based on her expression alone and it was disconcerting.

"We'll just have to see that she learns all the relevant facts as soon as possible."

Oh, so not dead then. That was nice.

"Now let's see. I've given this talk plenty of times so I would be happy to speak with Ivy, if that is alright with you," she said, nodding to Harry, whose vigorous nod earned him two smirks from the other ladies present.

"I would be happy to give her the *other* talk," Narcissa offered.

Harry and Sirius both let out a sigh of relief. All three women laughed at them. They were truly heartless at the sight of Harry's plight. Sirius could fend for himself.

"Well, I suppose that just about covers it then, doesn't it," Sabrina added. "We'd best be off then."

"Would you like to stay for dinner?" Harry had no idea why he blurted that out, and was hoping no one had heard him.

"We would love to."

Damn it.

---

On the bright side, now that Malfoy and the other Greengrasses were here, the discussion on female anatomy had been brought to a blessed end.

Harry had no idea what he was supposed to say to any of these people. Sirius and Sabrina were entertaining enough when they weren't making little lovesick eyes at each other, but

they were occupied with said activity at the moment so were not at all helpful. He didn't know the Greengrasses well before so he wasn't sure what to say to them, and Astoria was currently like nine or some other age that meant she was small and not a Draco-was-annoying-today-so-let's-go-tease-him buddy. And Malfoy... Well, that wouldn't normally be as much of a problem, but there was the whole I'm-about-to-go-off-the-dark-lord-you-followed thing at the back of his mind and that made finding a topic to speak to Lucius about a little difficult. Thank Merlin for Narcissa. He was mentally singing her praises when Lord Greengrass asked a seemingly innocent question.

"So where are you from?"

Harry had gone three blissful years without having to actually answer that question to anyone in Britain. When he was outside the country he just answered "England" and that seems to satisfy people. Here, however, he couldn't exactly get away with that response.

Forgetting his well-rehearsed set of responses that he had practiced for just such an occasion as this, Harry said, "London."

Well, all in all that wasn't too bad of an answer. And he had lived in London. Once. Very briefly. The details weren't really worth getting into...

"Oh, I'm surprised I've never run into you then."

"Well I... I didn't spend a lot of time there, you see. A lot of time abroad."

Harry sent Sirius a small look that signaled his plea for help but Sirius just grinned lazily at him. No help whatsoever.

"Ah, of course. So I take it you did not grow up here?"

"Ah, no. I grew up..." One last glance at Sirius who was apparently going to leave him to suffer alone. "...in Canada."

He wished someone would cast a silencing charm on him. *Canada*? Perhaps the one country in the world he did not want to ever talk about. Ever.

"Oh, whereabouts? My mother's family was from Canada. We visited there a lot when I was younger."

Great. Just great.

"Oh, he's from Montréal." Sirius was an absolute traitor and Harry was never going to speak to him again until it was tomorrow and they went to go murder Voldemort.

"Beautiful city," Lord Greengrass said.

"Yes. It is," Harry ground out, trying to discreetly shoot a glare at Sirius. Or a jinx. Whatever worked at this point.

"Do you visit often?"

Harry was going to kill Sirius. Slowly. Deliberately. With exhilaration. “No, no, not at all.” Seeing the puzzled frowns around the table he hastily added, “it’s just that my childhood was... less than ideal, and I prefer to make my home elsewhere now.”

The topic changed thanks to Merlin, Morgana, and Harry’s ability to BS his way through nearly any situation. There. Take that Sirius. Turn any answer into a somewhat ambiguous hint at a tragic past and everyone clams right up. Brilliant. Harry was rather pleased with himself now.

---

*May 11, 1992*

“Are you sure this is a good idea?” Fred whispered to his twin.

“No. This is a terrible idea. We should really probably put a stop to this.”

“How?”

“No idea.”

“What are all of them doing here anyway?”

George glanced at the five first years making their way to the forbidden corridor with varying levels of enthusiasm. “Pretty sure Ivy dragged Draco along as per usual. Ron was bored and just kind of followed. Honestly didn’t notice him there until a second ago. Someone pulled Neville along, but he hasn’t left so he’s fine, right? And I have no idea about Hermione. I thought we were going to tell her something so she wouldn’t go tell on us?”

Fred winced. “Uh yeah, that might be my fault. I may have sort of implied that it was some kind of magical obstacle course. A practical of sorts. Maybe a little extra credit.”

“That’s probably the worst possible idea you could have come up with,” George hissed.

“I know that *now*,” Fred whispered back furtively. “It’s not like you had anything better.”

“I was trying to get Ivy away from Percy and that Slytherin he’s always hanging around now.”

“Who, Harrington?”

“Yeah, that’s the one.”

“You don’t think they’d get in the way, right?”

“Doubt it. I mentioned something about Ivy wanting a book on Hydra and they both rushed off. Looked a little panicky now that I think about it.”

“Why Hydra?”

George shrugged. “First deadly thing I thought of.”

“Fair.”

Finally they reached the door of imminent death, or, as Ivy put it, the only thing standing between us and the cutest little hellhound there ever was. That was reassuring for neither their safety nor their concerns over her sanity, but here they were anyway. Ten seconds. They could handle this for ten seconds.

“Alright,” Fred announced with more cheer than he was actually feeling. “Who wants to see a Cerberus?”

---

“Need I remind you, *again*, that we’ve *already seen this*?” Draco hissed at Ivy.

“Yes, but we didn’t know how to put it to sleep then, did we.”

“And that makes it better?”

“Of *course*. Now we can see it up close.”

“You’re insane,” Draco muttered.

“It’s only for a minute,” Ivy argued.

Draco just glared at her and she sighed. “Just a quick peek and then we’ll be out. I promise.”

---

Fred let out a string of words his mother didn’t know he knew and then turned towards the shorter people. Oops. Except... None of them actually seemed surprised by what he had said. Well, except Ron, who was arguably the worst person to accidentally teach words to, what with them sharing the same parents and all.

George pushed up his sleeves. “Right then. No worries. We’ll just put it to sleep while we figure this out.”

Fred aided George in setting up some music for the Cerberus. Once it was finally asleep, Neville asked, “how did you know to do that?”

Fred couldn’t think of a reply.

“I know more than I ever wanted to about that thing,” George muttered.

“So, what do we do now?” Everyone’s face seemed to mirror Ron’s question. What *did* they do now? They were rather stuck at the moment. A door that wouldn’t open, a Cerberus that was asleep, for now, and... huh. Was that a trapdoor?

Apparently he wasn’t the only one that had noticed it.

“Is this what you meant by an obstacle course?” Hermione asked.

Fred winced. “Yeah, about that. See, the thing is...” He looked at brother for help.

For a moment George looked as panicked as Fred felt, but composed himself and said to the rest of the group, “just a moment. We need to, uh, talk for a minute.”

They huddled together and spoke softly so they wouldn’t be overheard.

“We need to get out of here.”

“No kidding. What do we do?”

“No idea. How’d we even get stuck anyway? *Alohomora* worked to get in and Ivy and Draco got out when they were in here before just fine.”

Fred thought a terrible thought. “You don’t think someone trapped us in here, do you?”

George shook his head. “I don’t think so. No one knew we were here, right? Besides, who’d want to do that?”

Fred didn’t have an answer for that. “Okay, well first things first we need to keep everyone calm. And whatever we do, we can’t let anyone...”

“Hey, maybe we should just go through the trapdoor.”

“...go further,” he finished.

“We’re all going to die, aren’t we,” George said.

“No way. We’ll be fine. It’s just a sleeping Cerberus. And it can’t follow us through anyway, can it.”

They exchanged a look saying that neither of them were the least bit optimistic about the situation, but they couldn’t betray any sign of weakness or fear in front of the first years. Nope. Time to be Gryffindors.

“So, if this is an obstacle course of some kind, what’s at the end?” Hermione asked.

“Oh, the Philosopher’s Stone that Headmaster Dumbledore has been hiding here all year,” Ivy said nonchalantly. Everyone else, Fred most definitely included, turned to stare at her.

“The *what*?”

“The Philosopher’s Stone. Apparently it was made by Nicholas Flamel, and he’s like six hundred years old or something, and it was in Gringotts but someone tried to steal it so it was brought here and there are probably some obstacles between here and there in case anyone were to come try to steal it.” Ivy apparently did not understand why they were all taken aback by that.

“How do you know all of that?” Draco demanded.

Ivy shrugged. “Just little bits here and there. Didn’t really put it together until just now actually, but that might be why the door locked. Make it so anyone who tries to steal it can’t

get back out.”

“But, we’re not trying to steal it, are we?” Neville did not seem to be completely assured of their intentions.

“Of course not. But maybe someone else was. Anyway, should we go see what else there is? Maybe there’s a way out on the other end.”

As reluctant as Fred was to follow Ivy’s suggestion on this particular matter, a glance at George showed that they were in agreement. There wasn’t really another way to go.

Down the trapdoor it would have to be.

---

“Just relax. ”

“I’m *trying*.”

“Well try harder!”

“This would be a lot easier if this plant wasn’t trying to *kill me right now*.”

“You know, Professor Sprout did say that you can kill devil’s snare with fire. Maybe we should...”

“Don’t *kill* it. You can’t hurt it.” Draco was seriously questioning Longbottom’s life priorities right now.

“Oh come on. *Lumos*,” he said. The twins quickly followed his example, proving that they were good for something at least. A moment later they had all dropped down onto the ground below.

“Do you think Professor Sprout would give us any extra credit?”

Draco groaned. This was not how he wanted to spend a Monday afternoon.

---

Ivy watched all the keys flying around. They looked so funny like that. She wondered what else could be given little sings to fly around. Maybe she could see about giving Tiger...

“Well?” She looked to see everyone eyeing her expectantly.

“Um, yeah?”

“Are you going to...” Draco gestured to the keys.

“Oh, right. Which one do we need?”

Hermione pointed to an old looking key floating far above.

“Thanks.” Ivy drew her wand and brought the key to her. Seeing everyone’s looks she quirked her head and said, “what?”

“You have got to teach me that spell,” Hermione said after a moment.

“What spell?”

“The one that you just... You know what? Never mind. Come on,” Draco said, dragging her along with the key to the next door.

---

Neville needed to remember to say no. So much could be avoided if he just remembered to say something in time. Like this. First a three headed hellhound that could have easily torn them apart, then a deadly plant that they had wanted to *burn*, then... Well actually the keys weren’t so bad. But this? He had dealt with this on an almost daily basis for over two months, and now he was dealing with it again, except this time the chess set was *huge* and possibly out to destroy them all.

He sighed, watching Ron and Draco continue their fight over who should play the chess game. A slight movement caught his eye.

“Um, guys? GUYS,” he said a little louder. Or more like shouted. Either way it got everyone’s attention.

“What is it,” Fred asked.

Neville pointed to Ivy, who was now on the other side of the chessboard.

“Oh, well that looks easier,” Fred said, before making his way in the same direction, only to be stopped by a massive chess piece carrying a very realistic looking sword. Realistic in the fact that yes that would probably kill you.

“Okay, maybe not. Hey Ivy,” Fred soured across. “How’d you get over there?”

“Oh, I just made the pieces stop moving.”

“She just...” George rubbed a hand over his face. “Little help here then?”

---

Ron was happy to be safely across the chessboard, even if he would have liked to test his skills on such a large set...

His musings were interrupted by a terrible smell that matched a terrible sight. On the ground lay a dead mountain troll. Or at least he really hoped it was dead.

Realizing that he was the only one of the group that had never encountered a mountain troll, he decided the best approach was to try to appear brave and not scared out of his mind like he was really feeling.

“Is it dead?” Hermione asked quietly?



Fred rushed to reassure her that it was indeed.

“That’s good,” Ivy said. “Because I didn’t bring Tiger with me this time.”

---

“That’s *it*?”

Hermione tried to placate the irate blond to no avail.

“This is supposed to stop someone from stealing an object that Gringotts couldn’t protect and this is *it*?”

“Well, to be fair, logic isn’t really a strong point amongst wizards...”

Malfoy either didn’t hear her or didn’t care. He was mad at the apparent simplicity of the riddle and the overall “challenge” and he was not willing to be pacified.

“Well maybe it’s a really hard riddle...”

Malfoy gave her an exasperated look. “No. It’s not. I bet you already have it all figured out, don’t you.”

Hermione shifted nervously. She did, but that hadn’t exactly been the point she was trying to make...

---

Ivy took the potion and stepped towards the black flames. She wasn’t sure why she had said she ought to be the one to go through, yet here she was. She had the feeling she was reaching the end. What awaited her at the end? And how was she supposed to get the others out?

She stepped through the flames, and then through yet another door. After taking a look around her eyes landed on a person she definitely did *not* expect to see.

“What are you doing here?”

## Chapter 22

“What are you doing here?”

Harry spun around, bucket of ashes still in hand, slowly falling to the ground. This was definitely not how this was supposed to go.

“What are *you* doing here?”

“We went to go look at the Cerberus because I missed Fred and George’s brother coming to take away the dragon, but then the door locked and we couldn’t leave, so we had to come this way.”

Harry had already killed one person today. What was one more to add to his list. “And just who else came with you?” he ground out through gritted teeth.

Ivy looked a little frightened all of a sudden and Harry made a conscious effort to relax his face. He was angry, but not at her, and he needed her to know that.

“Well, Fred and George, and Draco, Neville, Hermione, and Ron.”

Harry exhaled. That was quite the group. “And how are they?”

“What do you mean?”

“Is everyone okay? Anyone hurt?”

Ivy shook her head and Harry breathed a sigh of relief. “Everyone was fine when I left them in the last room.”

That was good. “So why’d you come through by yourself then?”

“Well, it looked like only one person could go through, and I’m not sure why, but I really felt like I needed to come..”

Mustering every bit of will power he possessed, Harry focused on not letting his rage show. He didn’t want to frighten Ivy more than he already had. “Okay, I’m just going to cast a couple spells on you sweetie. Nothing bad, just need to check a few things.”

Ivy, recognizing their code word for I-need-you-to-trust-me-and-just-go-with-this, nodded and walked the rest of the way over to where Harry stood, making a little face at the pile of ashes nearby.

Harry glanced between her and the ashes. “I’ll explain later. Alright, here we go.” He cast several detection charms, and upon finding the expected set of compulsions, set about removing them one by one. Due to their strength he was rather impressed that Ivy wasn’t a walking zombie at this point. And also extremely upset at the person who had cast them in

the first place. Many things he could forgive, but hurting Ivy was not one of them, and never would be.

“Did you find something?” Ivy asked in a small voice.

Realizing that his anger was once again showing on his face, Harry did his best to relax again and nodded. “Yeah. I took care of it though.”

“Are you mad?”

“Not at you,” he said, pulling Ivy into a hug. “Not at you.”

They stayed like that for a minute, but eventually Ivy asked the previously unanswered question of “So what are you doing here?”

Harry grimaced. As much as he wished he could hide everything from Ivy, that wasn’t going to happen, and he’d much rather she heard this from him than from someone else (Albus insert several creative curse words here Dumbledore). “Well, here’s the thing…”

---

Harry really hoped this worked. He knew Dumbledore would likely use legilimency on Ivy, so this needed to be perfect. Memory charms were tricky as it was, but implanting false memories into someone who knew otherwise and couldn’t occlude was definitely higher on the scale of oh-this-might-go-terribly-wrong. Still, it was the best plan Harry could come up with spur of the moment like that, so this is what they were going with.

They would claim “accidental magic” as the reason for Ivy’s “defeat” of Quirrell. Harry was really glad she was more grossed out than scared by the revelation that Quirrell had had Voldemort in the back of his head. He really wasn’t trying to give her nightmares or anything.

So accidental magic it would be, with Ivy losing consciousness before Quirrell’s um... unfortunate demise. That way the memory could show part of Harry’s memory, at least the part with Quirrell revealing Voldemort at the back of his head. Everything after that would essentially be blocked out. They would say Ivy lost consciousness, or, if absolutely needed, could go with something along the lines of “oh this was super traumatic so she’s suppressing the memories.” Because there was absolutely no way he was implanting a memory of her killing someone. Nope. She did not need to deal with something like that.

Thankfully Ivy, in true Ivy fashion, had responded to Harry’s explanation and plan with an “okay cool.” Besides the whole being grossed out thing of course, but that was understandable.

“Okay, you ready?”

Ivy nodded, and Harry began the delicate work that was adjusting, concealing, and falsifying her memory.

“Done,” he said after a minute. “Okay, I’ll stick around to make sure everyone gets out okay, alright? My guess is that Dumbledore will be down shortly to come check in on you. Avoid eye contact if you can but if not I think these should hold. You’ll probably be in the hospital wing for a while...”

Ivy groaned.

“...but I’ll make sure to come and see you. Maybe Sirius will be able to drop by as well. We’ll see. Anyway, you all set?”

Ivy, now slightly less dreading the possibility of being stuck in the hospital wing, nodded eagerly.

“Alright then.” Harry gave Ivy one last hug. “Let’s knock you out.”

Ivy giggled and Harry cast a few spells that would render her unconscious but wouldn’t show up on any normal diagnostic scans. She’d wake up on her own in the morning.

Satisfied with the scene presented, Harry slipped his cloak on and went to check on the others. He was taking no chances. When he found the a few of the others Ivy had said had come with him chatting happily in the room, he assumed a couple of the others had gone back to try to get out that way again. There was now nothing else to do but wait.

---

*May 12, 1992*

It had worked. It had all worked. Sure, it might have taken a few extra plans and adjustments and some liberal use of compulsion charms in the end, but it had worked. Ivy Potter had gone after the stone, and had defeated Voldemort. Albus would really have liked to have been able to get a few more details on the entire encounter, but the details she had been able to provide had been rather vague at best, and his legilimency probe had revealed little else, though it did confirm his suspicions that Quirrell had been in league with Voldemort.

So, he had been forced to draw his own conclusions, but he felt confident that he had the general idea of what happened, and he was rather pleased with the result. He was a little taken aback at the fact that Ivy had seemed to break through all his compulsions. Of course, it could have happened when Voldemort tried to kill her, rendering her unconscious. But even still, when he had gone to remove them (no need to have people start asking unnecessary questions after all), they were already gone. No wonder it had taken so many to get her there in the first place.

Overall, though, the plan had been a success. Unfortunately she was now in the hospital wing, still unconscious, and Poppy was pressing him to inform her guardian, which, if Albus was going to be completely honest with himself, he didn’t *really* want to do. Maybe he could get away with contacting Sirius instead...

Of course, this would be an opportunity to meet Lord Peverell finally. On the other hand, the best time to meet someone is not when their... the person they have guardianship over is injured and in the hospital. But then again, maybe this would be a good time to be able to

persuade him to relinquish guardianship. After all, she had been attacked by Voldemort. It might take some persuasion, but hopefully Peverell would see the need for her to return to the blood wards at the Dursleys, or even go with Sirius, both of which would be much better options than Ivy remaining with her current guardian.

Yes, that was an excellent plan. Very excellent. And it had the added benefit of getting Poppy to stop glaring at him every time he checked in on Ivy to see if she could remember anything else.

---

“I can’t believe it.”

“Really?”

“Well, alright, I *can*, but still. *Twenty four hours*. It took him *twenty four bloody hours* to notify me.”

“You do remember she’s fine, right?”

“That’s not the *point*.”

“I know that, but I’m just making sure you remember. You have to keep your head for this.”

Harry groaned. Sirius was right. He had to stay focused right now, and getting mad at Dumbledore wasn’t helpful. There’d be plenty of time for that later anyway.

---

“I must admit, I am a little concerned that it took so long to notify me.” Harry was keeping his cool, but just barely.

“Ah, yes. Well, there seems to have been a little mix up with the notification process, what with the change in guardianship and all.”

Harry raised his eyebrow, channeling his inner Malfoy in what he hoped was a passable representation of the pureblood lord he supposedly was. Dumbledore spouted off a few more excuses, but finally Harry managed to get the headmaster to lead him to Ivy. She was awake, and had obviously been for a while now. She smiled when he came into sight and he gave her a huge hug when he reached her, ignoring the look of surprise on Dumbledore’s face.

“How are you doing?” He could tell she knew what he was asking.

“Good. I’m good,” she said.

He breathed out a sigh of relief. So far so good then.

She rehashed the entire story, leaving out of course the part where she ran into him, and even though he had already heard it (and lived it for that matter), he still felt relieved when the story ended.

After a few minutes he allowed himself to be ushered away by Dumbledore, who proceeded to explain how Voldemort was back and how Ivy needed to go back to the Dursleys. Harry was suddenly very glad that Ivy was not within hearing range of them, and that Remus and Sirius had made him promise not to kill Dumbledore.

The headmaster, recognizing that he was getting nowhere with this approach, changed tactics and started advocating for Ivy to spend time with her godfather over the summer. Harry wasn't sure exactly why Dumbledore was so eager to get Ivy away from him, but he did not like it one bit.

"Yes, I agree."

Dumbledore was clearly surprised at Harry's response, probably expecting it to take a lot more time and persuasion before Harry relented.

"Oh? Well that is good. Ivy will surely benefit from being around someone who knew her parents so well."

"I agree. I am sure they will have a wonderful summer together."

Dumbledore's eyes were twinkling and he was practically beaming. "Ah yes, that will be for the best I'm sure."

"I'm sure Remus will be happy to share more stories with her as well."

Harry couldn't help himself. He watched with glee as the headmaster's face fell slightly.

"She has spoken with Remus before?" The man asked a bit hesitantly.

"Of course. He was our guest at Christmas after all. And he stops by quite frequently to see Sirius and I."

"Sirius and..."

"Sirius has been living as a guest in my house ever since his release, after all. I know we are both looking forward to having Ivy home again."

Harry was enjoying himself, and maybe there was a little voice that sounded suspiciously like Remus saying they needed to be careful how they handled this, but at the moment Harry couldn't bring himself to care. He was angry at Dumbledore. Angry at what he had done, angry at what he was trying to do, and most of all angry that he himself had not seen all of this that much sooner.

"Yes, I see. Well, if that is all. I assure you Miss Potter is in the best possible hands at the moment and will be looked out for with the greatest possible care."

Harry had the feeling he was referring to more than just her stay in Madam Pomfrey's care.

He exchanged farewells with the headmaster and made his way back to Ivy to tell her goodbye. As he made his way back to the infirmary he was suddenly faced with three red

heads who all looked a tad nervous.

“Could I speak with you for a moment, sir?” Percy asked.

Harry had no idea what this was about, but he nodded and stepped off to the side with Percy, the twins staying put but fidgeting in place.

“I just wanted to apologize, sir, for what happened to Ivy. I know the twins can be a bit reckless but I promise they didn’t intend for...”

Harry held up his hand. “It wasn’t your fault, and it wasn’t theirs. Ivy is perfectly fine, and will probably be released any time now.”

Percy seemed relieved by that. “Still, I’m sorry I couldn’t keep a better eye on her. On them. All of them.”

“Percy, you may be a prefect, but that doesn’t mean you can keep an eye on everyone all the time.” Because your brothers have the map, not you. “I do appreciate your efforts at keeping Ivy from causing mass destruction,” Percy smiled and blushed a little at that, “but I in no way expect you to be able to watch her every minute or keep her out of trouble all the time. I’ve spoken to her, and I will continue to try to do my best to keep her safe, but sometimes there are dangers we can’t prevent, and we have to deal with those the best we can. So thank you for looking out for her.”

Harry turned to the twins. “Fred, George, can I speak with you for a minute?” He realized why they were likely looking so nervous, and he wanted to deal with this as soon as possible.

Percy gave them a little space, and the twins shifted nervously in place, neither really wanting to make eye contact with Harry.

Harry sighed. “Look, I just wanted to thank you both for keeping clear heads and getting everyone through that safely.”

“We didn’t...” Fred started to say, but Harry cut him off.

“You did. It wasn’t your fault you all got trapped there, but you did do your best to get everyone out safely, which they did.”

“But no one would have gone if it weren’t for us,” George argued.

“Maybe, but maybe not. Chances are Ivy would have ended up there at some point anyway, but if she had been on her own she might not have made it out, or might have been seriously hurt in the process.”

“But she’s in the hospital and we...”

“Ivy is fine. She had a little run in that caused her to lose consciousness, but there is nothing the matter with her and I’m sure she’ll be set for another adventure tomorrow.”

Both twins sighed at that, looking very much relieved.

Harry smiled. "Besides, maybe now she'll stop asking me for a Cerberus puppy."

Fred chuckled nervously. "Yeah, about that, I think she may be looking into dragons now."

Harry laughed. "Oh, she is. She tried to get me to adopt Hagrid's dragon but I wrote your brother and asked him to come get it before she could devise a way to bring it home with her."

"Wait, you wrote Charlie? No wonder he got here so fast," George said.

"You wrote him too?"

"Yeah, we didn't know anyone else who knew more about dragons so it seemed like a good idea."

Harry laughed again. "Yeah, me neither. Haven't even met him, but I still don't know anyone else. Glad it all worked out then."

"Yeah, Ivy was upset she missed it."

Harry grimaced. "So I heard. I take it that's part of what led all of you to the Cerberus again?"

"You, uh, you know about that first time?" The twins both looked slightly uncomfortable again.

Harry couldn't help but smile. "Of course I do. Parents tend to know what happens with their kids, you know."

He enjoyed the fleeting look of panic that crossed each of their faces as they no doubt wondered just how much their parents knew about their...antics. He was feeling generous though, so he decided to set their minds at ease a little. "Of course, it helps when the child tells you everything in the first place."

They both laughed, but as he was turning away Harry caught George mouthing "everything" to Fred. He smiled. Yep. It helps when your kid tells you everything. Also helps when you lived it.

---

"Well, this is... Not exactly what we planned..."

"I know, I screwed up," Harry said.

"Well, at least you didn't kill anyone," Sirius offered cheerfully. Harry and Remus both gave him a look. "I mean, more than one person... Dumbledore. You didn't kill Dumbledore."

Harry groaned. "I was this close," he said, holding up his finger a centimeter apart. He groaned again as he leaned forward and put his forehead on the table. "I'm a terrible person."

"No, you're not. Just, maybe let us know if it gets this close." Sirius's fingers were touching.



Harry made another face. “What good’s that going to do?”

“We’ll get to decide if we want to join in or not.” Sirius was far too comfortable with murder as a solution to their problems.

Harry looked to Remus, but the man made no objection to Sirius’s statement. That was... mildly concerning. All of a sudden Harry was less worried about accidentally on purpose murdering the leader of the light and more worried that these two might end up doing it.

“Wait, no killing Dumbledore, remember?”

Sirius waved him off. “Yeah, yeah. No killing. Got it.”

“We’re going to have to deal with him in some way another, and probably sooner rather than later,” Remus pointed out to the twin groans of Sirius and Harry.

“Can it be later?” Harry whined. Yes, whined. Because it had been a long couple of days filled with murder and staging an accidental death and dealing with the person responsible for his eleven year old nearly dying by the hand’s of an evil dark lord, which wasn’t what happened, but Dumbledore didn’t know that so it still counted.

“Okay, yes, maybe. We should start planning now but I guess it wouldn’t hurt to wait and see how things play out a bit, as long as Ivy stays safe.”

“Agreed,” Sirius said.

Harry nodded. Ugh. What had been wrong with his Hermione summoning idea again?

## Chapter 23

*June 16, 1992*

Sirius choked on his coffee when he caught a glimpse of the headline Harry set in front of him. Merlin, that was hot.

“What’s this?” he asked.

“I was hoping you knew,” Harry said. “You didn’t do this, did you?”

“What? Of course not. You think it was on purpose?”

“Their entire house burned down, and no one could find a cause.”

“And you’re upset about this because...”

“Okay, maybe not *upset* per se, but still, what if someone was after Ivy?”

“They weren’t,” Remus said, coming into the kitchen.

“Wait, how do you know?” Harry asked him.

“Well I’m the one who did it, obviously.”

Sirius was about to argue that it wasn’t in fact obvious, but Harry beat him to the punch.

“*You* went and burned down the Dursley’s?”

“Their house, yes.”

Harry and Sirius both stared at Remus.

“They weren’t *there*,” Remus defended.

They kept staring.

“They have excellent insurance.”

“Why would you even know something like that,” Sirius heard Harry mutter.

“Because I did research, obviously.”

Again, not obvious, but it did clear a few things up. Mostly it clarified that this wasn’t a spur of the moment decision.

“Okay sorry, um, *why*?”

“Now Dumbledore can’t try to get Ivy to go back.”

It was a somewhat valid point, Sirius supposed. “Hey, can you go do my house next?”

---

Albus took in the charred remains and sighed. It would appear that Peverell would do anything to keep Ivy under his own control, even attempt to kill her last remaining family. Thankfully they hadn’t been home when the attempted murder took place. Unfortunately, however, the last remaining fragments of the blood wards had been destroyed. They had weakened significantly since Ivy’s disappearance, but the fire had obliterated the remains strands. There was also absolutely no evidence tying Peverell to this crime. There was no residual magic, no eyewitnesses, and, worst of all, Peverell had been spotted in Diagon Alley at the same time the fire was said to have occurred. He certainly covered his tracks well, Albus thought with another resigned sigh.

---

*July 4, 1992*

It had only been a couple weeks since the end of the school year, and already Sirius’s respect for Harry had shot way up. Maybe he had been distracted at Christmas with Remus and trying to get to know Ivy and the fact that it was a rather full house, but now that it was just him and Harry and Ivy... Harry was an amazing parent that had managed to keep this little fireball alive, and that was something worth his utmost respect.

Not that Sirius did anything to discourage Ivy. Of course not. He was a very willing participant in her schemes, it was just that Sirius respected Harry for being the responsible adult in this situation.

“Alright, so what are we doing today?”

His goddaughter beamed up at him. “I’m going to introduce you to Bogrod and Gornuk.”

Those sounded suspiciously like goblin... No. Nope. Not going to happen.

---

Sirius shifted in his seat. Ivy had been chatting to the two goblins for a half hour already, and they had all been smiling the entire time. Sirius couldn’t understand them, since they were speaking the goblin language, not, you know, any languages that Sirius actually knew. It would have been fine if he wasn’t slightly suspicious that they were plotting the demise of some unfortunate soul. Well, as long as it wasn’t him he supposed there were worse things they could be doing...

And what in the name of Merlin was taking Harry so long? Ivy might be content to sit there and talk to her goblin friends all day, but Harry was not nearly so eager to remain in Gringotts. Sirius knew Harry had received a letter saying he needed to come to Gringotts as soon as possible for some business regarding his vaults or something like that, but why was it taking so long?

Sirius sighed. At least the goblins’ attention wasn’t on him.

---

“No.”

Ragnok just smiled at him.

“No,” Harry said again.

Still he received no reply beyond that bloody smile.

“Just... *why*?”

“Well, since the previous claimant is now completely deceased, as the next closest eligible heir, and as the defeater of the previous heir, the title now passes to you.”

Why did this sort of thing always happen to him? Feeling like the subject of every cosmic joke ever, Harry did what any reasonable person would do in this situation. He ran.

---

Sirius looked up at the sudden commotion. Was that... Yes, that was Harry running down the hall followed by several goblins who didn't look mad, so maybe they weren't trying to kill him, but still... Should he go... help? He wasn't sure what to do in this situation. He glanced at Ivy, who looked at Harry, rolled her eyes, and went back to her conversation with her goblin friends. This was proving to be one of the more uncomfortable days of Sirius's recent experience.

---

Harry resigned himself to his fate. Mostly. If he could just get away from the goblins, then maybe...

“Just place this ring on your right hand and sign here,” Ragnok said, the grin on his face causing Harry to immediately comply.

“Congratulations Lord Peverell-Slytherin.”

Harry groaned.

---

“Come on,” Harry said, grabbing Sirius and Ivy who hadn't noticed his sudden reappearance. “We're going.”

Ivy laughed a little and waved a goodbye to her friends who grinned back. Sirius shuddered as he let himself be pulled away.

“So where are we going?” Ivy asked.

“Brazil.”

---

*July 5, 1992*

Remus looked at the letter and accompanying portkey and sighed. Whatever had happened to make Harry and Sirius leave in such a hurry must have been pretty bad. At least they had reassured him they were all alright. No one had died, so that was good. Now Remus just had to go make sure it stayed that way.

---

*July 9, 1992*

“Isn’t this a wonderful place?”

“Yeah.”

“We could just stay here.”

“Agreed.”

Remus rolled his eyes at the two. Eventually they would need to return to England, but he did have to admit it was rather nice here.

“What do you think, Ivy? Want to move here?”

“It’s a long ways from Hogwarts.”

“You could always transfer.”

Now Ivy rolled her eyes. “Not happening.”

Harry pouted and Remus laughed, though he couldn’t blame Harry for trying.

---

*July 24, 1992*

“Must we?”

“Yes.”

Harry sighed.

Remus tried another tactic. “We have to be back in time for Ivy’s birthday.”

“We could celebrate here.”

“You told her she could have a party.”

“We could have a party here...”

“What are you going to do, give all her friends international portkeys?”

Harry looked like he was actually considering doing just that.

“No,” Remus interjected. He needed to get Harry out before he accidentally gave him any other ideas. “Time to go.”

Harry sighed again. Remus wondered when he had become the responsible adult in this situation.

---

*July 31, 1992*

Harry’s eye twitched. Plan a birthday party, they said. Invite a few people over, they said. It will be fun, they said. He wasn’t sure who had said that, but they were wrong. This was terrible and he absolutely did not enjoy having five hundred people at his house. And how was there even enough food for all of them? He gasped. *Sirius*.

---

“You *knew* about this?”

Sirius wasn’t sure what Harry was referring to exactly. “What this?”

“This,” Harry said, gesturing to the party. “All the people.”

“Um, yes? Didn’t you?” Sirius was confused. Harry did remember Ivy inviting people to her birthday, right?

“No! Why are there so many of them?”

“Them as in people?”

Harry nodded, looking a bit pained.

Sirius cleared his throat. “I thought you told Ivy to send out invitations to all her friends?”

Harry looked more pained now. “You mean these are all her friends?”

Sirius glanced around at the faces he did recognize. “Well, I think it’s probably more along the lines of her friends and their families, but yeah.”

Harry’s eye twitched. “I’ll be right back,” he said to Sirius. “Hey Ivy,” he said, calling out to the birthday girl, “remember last week when...”

---

Harry groaned. This was all his own fault, really. When he had told Ivy to tell the printer what she wanted for invitations, he had neglected to stay close enough to hear the *number* of invitations she asked for. Two hundred. She had sent out *two hundred* invitations. How did she even know that many people? It was like she had invited all of Hogwarts and their extended families and... He gasped. That’s probably exactly what she had done. Or at least close. And apparently she hadn’t limited herself to Britain either. That wizard was definitely from Spain, and he was pretty sure that witch was Russian or something. Seriously though. How did she know this many people?

---

“Ah, Peverell. There you are. Been looking for a chance to introduce you to some people.”

Harry groaned internally and automatically straightened, Narcissa’s words from years ago echoing in his mind. “Lord Deverill,” he said, turning and nodding at the speaker.

“I don’t believe you are acquainted with Lord Harrington or Mr. Pyrites, are you?”

Harry shook his head.

“Ah, well allow me the pleasure of introducing you.”

Harry reluctantly followed Deverill over to the men he supposed were the aforementioned wizards he was to be introduced to. One letter. He had sent *one letter* to Deverill, and now he was being subjected to being introduced to the whole of the upper echelons of British wizarding society. And no, he was not being dramatic. He was never dramatic. Quite undramatic as a matter of fact.

The introductions were made, and he managed to speak with the two for a few minutes. Pyrites he couldn’t recall anything particular about, but Ivy had mentioned Thomas Harrington in several letters and Lord Harrington noticeably puffed up at the compliments Harry paid towards his son.

Thirty minutes later he had been introduced to another dozen or so fathers of current Hogwarts students that Ivy seemed to have become friends with. Did she have to be that friendly?

Finally he spotted a familiar face. Well, familiar to him, anyways. He didn’t know why they were here exactly, but he wasn’t about to complain. He made his way quickly over to Andromeda Tonks, thankful that this would be at least one introduction he could look forward to.

---

Harry was so confused. Sure, he knew logically that some things were different between his old world and this one, the fact that his counterpart was a girl being just one of those, but he honestly hadn’t been expecting this...

“And you’re sure you never met him?” Sirius leaned over and whispered.

“No. I’m positive he wasn’t there before. Tonks was an only child.”

Sirius frowned but nodded. “I guess some things were bound to be different.”

Harry nodded, but he was still a little too frazzled to respond further. Yes, it had been nice being introduced to Ted and Andy, but then they had introduced their son and Harry’s brain had sort of shut off.

“And you’re positive...”

“Yes,” Harry whispered a little too loudly, drawing a few looks. “Look, I’m sure I would remember if... what was his name again?”

“Taran.”

“Right. I’m certain I would remember if Taran existed in that world, and I’m sure he didn’t.”

Sirius shrugged.

“Hey, you haven’t seen Tonks here anywhere, have you?”

Sirius gave him a quizzical look but shook his head. “No. Why?”

“Just wondering,” Harry said, a bit too casually. It’s not like he wanted to introduce her and Remus or anything. Of course not. But it wouldn’t be so bad if they met a little earlier, right?

“Hey, do you think she still goes by Tonks here?”

“No idea. Might be a bit more confusing what with them having been at Hogwarts at the same time.”

“Yeah, but she always hated her name.”

“Maybe she goes by Dora. That’s what I called her when she was little.”

“How’d Taran end up with such a…”

“Normal name?” Sirius finished for him.

“Yeah.”

Sirius laughed. “His full name is Taranis Theodore Tonks.”

Harry winced.

“Yep. Initials have got to be killer.”

“Yeah. Andy?”

“Mhmm,” Sirius said, taking another sip of whatever and-it-had-better-not-have-alcohol-this-is-a-kid’s-birthday-party-Sirius drink he had in his hand.

Just then a few other adults came over and Harry groaned softly.

“Have fun,” Sirius said, chuckling softly as he made his escape.

Harry had to resort to cursing internally since he didn’t want to offend the little old ladies standing just over there. Suffering through yet another round of introductions he idly wondered what it would take to set Ivy, Remus, the twins, and maybe a goblin or two on Sirius.

---

“Hey Henry, can you come play a quidditch game with us?”

Ivy was the best person on the planet and nothing she did would ever faze him again.



He made his excuses to the people whose names he had already forgotten and made his way with a much lighter step towards Ivy. Yes, he would absolutely indulge his daughter's birthday wish. All in the attempt to be a wonderful parent, you understand. Getting out of talking to anyone else was just an added benefit.

And if Sirius didn't happen to hear about it, and accidentally got left with entertaining a few older witches, or better, a few younger, very single witches, well, it wasn't Harry's fault he had left Harry alone.

---

*August 1, 1992*

Harry looked at the stack of letters with blatant horror.

"What's all this?" Sirius asked, gesturing to the pile.

Remus set down his newspaper. "It's all the society wives inviting Harry over to meet their daughters," he said, as if this weren't the worst moment of Harry's life. Adult life, he amended to himself, even if this was still pretty close to the top. "Oh, and did you two see Ivy's birthday party made it into the Daily Prophet?"

Harry let out a sound that was somewhere in between a groan and a sob.

"What, like dinner invites or something?" Sirius said, sorting through the top few letters.

"Yep," Remus said, almost as if he were amused by the entire situation. "Oh, would you look at that. You've both made it into the list of top ten eligible bachelors."

Sirius snorted. "Yeah, sure glad Harry here beat me out for the top spot."

Remus hummed and turned back to his paper.

"Wait, I'm number two, right?"

Remus didn't respond.

"Remus," Sirius pleaded. "Come on, tell me I'm number two, right? I can't possibly be number one. Right? Please tell me I'm right."

"Oh don't worry Padfoot," Remus said with a snort. "You're not number one."

Sirius gasped and went to grab the paper out of Remus's hands, but was thwarted by Remus jerking it out of reach just in time.

"Come on Moony," Sirius very nearly whined.

---

*"Seventh. I was ranked seventh."*

Harry had heard Sirius the first thirty seven times. Thirty nine now actually.

“How did I end up *seventh*?”

Forty.

Harry sighed. “Yes, poor you. Now can we get back to the actual problem here?” He gestured to the letters of doom piled on the table.

“Oh sure, back to all your *admirers*,” Sirius said with a touch of bitterness.

“I can give them to you if you want,” Harry said hopefully.

“No. Don’t you remember? They don’t want *me*. I only came in *seventh*.”

Harry groaned as Remus chuckled. These two had no sympathy.

“Why do you even care? You’re already dating Sabrina.”

“That’s not the bloody *point*. Just become I’m dating the most beautiful woman in existence doesn’t mean they have to go printing sh...”

“Hey, Fred and George just wrote me asking if we could come to dinner tomorrow,” Ivy said with perfect timing that caused Harry to grin and Sirius to redden at being almost caught.

“Can we...”

“YES!” Harry shouted much louder than was necessary. “Yes,” he said, his voice regaining a normal volume. “That would be great. Tell them we’d love to come.”

Ivy smiled and skipped off happily to reply to her friends or cause chaos. Possibly one and the same at this point.

“There, problem solved,” Harry said triumphantly.

“How so?” Why did Remus have to be so skeptical? Couldn’t he just going Harry in welcoming the fact that he now had an excuse to get out of all these dinner invitations?

“Now I can just say no to all of these. Prior engagement and all that.”

“You know it’d be more effective if you had an actual engagement.”

“Shut up, Sirius.”

Remus gave them both the you’ll-get-there-eventually-if-you-try-hard-enough look. “You have tomorrow covered, yes. But what about the day after that?”

Harry’s eye twitched. A common occurrence in this house really.

“Hey Ivy,” he yelled out suddenly, running off to where he thought she might have gone.

“How are your acting skills? Do you think you could fake being really sick for...”

---

*August 2, 1992*

“Hello, Mrs. Weasley. Thank you so much for inviting us over.”

Molly had been half expecting a little girl and a haughty Lord, not a little girl and three men, two of which were dressed in muggle... what were those blue trousers called again?

She barely caught herself before she started gaping, and instead managed to usher them all inside. Arthur had taken the boys to the birthday party the other day, since Ginny hadn't been feeling well and had had to stay home. Poor girl. She had so been looking forward to it too. That was part of the reason she had agreed to letting Fred and George invite Ivy and her guardian over. Well, that and the fact that four of her children had spent Christmas with the man and it was high time she was properly introduced to the person they all kept raving about. Since she hadn't been able to meet him at the birthday party, this seemed the next best way.

“Remus!” came a double shout from the top of the stairs.

“Oh sure, I see who's really loved,” the one she recognized as Sirius Black said, rolling his eyes.

Before she could raise a voice in protest towards the twins the two came barreling past her and nearly ran the poor man over, though he didn't seem fazed in the slightest.

“I apologize, Lord Peverell, Lord Black, and Mr...”

“Lupin,” the man currently being tackled on the ground called out.

The other two men made a face. “What lies did you two tell your mother?”

Oh dear.

“Nothing. Just your names,” Fred said cheekily.

Lord Black stuck out his tongue childishly at Fred, who responded in kind. Then he turned back to Molly and with a roguish smile said, “please, call me Sirius, Mrs. Weasley.” He pressed a kiss to the back of the hand she hadn't realized he was holding.

She blushed and turned to Lord Peverell. “I'm Henry,” he said, shaking her hand that had dropped somewhat reluctantly. “But please, call me Harry.”

The little girl who could only be Ivy Potter snorted and Lord Pever... *Harry*, rolled his eyes and nudged her.

“Oh right,” she said. “Hi, Mrs. Weasley. I'm Ivy. It's nice to meet you, and thank you for having us over. Could you tell me where Percy is please?”

“Oh I believe he's upstairs in his room, dear. And please, call me Molly.”

Ivy gave a smile that was likely going to break a few hearts in coming years and bounded up the stairs at a pace that could almost beat the boys.

Molly turned back to her company. "Well the food is almost ready. Let me just get some of the kids to help finish up and then..." She turned to the twins but they had vanished out of sight. She sighed.

"I would be happy to help, if you'll allow me," Harry said politely.

"Oh, of course not. Why don't you just have a seat there and I'll go..."

"Really, it'd be no trouble at all."

"Well if you're sure..."

"I'd love to! Although, do not under any circumstances allow Remus in your kitchen."

"Hey!"

"It's true," Sirius said, grinning.

"What, like you're any better," Remus retorted.

"Hey, at least I'm allowed in the kitchen."

"But not encouraged," Harry said, pushing the other two men towards the sofa. He held out his arm to Molly. "Shall we?"

---

"Hi Percy!"

Charlie pulled his head out of the closet at the unfamiliar voice.

"You're not Percy," the girl said, frowning at it.

He chuckled. "No, I'm not. I'm Charlie."

Her eyes lit up. "You're the one who works with dragons?"

---

Percy trudged into his room and was met with a scene from his nightmares. The one from May 7th, if he remembered correctly. There, seated on his bed, was his older brother Charlie and none other than Ivy Potter. Together. Talking about dragons. Merlin, there were two of them.

Panicking, he latched onto the first topic he could think of to distract them. "Hey Ivy, what's that?" he asked, pointing to the book she held in her hand.

She turned to him and held it up. "Oh, this is for you. I thought you might like to read it. It looked like some of the books you were reading before school got out."

“Um, thank you. What is... oh, *Principles of Transfiguration in Pitched Battle*...” his voice trailed off at the end. “Thanks, Ivy,” he managed to get out.

“You’re welcome,” she said all too cheerfully. “Oh, I think it’s time for dinner too.” And then she walked out of the room as if she hadn’t just handed him a book that wasn’t even in the Hogwarts Library, which was saying something.

Charlie picked the book out of his hand. “Interesting reading choice there, Perce,” he said with a raised eyebrow.

Percy groaned and fell onto the bed. He needed to contact Thomas as soon as possible since they had obviously not made enough contingency plans for the summer holidays.

---

“Hi, you’re Ginny, right?”

Ginny nodded. *Ivy Potter* was talking to *her*. This was the best day ever.

“Nice to meet you. Hey, can I have your brother Charlie?”

Ginny nodded again, a little unsure why she was asking such a strange question.

“Great! Thanks.”

Ginny stared at the Girl-Who-Lived and slowly followed her towards the dining room.

---

In the few minutes he had spent talking to Lord Peverell, or Harry, as he preferred to be called by everyone except Ivy it seemed, Charlie had come to understand so much better the reasons he had received the letter a few months prior.

Essentially, it all came down to the fact that Ivy was a creature enthusiast, much like himself, except her interest was not so focused in its scope, and her guardian apparently had a nearly full-time job ensuring that his house did not become the next dangerous creature sanctuary. Charlie did volunteer his services should that ever happen, and the look of panic that crossed Harry’s face had sent Sirius Black into a laughing fit that had him grasping at his sides.

And apparently it wasn’t just creatures she tried to adopt. Somehow the twins had gotten into an argument with her about Charlie himself, with Ivy trying to claim him as *her* brother now. The twins volunteered Percy as a substitute, then Bill, then Ginny, but Ivy claimed she didn’t even *know* Bill, and had only just met Ginny, so how could that possibly work (ignoring the fact that she had only just met Charlie as well), plus she was a girl and couldn’t possibly be Ivy’s *brother*, and Percy was already her brother anyway so that didn’t count. Harry occasionally interjected a reminder that she couldn’t adopt other people’s children, especially when said children were adults and lived outside the country, but she didn’t seem to care about that at all. Everyone else just watched the scene unfold bemusedly.

---

Ivy was excited. Not only had she met her new brother and given Percy a book she was sure he would love, but she had successfully arranged for the Weasleys to go school shopping with them. Now she just needed to write Draco and Neville and let them know what day they were all going so they could meet up. It'd be so much fun!

And Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were so nice. She liked them a lot, and Mrs. Weasley made *really* good food. Like, maybe even better than Henry. She hadn't even known that was *possible*. All in all, an excellent day.

## Chapter 24

*August 12, 1992*

“Did you get your letter today too?”

“Mmhmm.”

“Did you see all those books by Lockhart?”

“Yeah. Henry says I don’t need to get those though.”

“Why not?” Draco was worried. Ivy wasn’t dropping out of that class or anything, was she?

“He said they’re just stories and won’t help me learn anything.”

“Wait, really?”

“Yeah. I can share my other books with you if you want.”

“Well what did you get then?”

“Oh, I haven’t gotten anything yet. We’re going next week. But Henry had a couple books in the library that he said I could take with me to learn the second year spells.”

“But you already know most of them.”

“Only the good ones.”

“True. I suppose you’ll have to learn the boring ones still though.”

Ivy sighed. “I suppose so.”

---

Narcissa watched the two children talking, not at all planning out their future wedding. But if that did happen she would be well prepared. Preparation was key, after all.

“Ivy dear,” she eventually said, interrupting the children who had changed topics and were now discussing the plants they most wanted to ask the Longbottom boy about, “could I speak with you for a moment? Your uncle had something he asked me to discuss with you.”

“Oh, sure Lady Malfoy.”

“Call me Narcissa, dear.”

---

Harry bounced his leg a little as he waited for Narcissa to finish talking with Ivy. Did it really have to take so long? He had thought it’d be five, maybe ten minutes tops, but they had been

in there for over an hour. Surely there wasn't *that* much that Ivy needed to know, was there? Of course, he didn't have that much experience with "The Talk." He had picked up things from his roommates, and had had one very awkward conversation with Neville that need not ever be repeated or thought about for the rest of time, but that had pretty much been it. Still, he felt he understood things well enough. So why was it taking so long?

Finally the two emerged. Ivy was smiling and Narcissa was smirking (elegantly, of course, since she was very likely incapable of doing anything otherwise).

"So, how did it go?" Harry asked with slight trepidation.

"It was brilliant! Narcissa showed me all kinds of spells..."

Oh no. No, no, nonononono. Abort. Grab the time turner... Go find a time turner...

"...to use if a boy annoys me."

Oh. That was better.

"What kind of spells, sweetheart?" Sirius asked.

Ivy tilted her head. "Well, I can't remember what they all do exactly. By the way, what does castration mean?"

Harry choked on air and discreetly crossed his legs, noticing Sirius and Lucius doing the same.

He was vaguely aware of Narcissa asking if they wanted her to explain anything else, but thankfully Sirius was able to squeak out a "that's fine," making it not entirely necessary for Harry to answer as well.

He supposed that was one way to go about it.

---

*August 19, 1992*

"You managed to pick the *one day*..."

"Well it's not like I remember the exact dates of everything I ever did in my life."

It was unfortunate, though, that Harry hadn't remembered this particular date. Somewhere in the vast multiverse there someone was laughing their head off. Why? Because out of all the days he they could have possibly brought Ivy school shopping, it had to be the day of the book signing. Lockhart. The fight. The diary, although Harry knew that wouldn't be an issue now. Hmm. How how Lucius taken the discovery of the missing diary, he wondered...

Still, he would be paying very close attention. Just because the diary wasn't on hand didn't mean Malfoy wouldn't try slipping something else to Ginny.



Oh, and there they went. Arthur and Lucius, fighting in the middle of the bookstore. He probably ought to do something about that. Oops. Look like someone else had already broken it up. Looks like he didn't need to get involved after all. Shame.

In his determination to keep a close eye on the Malfoy-Weasley interactions, he had somehow lost track of Ivy. He didn't actually realize this until he heard her name called out loudly by none other than Gilderoy Lockhart. Harry sighed. He had really hoped to avoid all this, even when he had realized what day it was.

He gradually made his way over to where the book signing was taking place, and just as he was almost there something caught his eye. He saw Lockhart's hand resting on Ivy's shoulder, and noticed how it lingered just a little too long. He saw him glance down at Ivy with a look in his eye that made Harry instantly sick. He saw red, and pushed his way through to Ivy, ignoring both the whispers and the exclamations as he pulled her quickly away. He nearly ran into Sirius who gave him a concerned look, but Harry just shook his head, silently promising Sirius that he would explain later. Sirius obviously understood, because he just nodded and helped them to a deserted corner.

"Is everything okay?" Ivy whispered frantically.

"I'm so sorry, Ives. I lost track of you for just a moment and I..."

"I'm okay. But what's going on?"

"Sorry sweetie." Ivy stiffened slightly. "I'll explain later. Just promise me you'll stick right by Sirius or I for now, okay?"

Ivy nodded, though she still looked concerned. Harry couldn't do anything more to comfort her at the moment. Sirius, likely sensing Harry's distress, offered to take Ivy to go finish getting her books. Harry nodded thankfully at Sirius.

What on earth was going on? Was he just imagining things? It certainly didn't feel like he was. And if he had seen what he was pretty sure he had seen, did that mean it had been the same in his world? Harry felt sick all over again at the thought.

His reaction to Ivy standing by Lockhart had drawn a great deal of attention, but he was in no mood to pay it any heed. He glared at a few people who looked like they were about to approach him, and thankfully no one appeared brave enough to confront the obviously upset Lord Peverell. He supposed that the name was good for something sometimes after all.

Seeing the Weasleys exiting the store, he made a snap decision.

"Percy," he said, chasing after the bunch, "could I talk to you for a second?"

The teenager looked surprised but agreed. Harry led them off to a small alcove and put up several privacy charms, ignoring the startled look on Percy's face.

"Is everything alright?"

“No. I mean, yes. I... I don’t know. Look, I just wanted to ask you to look out for your sister this year. And Ivy, if you could. Actually, all the girls. All the younger years in general. Just, keep an eye on them. And whatever happens, don’t let *anyone* in a detention with Lockhart.”

Harry said the last part with such vehemence that Percy took a small step back.

“Is there something wrong with him?”

Harry sighed. “I don’t know for sure. It was just that while we were in there, the look he gave Ivy... Maybe it’s nothing, but I really don’t want to risk it.”

“You think he’s a...”

Harry nodded grimly and Percy’s face went pale.

“I’ll contact Professor Snape as Ivy’s head of house and share my concerns, but if you could keep a close eye on things, maybe enlist the help of some others.”

Percy nodded vigorously. “Of course. But wouldn’t someone know? I mean, if he is like that, wouldn’t Dumbledore or someone know that?”

Harry shook his head. “People are really good at hiding what they want hidden. Add to that a talent for memory charms and...”

“What?”

Harry winced, not having intended on letting that part slip. “I believe he may not have been... entirely truthful in the tales of his exploits. All it takes is a well-placed memory charm to take credit for something someone else did. And if you can obliviate someone of their memories defeating a troll or vampire or whatever else...”

“You could obliviate other memories easily,” Percy finished, eyes going wide.

Harry nodded, his face hardened. “I’ll do my best to sort it out, but please just keep an eye on things,” he pleaded.

“Of course I will, you have my word.”

“Thanks Percy. You’re a good man.” Harry noticed the way Percy stood up a little straighter at that and allowed a small smile to cross his face. He knew Percy would do everything in his power to keep Ivy, Ginny, and the other students safe. Now he just needed to make sure he did the same.

---

Sirius slammed his fist on the table. “You can’t seriously be considering letting him in the same building as her.”

“What do you want me to do? I have no proof and he’s already been hired!”

“Then deal with him before the school year starts.”

“I can’t kill everyone that might possibly pose a threat to Ivy. I’ll write Snape, and talk to Lucius. He’s on the Board of Governors, so he might have some ability to change things.”

“That will take far too long and you know it,” Sirius yelled, shoving his finger at Harry. “Why can’t you just deal with it now?”

“You know why! You know damn well why,” he cried.

The anger seemed to dissipate out of Sirius and he collapsed on the sofa. “What do we do?” He asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

Harry looked at Remus, but the latter was still staring at the ground, jaw clenched and fingers twitching just slightly. Harry sighed. “I don’t know. I don’t know what to do.”

The three men sat in silence for several minutes before Remus abruptly raised his head.

“What happened in your world?”

“What?”

“What happened in your world,” Remus repeated. “With Lockhart. Were there ever any signs of...” He waved his hand. “This?”

Harry shook his head. “No. I... He was a terrible teacher,” Harry said with a dry huff. “But I don’t remember him ever...” Except that was the thing, wasn’t it. He *didn’t* remember. Those long detentions that seemed to just fly by, leaving him wondering where the time had gone...

Harry didn’t even make it out of the room before he lost the contents of his stomach.

---

*August 25, 1992*

Severus dropped his head into his hands. He was really regretting not pressing Lucius for an introduction with Lord Peverell. Sure, Lucius, and even Narcissa, had supplied him with some useful information, but for some reason he had been unable to bring himself to attempt to meet the man. To be completely honest with himself, which wasn’t one of his preferred activities, everything he knew about the man set him on edge, the most recent discovery most especially.

Oh yes, he knew that Lord Peverell was also Lord Slytherin. Severus could understand why the man hadn’t advertised that fact, given both his notorious reluctance to present himself in public and the negative connotation the title held among many, but Severus wasn’t sure if he was simply biding his time or if Peverell simply sought anonymity from the gossips that plagued society.

Subtle inquiries had revealed that neither Lucius nor Albus were aware of this second title, which made Severus suspect that it might be a more recent acquisition. One that coincided uncomfortably with the disappearance of the Dark Lord’s mark. Severus had witnessed too much in his lifetime to be a believer in coincidences, and even if he were not prone to the same conspiracy theory tendencies as the headmaster, he couldn’t help but feel that there was

some connection between the disappearance of the dark mark and Peverell, and he was nearly positive it went beyond Ivy Potter's supposed confrontation with the Dark Lord, a story only Albus seemed inclined to recite.

Even Potter herself had not confirmed the entire story, only saying that Quirrell was possessed and was seeking the stone. At least that left Severus slightly more at ease at the thought that he might have a few less murder attempts to stop this year, though Severus wasn't to get his hopes up just yet.

This entire situation was a mess, and three people seemed to be at the center of it all. And surprisingly, the Dark Lord was not one of them, despite Albus's assertions.

No, the three people this entire mysterious mess seemed to center on was Ivy Potter, Lord Peverell, and Albus Dumbledore. One of them was barely twelve, one of them was powerful, far past his prime, and prone to conspiracy theories, and the other was still a mystery with disturbing similarities to the Dark Lord.

Severus groaned. Albus's recent probes for information and not-entirely-subtle inquiries made a bit more sense now. Of course Albus had seen the similarities, even if he was likely still unaware of the Lord Slytherin connection. The Parselmouth connection was obvious, but there were other similarities that Severus could only guess Albus had picked up on. Both had seemed to appear out of nowhere, both were reported to be extremely powerful, both seemed to be well informed of everything that was going on... But there were differences too that were too great to ignore. Peverell had not involved himself directly in politics up to this point, nor had he done anything to ingratiate himself to anyone who was an active participant. In fact, his only direct dealing with Wizarding society seemed to have come at his involvement with Black's release from Azkaban. He had held a massive event at his house that had been the topic of everyone's gossip ever since, but that appeared to be a singular event that, if Narcissa was to be believed, and she usually was, hadn't actually been planned by Peverell himself. How you accidentally end up with five hundred people at your house was beyond Severus's comprehension, but then again he had had the entire last school year to get to know Ivy Potter so perhaps the idea wasn't so out there after all.

And even if he did seem to know everything that was going on at any given time...

With the exception of Black's release, Severus was only aware of Peverell ever alerting others to what was taking place. And not just anyone, either. No, he seemed to know exactly who to contact to resolve any particular issue he found.

And apparently he thought Severus was the one to contact with issues regarding his... whatever Potter was to him. She called him her uncle, and he had apparently referred to her as his daughter, so obviously that meant it was slightly complicated and not worth Severus contemplating longer than absolutely necessary right now.

And so Severus was brought back to the original reason he had dropped his head into his hands and begun his internal monologue.

Lord Peverell apparently thought, either due to his status as Potter's head of house or perhaps for some as of yet unknown reason, that Severus was the person to contact to express his...

concerns. That seemed a bit of an understatement for what Peverell had written, but there it was.

Peverell had concerns, and now *Severus* had concerns, and now there was only a week until students arrived and he would be faced with the subject of said concerns.

Why was it always the defense professor? Severus had never understood why Albus hadn't ever bothered to get rid of the purported curse on the position. Yes, it *technically* hadn't ever been confirmed that there was indeed a curse, but only an idiot would think it just a coincidence that all the defense professors over the last several decades had only ever managed to last a single year.

Severus grimaced. No wonder Albus had resorted to hiring this... honestly, anything Severus could say at the moment was bound to be far too complimentary towards the newest trier of fate, Peverell's suspicions aside. And if Peverell's suspicions turned out to be accurate, which Severus had an uncomfortable feeling in the region of his internal organs that he might be, then that was all the more reason to think ill of the man.

Of course, Quirrell had ended up dead, so maybe there was still hope. Now if could just happen sooner, rather than wait until the end of the year...

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*September 1, 1992*

Ivy sat alone in her compartment. She felt a little bad for putting up several wards and spells she wasn't technically supposed to know yet, but she needed some time to think.

Henry was acting weird, and she didn't like it. Something was up, as had been obvious ever since the bookshop, but today the weirdness had been taken to a whole new level. Sure, it was cool that he told her the entrance to the chamber of secrets and the fact that there was a giant basilisk living there, but it wasn't like Henry to say stuff like that. Usually he was all like, "no bringing a dragon home, Ivy," or "no you can't ride a thunderbird to Mexico," or "no I'm not going to adopt a occamy, no matter how cute it is."

So it wasn't that she was complaining at the prospect of meeting a basilisk or anything, because she wasn't, it was just that for Henry to be the one to suggest it seemed a little out of character for him.

He had also wanted her not to be alone with the new defense professor, and if she was given any detentions she was to go to her head of house right away. Ivy wondered what a... what was it Remus had called him again? Oh, a pedophile. That's right. What one of those was doing as a teacher. Still, Henry had promised he would take of it, so she wasn't all that worried. And his request had seemed reasonable enough, but that's when Harry had done the whole "by the way there's a huge basilisk under the school in the chamber of secrets and the entrance in the girls bathroom the Myrtle lives in and you go through the sink and make sure you remember where it's at, alright? Just in case" thing.

Just in case of what? Ivy wasn't sure. Maybe in case she got bored or something? It would certainly be fun to have another snake to talk to. Tiger would probably enjoy it too.

---

While Ivy was busy contemplating life in the relative peace and quiet that she had felt befitted the situation, other passengers on the train who she had forgotten to inform of her whereabouts were experiencing varying degrees of panic.

Oliver was worried because he had wanted to get her confirmation that she would be doing the quidditch team before they got to Hogwarts, just so she wouldn't forget.

Marcus had a similar worry, but was slightly more concerned because it was *his* team she would be playing for.

Percy was worried because last time he had left her unsupervised on a train she had somehow managed to nearly land a fifth year in the hospital.

Thomas was worried because he hadn't gotten a chance to ask her about the books she had with her, and, more importantly, if he could borrow the more... interesting ones. For an indefinite amount of time. Perhaps until she graduated.

Fred and George were worried because they thought she might have had an incredible idea that she was enacting on her own, without them, which of course she would never do, but still...

Draco was worried because he thought she might have finally been stolen away completely by the Gryffindors.

Neville was worried because he wasn't sure if Ivy was upset he hadn't been able to go to her birthday party.

Hermione was upset because she had wanted to try a couple spells before they reached Hogwarts and no one else was willing to be a guinea pig for some reason.

Ron was worried because Percy was worried and that meant somehow Percy felt the need to sit by him and ask him questions about school. School hadn't even started, so Ron felt this was entirely unnecessary.

Ginny was worried because she really wanted to be friends with Ivy but now wasn't sure if Ivy would want to be her friend after all.

Pansy was upset because no one else was interested in hearing about her summer, and she had already told Draco, leaving Ivy as the best person left to tell.

The remaining second year Slytherins weren't worried, mostly because they were divided into a few different compartments and they all assumed Ivy was in one of the others.

Luna Lovegood wasn't worried either, but she mostly didn't understand why no one had just gone into Ivy Potter's compartment if they were all so worried about her. Maybe they just hadn't looked hard enough.

---

Ivy started at the sound of someone knocking on the compartment door. Maybe she had done one of the spells wrong? It was two hours in to the train ride to Hogwarts and no one had come so far. She had honestly meant to go find her friends by now, but she had gotten distracted talking to Tiger and making a list of books she thought Thomas would like that were in the Hogwarts library. It seemed only fair since he was always recommending new books to her. Of course he had been there a lot longer so he might have already read some of them, but a few of them Ivy was fairly certain no one had checked out for at least a decade or two so those were a fair bet.

Ivy got up and opened the compartment door.

“Hello, Ivy Potter,” the girl standing in front of her said, smiling. “People are worrying about you, you know.”

“Oh, sorry, I got distracted.”

“Oh that’s alright. I don’t mind.”

“Well would you like to come in then?”

The girl came in and introduced herself as Luna Lovegood.

“That’s a very pretty name,” Ivy said.

“Thank you. My parents gave it to me,” she said matter-of-factly.

Ivy grinned. “And I guess you already figured out my name. So is this your first year? I don’t remember seeing you before.”

“Yes. I’m going to be in Ravenclaw.”

“Are you sure? I wanted to be in Hufflepuff but the hat wouldn’t let me.” Ivy gasped and held her hand up to her mouth. “Oops. I forgot I’m not supposed to tell people about the hat.”

“Oh it’s alright. I already knew.”

Ivy breathed a sigh of relief. “So, how do you know you’ll be in Ravenclaw?”

“That’s the house that I fit best in,” Luna replied.

“Hmm. Well if not you could always come to Slytherin with me.”

“That’s nice of you. I think that might make your uncle’s eye twitch though.”

Ivy inhaled sharply in surprise. “You know Uncle Henry?”

“We met,” Luna said. “He took me for ice cream on my birthday.”

“And he didn’t even tell me,” Ivy said, scowling. “We could have been friends for... When is your birthday?”

“February 13th.”

“We could have been friends for *months* already.”

“We can be friends now, if you like.”

Ivy beamed. “Yes, please.”

Luna smiled widely. “I was so looking forward to having a friend.”

“Perfect. I have a good feeling about this.”

---

“Hi everyone, this is my new friend Luna.”

Neville looked up in relief at Ivy and her new friend. Finally. One other person that wasn't a Slytherin. Or at least, not yet. Not that he had anything against Slytherins, but they were a little more on the intense side at times. At first it had just been Millie, which was fine, but then Nott had come in and made himself at home, and then Draco had come looking for Ivy but declared himself bored and had joined as well. Pansy had come a bit later, looking for Lavender and Parvati, but had decided she would find them later. Finally the two Slytherins whose names Neville could never put to the right face joined in, and he found himself vastly outnumbered in what was once more or less his compartment. Again, not that it was a *problem*, but that didn't mean he minded seeing Ivy and a non-Slytherin. Plus, Ivy had been declared an honorary Hufflepuff, so she kind of counted too.

Luna turned out to be an interesting girl. He had no idea what she was talking about, but she was nice and said she hoped they could be friends too.

Neville didn't think he'd mind that all that much.

---

Thomas exhaled loudly as he slumped in his seat. The last forty minutes or so had been particularly trying and he hadn't even gotten around to asking her about the books. And did his fellow students really have to be that dense sometimes? Was their memory really that short? Did they really not remember what happened *last time* someone insulted one of Ivy's friends on the train?

At least Corvin seemed to remember, so that was something at least. He hadn't made a peep. No, today's problem idiots were a couple of girls who had been flirting with the sixth year Slytherins boys before Ivy made her appearance, odd little first year in tow.

The girls obviously hadn't appreciated being interrupted by the younger students, and upon learning Lovegood's name had begun making some not so subtle jibes and insults. Apparently her father ran the um... *alternative* newspaper, and they somehow took offense to that. Well, he supposed there was a reason they weren't in Slytherin then.

Ivy had immediately gone on the defensive, and seeing Tiger poke his head out Thomas had decided it was an excellent time to intervene. He had (loudly) offered to take the two girls



around to go meet up with some more people but had ended up escorting them through practically the entire train, stopping at any compartment that had some of Ivy's friends in it (which if she kept this up was liable to get her elected Minister by default), so that she could introduce Luna Lovegood. Thomas was not at all ignorant of the sneers and scowls many students sent Lovegood's way, but to his relief none of the second years appeared to be bothered by her presence at all. The last thing he needed in his life was a literal war starting amongst the second years, because if some of them had insulted Ivy's friend there would likely be bloodshed by the end. Or by tonight, to be completely honest.

At least with the other students they were unlikely to be in as close contact with either girl on a regular basis, which meant less opportunity to potentially initiate a disaster.

Finally he had seen Ivy and Lovegood to a compartment where it appeared they were content to stay, and he had made his way back to his own compartment relieved that he had prevented any serious injury from occurring.

Upon his arrival he had immediately slumped into his seat, which is where he remained at the moment.

"Hey, uh, is everything alright then?"

Thomas glanced up at Corvin, who looked a little worried. Probably wondering if anyone had suffered like he had last school year. "Yeah, everything's fine. Disaster averted."

Corvin breathed out a sigh of relief. "Good. That's good. Sorry about them, I didn't know they'd be so..."

"Rude?"

Corvin winced. "Yeah."

Thomas sighed. "It wasn't just them. A lot of the other students gave the kid looks as we walked by."

Corvin swore under his breath.

"Yeah. We're going to have a problem."

"Meeting time?"

Thomas nodded. "I'll find Marcus."

"I'll find Kenneth."

"I'll... stay right here," Eric said. Thomas had honestly forgotten he was even there.

---

"Sorry, you want me to *what*?"

"Watch out for Luna Lovegood."

“Okay... And we’re doing this because...”

“Because she’s Ivy’s friend and some people are idiots.”

Kenneth ahh’d and nodded in understanding. “Got it. So Slytherin is going to go out its way to be super nice to a first year who probably isn’t even going to be in our house, because a *second* year is her friend and may destroy anyone who acts otherwise?”

All the other sixth year boys nodded.

“Alright then. Glad to have cleared that up. I take it we’re to spread the word?”

Thomas nodded alone this time. “Yeah, might be good to do it sooner than later.”

“I’ll take the prefects,” Kenneth said, standing.

“And the first years we get,” Thomas added.

Kenneth rolled his eyes. “And the first years. Anything else?”

Thomas shook his head.

Kenneth rolled his eyes one more time and left.

“I’ve got the fourth and fifth years covered. Don’t worry about them,” Marcus said with a smirk. Thomas didn’t want to know.

“Alright, second years should all be fine already, so we’ve just got third years and seventh.”

“And the girls,” Eric piped up. “I’ll go do that.”

Thomas rolled his eyes. For being a sixth year Eric sure was acting like he had just discovered girls or something.

“I’d better go make sure he doesn’t...”

“Put his foot in his mouth?”

Corvin nodded. “Yeah. Or on someone’s face.”

Thomas watched Corvin follow Eric out feeling slightly bewildered. Ultimately, he decided that he once again really did not want to know.

---

“Hey Ivy, can we borrow Tiger?”

Ginny’s eyes grew wide at the sight of the snake emerging from Ivy’s robes. She held her breath as the two Slytherin girls took the snake happily and only let it out when the compartment door was firmly shut again.

“Ivy, I need to talk to you about something.”

She started. She hadn't noticed the boy coming in. Ivy nodded and followed him out of the compartment, leaving Ginny alone with Luna.

"I think we'll all be great friends," Luna said.

Ginny smiled. She hoped so.

---

"Okay what do you need to talk to me about?"

"Sirius."

Ivy quirked her eyebrow at Blaise. "Why?"

"He's not a... you know..."

Ivy just stared at him.

Blaise sighed. "He's not like, a bad person, is he?"

Ivy frowned. "Of course not. Haven't you met him?"

"Yeah, but Mum's dating him and I think things are kind of serious." Ivy burst out laughing and Blaise groaned. "I didn't mean it like that."

"Yeah, I think he's great. Do you not like him or something?"

"Oh no, I do. I like him a lot. I was just worried..."

"That he might go the way of the other ones?"

Blaise winced and nodded. Ivy knew he didn't like talking about his stepfathers, but she also knew that they weren't exactly the best people in the world. And that his mum had known that and had, er, taken care of it.

"Well, I think he's great. And he seems to really like your mum. Remember when we all came over and they didn't hear us for ten minutes?"

Blaise grinned. "Pretty sure it was at *least* fifteen."

Ivy rolled her eyes. "You could practically *see* the hearts coming out of their eyes."

"So gross," Blaise said, scrunching his nose.

Ivy mimicked the expression. "Agreed. Now I just need to find someone for Henry to make heart eyes at."

"You still working on that?"

"Yes," Ivy sighed. "But I haven't found *anyone*."

Blaise nodded gravely. "Maybe I can help you."

"Thanks!" Ivy said, grinning. She started to walk off. "Hey, you know, if Sirius and your mum get married, then you can be my brother too!" She said as she headed down the train.

Blaise grinned. He'd always wanted a... well he'd wanted a brother, but he supposed a sister would do, and Ivy was pretty great. Then his face fell. "Wait, what do you mean too?"

Ivy didn't answer him. He started to run after her.

"Who else is your brother? I thought you were an only child?"

---

Oliver barely caught Ivy as she came barreling past him, some other boy chasing after her and yelling about being an only child. Perfect. Just who he wanted to see.

Twenty minutes later he was beginning to sweat nervously. She couldn't be serious, could she? Was it time to call in the reinforcements? He knew the exact compartments of every member of his team, and he could go find Marcus and have him join in. That might be more effective. But really, was she seriously contemplating not playing?

She stared him down for a minute and then burst out laughing.

"I'm just kidding. I'll play if you guys really want me too."

Oliver grinned.

---

"Hey! Slytherin's got a new seeker!"

Percy stared at Oliver Wood practically skipping down the hallway and shouting out the news with far too much enthusiasm to be considered healthy. It had to be Ivy. There was no other reason why Oliver would be so excited about that.

And hey, that meant that someone at least had their eye on her. All was well.

Percy heard a crash from the compartment at the end and reevaluated his statement.

---

"What's going on in here?"

Percy looked at the two little second year girls and the terrified third year boys. Something had obviously happened, but the Slytherins seemed unwilling to divulge anything. The girls were the picture of innocence, but Percy had siblings so was not fooled for a moment.

A year ago he would have pressed the matter and demanded that someone explain to him exactly what was going on so he, as a prefect, could handle it. That was a year ago. Now, he made sure there was no blood, asked one last time if everything was alright, and left, figuring that nobody seemed seriously injured and if they were there were other prefects who could handle it.

After all, Oliver had presumably left Ivy, so he really ought to go check. Just to be safe.

---

“And if you *ever* say something like that to Tracey again I’ll let Tiger lick your *eyeballs* instead of your *face*. Got it, *Linus Claridge*?”

The boy in question nodded vigorously and Daphne straightened up. She and Tracey both stalked out, waiting until the door was stalled shut to start cooing at Tiger and lavishing their praises on him.

“You know I could have done that myself,” said Tracey.

“Yes, but it was my turn to yell at Claridge.”

“Shouldn’t I get more turns, since I’m the one he keeps being mean to.”

Daphne frowned. “I guess that would be fair.” She pouted. “But then who am I going to get to stick Tiger on?”

“I’m sure we can find someone,” Tracey said with a shrug.

The girls shared a grin. “Has anyone been particularly stupid yet?” Daphne asked.

“Let’s go ask Pansy.”

---

Marcus watched as a few screaming fourth year girls ran out of their compartment. Deciding it was not his problem since Ivy wasn’t there and no one had died, he continued making his way back to his original compartment. He had impressed upon every member of his team the importance of not doing anything that would distract Ivy from quidditch, which, in this case, meant being really nice to a little blond first year named Luna Lovegood. They had wondered out loud what she had to do with anything at all, but Marcus felt he had adequately explained that Lovegood was Ivy’s friend, and being mean to Ivy’s friend meant making Ivy upset, and upset Ivy would be distracted, and that meant less quidditch time, which was a big no-no and would be dealt with accordingly. He reminded them of last year’s events and each seemed to grasp the importance of the situation. Finally, having secured their promises to do absolutely nothing to endanger their quidditch prospects this year, Marcus left contented. This was going to be the year. He was going to absolutely crush Oliver Wood and win the cup by the largest margin in a century.

Speaking of Oliver, he really ought to go find him so they could finalize their schedule for flying with Ivy.

## Chapter 25

Kenneth Burke watched as the last of this year's first years were sorted. The girl who was apparently under the protection of the entire Slytherin House had been sorted in Ravenclaw, and he had watched carefully for the reactions of her fellow housemates.

He was not impressed.

Sure, there was always one or two people who weren't readily accepted by some in their house, Potter being an example that came immediately to mind. Of course that had been last year, and now she was practically their mascot.

But the looks of pure loathing he had seen on some of the Ravenclaws' faces had left little doubt in his mind that Potter's newest friend was unlikely to receive a warm welcome all around. And since Slytherin had committed themselves to being nice to her, which in Slytherin meant making sure no one else got away with acting otherwise, he was confident this was somehow going to take up more of his time than he would have cared for.

---

Kenneth refrained from rolling his eyes at the fifth year prefects' awkward attempt to explain to the first year Slytherins why they needed to be nice to a particular Ravenclaw. The first years were questioning the reasons for the order, and the fifth year prefects had few options of explanations to give other than "the sixth years us told us to," which wasn't something they were likely to admit, or "we're all scared a second year is going to get mad and raise an army of Hufflepuffs ultimately bringing Hogwarts to its knees," which would be impossible to say in any way that would have them looking like the authority figures they were trying so desperately to be.

He was sure he hadn't been that bad last year.

As the newest prefects unsuccessfully tried to turn the conversation away from the topic of Luna Lovegood, Kenneth decided some intervention would be necessary. Eventually. It was rather entertaining to watch the prefects fail so spectacularly, although they would obviously have to get better before they embarrassed Slytherin in any way. Couldn't have that, after all.

On the other hand, that one little brat that kept voicing his objections was getting on Kenneth's nerves.

"I understand you have some... concerns about Slytherin's interest in Miss Lovegood, Mr...."

"Poinston, Anthony Poinston," the brat said haughtily. Great. Another one of those.

"I see. And you object to these instructions because..."

Kenneth's patience lasted for precisely seventeen seconds before he gave up. By the time he was done the first years knew everything there was to know about Ivy Potter, her impressive

wand skills, her pet snake that loved hanging out in his dorm room for a reason not even Merlin was likely to have known, her guardian that was, who was it again? Oh right. Lord Peverell, you know, that one really powerful guy your parents have all been talking about for the last year. Oh, and did you know he is a Parselmouth? How neat! Oh, and see that huge sixth year over there? That's Marcus Flint, the quidditch captain, who will absolutely crush anyone who distracts Ivy Potter from quidditch, and she does get terribly distracted when someone upsets one of her friends, and we wouldn't want to offend her, the entirety of the rest of Slytherin House (exaggeration was necessary when making a point sometimes), her guardian (and did I mention who that was?), her snake, or every Slytherin ancestor you have ever had, would we? No, I didn't think so.

Watching the wide-eyed first years with satisfaction, and deciding that his good deed of the day was done, Kenneth made his way cheerfully past the stressed looking fifth year prefects and towards his dorm room, confident they could handle any other questions the first years might have.

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*September 2, 1992*

Kenneth was concerned for the future of wizarding society. Was it really so hard for students to remember simple instructions that had been issued only the previous night? Stay in groups of two or more, their head of house had said. Don't go anywhere alone. Inform the prefects or head of house directly of any detentions earned. You would think that would be a simple set of instructions to follow, but apparently not. Kenneth glared at the first year until they emitted a small squeak and ran to join their classmates.

Be a prefect, they said. It's an honor, they said.

No. It was a way to get the best and brightest of Hogwarts to babysit the... well, those that apparently required such high levels of supervision. Which looked to be the majority of Hogwarts students, and no, not just the younger years. Fourth and fifth years could be just as bad.

No wonder Thomas never seemed the least bit jealous of the prefect badge. He was smart. He must have figured this out already.

Kenneth was offended that Thomas hadn't bothered to inform him of these facts.

So now he was a glorified babysitter, relegated to the unenviable position of student herder. Honestly, herding kneazles would probably be easier.

The reason for this herding was something Kenneth still wasn't sure on. He had half listened to Weasley's insistence in the prefect meeting on the train that students shouldn't be left alone with the new Defense professor, but he had honestly thought Weasley was just paranoid from last year's revelation that the last person to hold that position had actually been possessed and tried to kill a student. The fact that Ivy Potter was the student and that this warning apparently came from Lord Peverell seemed to fit Kenneth's theory.

But then their head of house had given the same instructions. Professor Snape had told the prefects very directly that no student was to be left alone with the new Professor, but he had ordered the entire house to follow a new set of guidelines, leaving out the principle factor for the changes. That had certainly caught Kenneth's attention, and had made him wonder what exactly was going on. He had questioned his head of house, who had informed him that a word of warning had come from a concerned guardian of one of the students. Professor Snape had given him a very pointed look, and Kenneth had left nearly positive that his professor's source was the same as Weasley. Why else say guardian instead of parent?

Kenneth was momentarily brought out of his musings in time to yell at a couple of fourth years who were absolutely not a credit to Slytherin House at the moment. How hard could this be? It was a set of *simple instructions*. He had never sympathized with Professor Snape as much as he did at this moment. That man was patience itself.

---

They had barely finished the first day of classes and already Neville was wondering why him. Why was he the one that was stuck dealing with this? Little help his roommates were at the moment. They were watching him just as intently as the new kid-that-slightly-resembled-a-puppy, and Neville wondered whether it would have been better if they had abandoned him completely rather than stay behind to bear witness to his feeble attempts at explaining the facts of life to the first year. And apparently to his roommates because they had so kindly shoved this on him, saying they didn't know either.

Neville sighed and resigned himself to his fate.

"Alright, so, what happened exactly?" He already knew, but a delaying tactic seemed in order.

Colin Creevey, with the enthusiastic help of Ron, Seamus, and Dean, explained again what had happened. It seems Colin was a big fan of Ivy Potter, and had run up to her and asked if he could take her picture. He had also asked about her scar, and even though Neville had been sitting right there and had seen the entire thing, he still cringed at that. Ivy didn't like people asking about her scar. The entire school was well aware of that fact at this point, except, of course, the new first years.

After Colin had asked about the scar, barely taking a breath before plunging into a detailed account of Ivy's supposed exploits, Ivy had frantically searched around for something, and had unfortunately made eye contact with Neville, who had suddenly found himself faced with a person who had far too much energy and far too many questions. Ivy had managed to excuse herself from the situation, claiming homework or something like that (Neville had barely been able to hear her at that point), and had left Neville on his own. He had found the other Gryffindor second year boys, but they had been entirely unhelpful and had instead started asking their own questions. It was terrible.

Neville sighed again. "Alright. First of all, Ivy is really nice." All the other boys nodded their heads.

"Second, she didn't do any of the things in those books."



Colin, and, surprisingly, Seamus, both looked surprised. Neville wanted to ask Seamus why he looked surprised, but decided it wasn't worth this taking any longer than necessary.

"Okay, so then she doesn't like anyone asking about her scar."

"Wait, so she does have a scar? What happened to it?" How did Ron not know this? They had spent the entire last year with Ivy and... Oh forget it.

"Yes, she has a scar. No, it's not on her forehead. No, I don't know where it is, and no, don't bother asking her. I don't know if it's shaped like a lighting bolt or not, and no, I have no idea why all the books show her looking like that."

All four boys looked mildly disappointed. Neville felt his eye about to twitch.

"Wait, so she didn't really do any of those things? But I thought she was really cool?"

The other three boys lit up and began explaining to Colin that Ivy was, in fact, very cool. As they regaled Colin with (only slightly exaggerated) tales of last year's adventures (Ron having the most exciting tales to tell), Neville took the opportunity to slip out while he could do so unnoticed.

---

"Do you think it'll be like this every year?"

Neville shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe? I mean, everyone here knows, but not everybody else knows yet."

Ivy sighed. "I guess you're right."

"Does it bother you? You know, people asking about the scar?"

"Kind of?" Ivy shrugged. "It shouldn't bother me, I guess, but I just feel like when people expect to see it they already have some kind of idea about me, and if they find out I'm not like that then maybe they won't like me."

Neville was confused. "But everybody likes you."

"Not everyone," Ivy mumbled.

"Well I like you," Neville declared, and then started blushing.

Ivy grinned. "Thanks, Neville. I like you too." She gave him a big hug. "Thanks for talking to Colin for me. You're the best."

Neville grinned back. "No problem. Anytime."

---

*September 3, 1992*

"That was the worst class ever."

Ivy laughed at Draco. “It wasn’t that bad. I thought it was kind of fun.”

Draco looked at her like she had just declared dragons were the cuddliest creatures alive. So, basically the look he gave her at least once or twice a day. “It was a *quiz* on Lockhart’s...” Draco made an exaggerated motion with his hands. “Everything. Merlin, how am *I* supposed to know what his favorite color is? And why does it matter? And he can’t possibly have defeated a vampire by spraying it with perfume, so *why should I care what his favorite one is?*”

Ivy laughed at him again and Draco scowled. “You’re upset because you didn’t get a single one right,” she said, giggling.

“Like you did any better,” he muttered.

She laughed at him, again. It wasn’t funny. “Well, I don’t know how I did. He looked like he didn’t feel very good while he was reading through mine, did you notice?”

Draco hadn’t noticed, but it didn’t surprise him.

“Anyway, when he got done reading it he just handed it back to me and said it looked fine. He didn’t mark it at all.”

“Wait, I want to see. What did you put?”

Ivy pulled the parchment out of her bag and handed it to him, and Draco began skimming over it as quickly as he could. “You put a Nundu as his favorite animal,” he said. “Why on earth would you think that?”

Ivy shrugged. “Well he seems to like dangerous creatures, and those are kind of dangerous, aren’t they?”

Draco would have used a slightly different description than that, but okay.

“So I figured that was a pretty safe bet.”

Again, Draco would have used something *other* than “safe” to describe a Nundu, even in such a context as this.

He stopped when he got to one particular line. “You compared him to an *Erkling*?”

“What? Where?”

Draco pointed out the question in answer. The answer in question. The... oh whatever.

“Here. See? The question was ‘What sort of creature could Gilderoy Lockhart best be compared to?’ and you put Erkling.”

Ivy nodded. “Oh, yeah. Someone mentioned something about him liking to sing.”

“That’s a terrible comparison to make.”

Ivy shrugged. "It's not like I read the books."

"Then how did you manage to get a passing grade on Lockhart's quiz?"

"Professor Lockhart," Granger said, suddenly appearing between the two. "Did you not do so well on the quiz?" she asked, looking at Draco who just scowled.

"Lockhart didn't exactly grade mine," Ivy explained, "but Draco didn't get any right."

"Didn't you read the books?" Granger asked.

"No," Ivy and Draco said together. Granger looked scandalized and Draco allowed himself a smirk, positive that if he *had* read the books he would have beaten Granger's likely perfect score for sure.

---

*September 5, 1992*

*§Why can't I sstay in the ssmelly room with the boyss?§*

Ivy rolled her eyes. Tiger was not a morning snake, unless it was for a good cause like chicken, and he had been complaining nonstop.

*§Or the nisse girlss who rub my sscaless and tell me nisse thingss.§*

*§You can go to Trascey later,§* Ivy hissed. *§We're going to go find another ssnafe.§*

*§Why do you need another ssnafe? I'm the only ssnafe you will ever need.§*

Ivy tried not to laugh at Tiger's affronted tone. She held out until he started pouting as only a snake can and mumbling about how he was surely prettier than any other snake and all the snakes in the portraits said so. She burst out laughing and received a few strange looks from the few other students in the hall, who were no doubt wondering why she was laughing so suddenly to herself.

---

Thomas pushed his eggs around on his plate. Somehow he had gotten roped into showing up at a quidditch practice at an hour no sane person should be awake, which explained why both Marcus and Wood were there. He had had no issue with the whole "buddy system" thing Slytherin had going on, and it hadn't taken long to sort out the reason for it. So he had had no issue, until today. Today, for some unknown reason that made no sense whichever way he looked at it, he was somehow responsible for Ivy until lunchtime. He was fairly certain he had heard something about "babysitting" and "demon child," from Kenneth, but it was early and he had barely been paying attention. Something about Marcus and quidditch and Malfoy and something that he apparently forgot to tell Kenneth that was now being held against him. So now he was responsible for being Ivy's buddy for the next several hours. Maybe he could convince her to study in the library. He and Percy had found some interesting looking books there already this term.

Then again...

Maybe she'd be interested in Arithmancy. Yes. That was a great plan. Nothing dangerous ever happened in that class. He turned to Ivy to suggest just that but immediately panicked. She was nowhere to be seen.

---

"Where is your brother?"

Fred looked skeptically at Harrington, who looked rather panicked at the moment. Surely there was nothing he needed with Percy that called for that level of agitation.

"Library, probably. Why?"

"I already checked there and he's not there and I *need to find him*."

"Yeah, we got that," George chimed in. "Why do you need to find Percy?"

"I lost her," Harrington cried out. Looks like Percy was capable of driving even Slytherins crazy.

"Lost who?"

"IVY!"

Fred's mouth formed a small "o" and he shared a glance and a nod with George.

"Give us just a second," George said, before darting around the corner.

Fred smiled serenely at Harrington, who did not appear at all comforted.

A moment later George reappeared. "She's in the girl's bathroom on the second floor."

Harrington glanced between the two of them before turning around and taking off running.

"Do you think he's alright?"

"He's been hanging around Percy. What do you think?"

"Should we help him?"

"I'm sure it's fine."

"Yeah, probably."

"Although he did seem concerned about Ivy."

"You don't suppose she got herself into sometime of trouble, do you?"

The twins exchanged another glance. It was five days into the school year, so yes, it was entirely possible, nay, likely, that Ivy was in some kind of trouble.

"We'd better go..."

“Right behind you.”

---

Thomas ignored the confused looks he received as he dashed down the hall and into Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom. Somehow he had the feeling that this was not going to bode well for him.

As he burst through the door he was relieved to see Ivy standing there, no destruction or blood in sight. Just then he heard a giggle behind him. He whirled around and came face to face with the bathroom’s resident ghost.

“You can come back any time, Ivy Potter, if you’re always going to bring me cute boys,” the ghost said.

Thomas did his best to not blush at being flirted with by a ghost, because that was weird, and instead gave a half smile and turned back to Ivy who looked entirely too amused and not at all guilty for the stress she had caused him.

“What are you doing here?” he asked. “We were supposed to stay together this morning.”

“Sorry,” she said, having the decency to look a *little* guilty at that. “I’m just going to the Chamber of Secrets.”

Had Thomas been stressed? No. That was nothing. This, on the other hand...

“I’m sorry, you what?”

“I’m going to the Chamber of Secrets,” she said again, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Thomas was regretting not trying harder to find Percy so he could drag him into this mess.

---

Thomas was now convinced he had never experienced shock of any kind in his life. He didn’t even know where to start. They were standing in the *Chamber of Secrets*, which they had gotten to by sliding down something covered in something else that he didn’t care to think much on. A slide that was in a girls’ bathroom, and was opened in Parseltongue, which evidently Ivy Potter could speak, because the universe hated him apparently.

“Okay, this has been nice...” No, it had most certainly not. “...but I think it’s time to go now. You know, homework and such.”

“We can’t go yet, silly,” Ivy said, her cheerfulness a stark contrast to the doom and gloom feeling of this secret underground chamber that had been so appropriately named. “We haven’t found the basilisk yet.”

The next several moments were a blur. He was fairly certain he had heard some screaming, but he wasn’t entirely sure where it had come from. There wasn’t someone else down here with them, was there? At some point Ivy had told him to close his eyes, and he had decided that death by basilisk wasn’t the worst way to go. At least it wasn’t completely lame. There

had been a lot of hissing and he counted down the seconds until his inevitable death, before hearing something he vaguely recognized as his name.

“*Thomas*,” the voice said. “You can open your eyes now.”

He gingerly opened one eye, and was immediately faced with a sight he hoped to never see again, no matter whether he died in the next four seconds or a century from now, which honestly wasn’t likely, but he had nothing to lose at this point. There was Ivy, petting a snake that made other snakes look like wimpy little pieces of floss. Said snake was staring at him, but he wasn’t dead yet, so he ventured another eye open.

“Is that...”

“This is Hilda.”

“You *named* it?”

“Of course not, silly. She’s much older than either of us. I believe Salazar Slytherin named her, and he’s been dead for ages.”

Well, it’s not like Thomas had anything to refute that statement with. “And I’m not dead because...” Not that he was complaining, of course.

“I asked her if she could close her eyes so it didn’t hurt you.”

“Oh.” Thomas was at a loss for words. How did one respond to something like that? “What about you?”

“Oh, she won’t hurt me. Besides, the eyes don’t work on Parselmouths.”

“That’s nice.”

“Did you know that when Voldemort...”

He was fairly confident he hid his flinch well enough.

“...went here he got control of Hilda? But he’s dead now so she’s not under his control anymore.”

So much to unpack there. “The Dark Lord went here?”

“Yep! Of course, he had a normal name and not his made up one yet.”

Thomas decided he didn’t need to know, didn’t want to know, and mostly just wanted out, but he couldn’t help but ask one last question. “How do you know all this?”

“Uncle Henry told me,” was her all too happy reply.

---

Thomas's life expectancy was rapidly falling, even without the inevitable death-by-basilisk he had been envisioning moments ago. At this rate he was going to be lucky to graduate.

"You know," he said, not sure how to put this, "you should maybe not tell anyone about the Chamber. Or the basilisk. Or that you're a parselmouth."

"Wait, doesn't everyone already know?"

He wasn't sure to which part she was referring exactly, but he assured her that no, it was not common knowledge.

Ivy frowned. "But how else did they think I talk to Tiger?"

"Not everyone can speak to their pets, you know."

"Uncle Henry talks to Hedwig all the time."

"That's his owl, right?"

Ivy nodded. He had no explanation to give her.

"Just, maybe don't mention it to anyone just yet, alright? Some people have a tendency to freak out over things like that."

"Really? When we were at the Malfoys' party and everyone found out Henry was a parselmouth they all thought it was really cool."

"Yes, well, not everyone thinks that, and some people might not be very nice about it if they found out."

How do you explain to one of the nicest people (encounters with idiots excepted) in Hogwarts that a lot of people were adamantly opposed to your favorite person in the world because of an ability most considered dark, and that that same level of loathing might easily be applied to you should the ability be discovered?

Ivy continued frowning. "And you're sure everyone doesn't already know?"

He nodded. "Yeah. Pretty sure," he managed to get out.

Well, at least she seemed more concerned that everyone else had seemed to miss something she had apparently not actually been trying to hide up to this point, rather than the prospect that some people might react poorly should they actually find out. And honestly it did not fill Thomas with confidence that she had managed to keep something like this a secret *entirely on accident*. What else had he missed? Well, there was that giant basilisk named Hilda that had either been adopted by Ivy or had adopted her (it was hard to tell) for one thing.

---

*§Sso what did you think?§*

*§Sshe wass magnifissent,§* Tiger said. *§Our new mother ssnake is lovely.§*

*§Is that why she called us hatchlings?§* Ivy asked.

*§She is very old,§* Tiger said by way of reply. *§She can teach us how to be good snakes.§*

Ivy hummed. *§Do you think I should keep all this a secret?§*

Tiger couldn't exactly scoff, but she was pretty sure that's the type of response he was giving. *§Of course,§* he said. *§We just found her and I don't want to share.§*

Ivy laughed. *§Of course you don't,§* she teased. *§But I meant about me being able to speak to you.§*

*§Why should it matter what those people think? If they are mean to you I can just eat them.§*

*§You can't eat people just because they are mean,§* Ivy said, rolling her eyes.

Tiger muttered something about asking mother if he could and just try to stop him, and then demanded to be taken back to the chicken room. Ivy rolled her eyes again and then complied, taking the now content snake to the Great Hall for lunch.

*§I think we forgot Thomas again,§* she said.

*§I am sure he will be fine,§* Tiger replied. *§He probably needs more sleep, always so stressed. I'll help him sleep tonight.§*

Ivy patted Tiger on his head in appreciation for his thoughtful gesture.

*§Now no more delays,§* he said. *§It's chicken time.§*

---

When Thomas awoke in the middle of the night with a snake on his chest he was grateful he had had the foresight to place silencing charms around his bed. His reputation did not need the hit that waking the entire Slytherin House with his high-pitched screams would have brought. Of course, that gratitude didn't come until the screams stopped, and twenty minutes after he awoke he realized it was just Tiger, and so was finally able to move past the terror and onto the feeling of immense gratitude that he decided to focus on for the remainder of the night.

The next morning when Kenneth tried to wake him he cursed in every language he knew, and then grimaced as he set about undoing the damage he had accidentally caused on a less-than-happy Kenneth Burke. To be fair, he wasn't much of a morning person.



## Chapter 26

*September 13, 1992*

Lucius scowled as he read the latest note from one of his sources that no one needed to know about. Absolutely nothing had been uncovered regarding Lockhart, and this would most certainly not do. It was nearly two weeks into the school year and he still did not possess a shred of evidence to use against Dumbledore's latest excuse for a professor, and although Severus had assured him that Lockhart was being watched closely, he would still much rather have the situation taken care of sooner than later. Despite the lack of evidence he did not find himself doubting Black or Peverell at all. If they said there was reason to be concerned, he found himself surprisingly willing to believe it.

So where was the evidence? Lucius doubted whether any wizard was capable of leaving absolutely no trail behind, especially for one as acclaimed as Lockhart, regardless of how fantastical his exploits sounded. Unless...

Oh, and wouldn't that just be an absolute scandal. The good kind that doesn't involve you. What if Lockhart had been less than truthful in his stories? It would certainly explain how there did not appear to be *any* witnesses to *any* of his supposed adventures, and now that he thought about it, Peverell had hinted as much.

He sat down to respond to his sources that no, he has absolutely no idea who you are talking about, Mr. Auror.

---

*September 16, 1992*

Harry handed Sirius the letter from Malfoy. "Tell me what you think?"

Sirius skimmed over it and choked a little as he got to the end. "Is he really..."

"Yep. Seems like it."

"How did he even..."

"No idea."

"And we're going to..."

"I don't see why not."

Sirius puffed his cheeks and then exhaled. "Well, I guess that's one way to go about it."

Harry huffed a dry laugh. "Yeah, you could say that."

"It's a pity we didn't think of it ourselves."

Harry gave Sirius a look. “Because we both love the Daily Prophet so much.”

“*Seventh*. But you know what? That’s not important right now.”

Harry didn’t comment, though he dearly wanted to.

“What is important is that we may have another way to get Lockhart out of there.”

“Yes, I think that was Lucius’s intention when he decided to destroy Lockhart’s reputation and call his credentials into question.”

Sirius didn’t acknowledge Harry’s sarcasm and simply continued speaking. “If people begin to doubt Lockhart, then they’ll place him under greater scrutiny, and that could reveal enough to get him ousted from Hogwarts.”

“Again, pretty sure that was Lucius’s plan.”

“So now we need to make a plan.”

“Or we could just go along with Lucius’s plan.”

“We’re going to need to get a few reporters on our side.”

“Like the ones Lucius mentions here? See, paragraph three.”

“And some credible-ish sources to disparage his character, abilities, all that.”

“Oh look, here’s a complete list on page two. Would you look at that.”

“Somehow we need to get some kind of hard evidence. Photo, preferably.”

“Like the four Lucius included here?”

“I don’t know how we’ll do it...”

“Since Lucius already did.”

“But somehow we’ll manage.”

Harry stared at Sirius. “You really don’t want to have to work with Lucius, do you.”

“What ever gave you that completely accurate and entirely correct idea?”

---

Harry sighed at the sight of Sirius and Lucius staring each other down. Glaring each other down more like it.

He cleared his throat. Neither so much as twitched.

He tried again. Still nothing.

Finally, deciding that this was going to get them nowhere, he reasoned that someone had to be the adult in this situation, so he left to go see if he could find Narcissa. This was going to be a long night.

---

*September 17, 1992*

“What do you think?” Harry, Sirius, and Lucius all watched Narcissa and Sabrina closely for any reaction to the plan that was, in their humble opinion, brilliant.

The ladies nodded politely but without the enthusiasm they were hoping for.

“What’s wrong with it?” Sirius enquired, definitely not put out at the lack of compliments on ~~Lucius’s~~ their plan.

“Oh, it’s fine,” Sabrina reassured them. “It’s just that it lacks a little...” She looked at Narcissa.

“Devastation?” Narcissa suggested.

Sabrina nodded. “Yes. I mean, I’m sure this would be sufficient, but it’s not nearly as devastating as would be preferable.”

“I agree,” Narcissa said. “If you are going to tear someone apart in the press it really ought to be so much more...”

“Calamitous,” Sabrina offered.

The three men looked at them, each wondering exactly how their plan could possibly be made even more devastating to Lockhart.

An hour later they found out, and each silently swore to never get on the bad side of these two.

---

*September 20, 1992*

Lucius put down his morning paper and swore. He ran to the floo, tossed some powder in and called out the address, only realizing that he was forgetting something when he was forcibly thrown back. Oh, right. No one could actually floo themselves into Peverell’s home without his inviting them in first. Hastily rectifying that mistake, he sent a quick message off to Peverell requesting admittance. A reply was soon received and he once again made his way to the floo.

---

“So, what’s you looking so chipper this morning?” Sirius asked a scowling Lucius, who thrust him that morning’s edition of the Daily Prophet.

Sirius let loose a rather creative string of curses.

“That one’s new,” Harry remarked jokingly as he came into the room. Catching sight of Lucius he asked, “so what’s going on?”

Sirius handed him the newspaper.

Harry swore.

On the front page, in big, bold letters was the headline : ***HOGWARTS PROFESSOR MISSING***

---

“Alright, so what do we do now?”

“No idea.”

“Do you think he’s dead?”

“Or maybe he just ran away?”

“How do we confirm this?”

“I’m not trusting any report until there’s a body.”

“Why wasn’t the board of governors informed of this right away?”

“He’s not an animagus, is he?”

“You didn’t wake up with an extra peacock in your yard, did you Malfoy?”

Lucius scowled at Sirius who grinned.

“Guys, pay attention,” Harry said.

“Wait, does this mean we don’t get to use the blackmail folder?”

Lucius and Harry each stared at Sirius for a moment.

“He does realize it’s not actually blackmail, right?” Lucius asked, leaning over to Harry.

“Yeah,” Harry replied, “he just thought it sounded cooler.”

“Of course he did,” Lucius muttered, ignoring the voice in his head that said it was, in fact, cooler.

“So how do you think this happened?” Harry asked a little louder.

---

*Two days earlier*

§*Why iss everyone bussy?*§ Ivy asked.

Tiger made a little sound indicating either that everyone was stupid or he didn't care. Or possibly both. *§Why do you need someone anyway? I am perfectly acceptable company,§* he insisted.

*§Of course you are,§* Ivy assured him, *§but I'm supposed to have someone else with me when I go and Thomass made me promise not to forget again.§*

*§Then go find him. He's not so bothersome.§*

*§He's studying.§*

*§Why does he have to do something as silly as that? He already heard it once.§*

---

"Hey Terence, could you go with me to Lockhart's office? Everyone else is busy. It'll be fast, I promise."

Terence shrugged and followed the smallest member of the quidditch team out of the common room. He was done with his homework already so it wasn't like he had anything better to do.

---

"So why do you need to go to Lockhart's office?"

"I wanted to ask him to sign Hermione's books. It's her birthday tomorrow."

Terence made a face and Ivy laughed. "I know, but she really likes him for some reason."

Terence continued making a face that was a combination of horror and disbelief all the way until they arrived at the professor's door.

---

"Oh of course I'd be happy to sign them. Anything for a fan such as yourself."

Terence scowled at the professor but was out of his line of sight so wasn't noticed except by Ivy, who rolled her eyes.

As the professor ran out the door to grab his "special autograph quill," Terence made a gagging sound and Ivy laughed.

"You sure you don't want one too?"

He scowled.

---

*Oh, this is nice,* Tiger thought. *So many lovely smells... And are those eggs I smell?*

He slithered out of Ivy's robe pocket and went, unnoticed, over to the enticing scent.

---

“Thank you, Professor,” Icy said cheerfully, dragging a grumpy Terence behind her as they left. “See, that wasn’t so bad.”

Terence felt very much otherwise.

---

As Tiger finished up the last of the eggs that had been sitting there so invitingly in a secure box on the fourth shelf, he heard the silly man who lived here start to mutter. Then he heard his speaker’s name, and began paying closer attention. What did that silly man want with his speaker? He didn’t know what all those things meant. Maybe the big mother snake knew. She was very wise.

---

*§Don’t you worry about a thing, little hatchling. Mother will take care of everything.§*

Tiger slithered away, quite content that the big mother snake knew what to do. She would look out for his little speaker.

---

“Hey Draco, did you hear something?”

“What? Where?”

“Just now? It sounded like it was coming from the over here.”

“That’s just a wall.”

“Well maybe there’s something on the other side of it.”

“Pretty sure there’s not.”

Ivy shrugged. “Maybe it was nothing.”

“Can we please get back to this transfiguration essay now?”

“Why are you so eager to finish?”

“Because I was *this close* to beating Granger last time.”

Ivy rolled her eyes at her friend and turned her attention back to the essay.

---

*September 19, 1992*

“Did you hear? Professor Lockhart is *missing*.”

“Wait, really? Where’d you hear that?”

“It’s all over the school! No one had seen him all day.”

“But it’s Saturday. Are you sure he didn’t just leave the castle.”

“No, he was supposed to host a question and answer session about his latest book, but he never showed up.”

“Maybe he forgot?”

“He reminded us in class yesterday. *Nine times.*”

“Okay, point. But are you positive he’s missing?”

“*Yes.* Now shush. I have to finish writing my uncle.”

“*You’re* the one that brought this up. And which one, the reporter?”

“That’s the one.”

“What’re you writing him for?”

“He always said to write him if anything interesting happens.”

“How is one professor not showing up today something interesting?”

“Because it’s *Lockhart.*”

“That’s a terrible reason.”

“It’s still the most interesting thing that’s happened all year.”

“We haven’t even been here three weeks.”

“*I know* that, but it’s still the only interesting thing that’s happened so far.”

---

*September 20, 1992*

*§What do you have there? It ssmellss like other sspeaker.§*

Ivy laughed. *§It’ss a letter from Henry,§* she said.

*§Doess he have anything interessting to ssay or iss it jusst another boring sset of wordss?§*

*§Well, he’ss assking about the professsor that went misssing.§*

*§Ssilly man?§*

*§Are of Trascey’ss namess going to sstick?§* Ivy teased

*§Of coursse. Sshe hass ssuch good oness.§*

Ivy laughed again. *§Yess sshe doess. And yess, it'ss ssilly man. No one hass sseen him for two whole dayss.§*

*§Well, big mother ssnake did ssay sshe would take care of it.§*

*§Take care of what?§*

Tiger didn't respond, instead finding a warm spot to curl up in.

*§Tiger, what did sshe ssay?§*

She received no response.

*§Tiger...§*

*§Sshussh, little sspeaker. My chickens need to ssettle.§*

---

*September 21, 1992*

"Okay, I think we can safely say Lockhart is dead."

"What? How do you know?"

"Umm... the details aren't really that important..."

Sirius, Lucius, and Remus all gave Harry a look. They were teaming up against him and it was terrible.

"See, I got this letter from Ivy..."

"Harry..."

"And I had asked her about Lockhart..."

"Harry..."

"And there's a slight possibility that he was, um, disposed of by Slytherin's monster."

Several awkward seconds of silence followed.

"Why on earth would she know that?" Lucius asked. "Or think that? Slytherin's *monster*? Are you sure that's even real?"

"Yes," came the simultaneous replies from Harry, Sirius, and Remus.

Lucius's eye twitched but he didn't say anything further.

"Great, so Lockhart is a Basilisk snack and..."

"WHAT?"



Harry and Remus shot a glare at Sirius.

“THERE’S A BASILISK AT HOGWARTS?”

“No?”

Lucius joined Harry and Remus in glaring at Sirius.

“Would it help if I said everything is under control?”

“No,” came the triple response.

Sirius looked a little guilty but then seemed to realize something. “Hey, how would Ivy know there was a basilisk at Hogwarts anyway?”

Sirius and Remus both turned to stare at Harry, whose turn it now was to look sheepish. Lucius also looked his way with a single eyebrow raised.

“I think some explanations are in order,” Lucius said pointedly, his tone indicating that it was not a suggestion.

The four men took their seats again, Remus muttering something about leaving them alone a week.

---

Harry and Sirius explained as best they could to Lucius the situation with the basilisk at the school without revealing any sensitive details about Harry’s origins. Remus seemed content to let the two handle the explanation on their own, returning their occasional looks for help with a look that clearly said “this is your mess.”

When they reached the conclusion of their account Lucius sat for a moment looking rather contemplative.

“So, the girl-who-lived is a parselmouth. I take it that is not a widely known fact.”

Harry and Sirius looked frantically to Remus, who just mouthed “your mess.”

---

“How did he even figure that out?”

“Merlin, I can’t believe you told Ivy about the basilisk.”

“It was an impulsive decision, Sirius. Besides, it all worked out.”

“Yeah, except for the fact that *Lucius Malfoy* figured out that Ivy is a parselmouth.”

“It could be worse.”

Sirius went to argue something or other but Remus put a stop to it. “Enough,” he said.

“Harry, I can’t believe you told Ivy about the basilisk, and Sirius, I can’t believe *you* blabbed

about it in front of Lucius.”

One week. Remus had left them for *one week*. That was the last time he left them alone for anything not full moon related, and even then, Harry was a competent wizard and Sirius could change with him. So no. They were not going to left unsupervised ever. He needed to find a job closer to home...

“Hey, just a thought, but what happens now?”

Remus looked up at Harry and noticed Sirius doing the same.

Harry shifted a bit in his seat. “I just mean, Lockhart was there the entire year before. And this time it’s only a couple weeks into the year, so who takes over now?”

An idea formed in Remus’s mind. It took about four seconds but he was confident it was a solid plan. “I do.”

Sirius spun his head around and looked at him. “What?”

“I do. I go teach. I don’t think it’d be that hard to get Dumbledore to hire me, and that way I can keep an eye on things there.” But not not these two. Oh well. It’d probably be fine.

“But... It’s a whole year early. What about next year?”

Remus shrugged. “What guarantee do we have that I’d be hired next year anyway? No Sirius in Azkaban means no Sirius escaping Azkaban, so no interest on Dumbledore’s part to get me at Hogwarts. But right now he might be interested, especially if I express concern over Ivy’s safety, and make it sound like I’ll go along with his ideas.”

“I don’t know Moony...”

“How would you convince him of that?”

“I have my ways,” he said, not giving any other details.

Neither of them questioned him further.

---

*September 24, 1992*

“That was fast.”

Sirius nodded in agreement. “How’d you manage that, Moony?”

Remus shuddered. “Don’t ask.”

“O...kay? So, are you already to go be the best defense teacher Hogwarts ever had?”

Remus nodded. “Yeah. Say, would you two mind going over the timeline again? I just want to make sure I don’t miss anything.”

---

“No, no, keep going.”

“But that’s... the entire year?”

“I know, but keep going.”

“Alright. So summer after second year...”

---

“Okay now talk me through fourth year.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

Harry shrugged and continued talking.

---

“And he was in Crouch’s house that whole time?”

“Yeah, why?”

---

“So, you already to go?”

Remus looked up at Sirius. “Oh, yeah. Just have one little thing to take care of before I go.”

---

*September 26, 1992*

“Remus... who is that?”

“I think you know.”

“Can I ask why he’s in my house?”

“Yes.”

Harry looked at Remus warily. “Okay... so why is Barty Crouch Jr. standing in my house?”

“Glad you asked. Barty, this is Lord Peverell. Say hello.”

Crouch glared at Remus and then at Harry, a silencing charm, muggle gag, body bind, and ropes for good measure preventing him from doing much else.

Harry’s eye twitched. “SIRIUS,” he called out, his eye never leaving the glaring Barty Crouch Jr standing in front of him.

---

“So let me get this straight. You want *us* to look after *him*. Crouch. Death eater, crazy person Crouch.”

“Yes.”

Harry’s eye twitched for the forty second time that day. “Great. Glad we cleared that up. Now, ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR BLOODY MIND?”

Remus looked far too calm for this. “I’m sure you two will be fine.”

“At the risk of repeating myself for the seventeenth time, *why*?”

“Because no one deserves that,” Remus replied, his voice betraying no emotion even though the pain was evident in his face.

Harry deflated, and next to him Sirius put his head in his hands. Neither of them could really argue against that. Just then a pop sounded behind Sirius and they both whirled around to face the intruder.

“Oh, and this is Winky,” Remus added calmly. “She’ll be staying with you as well.”

Harry groaned and Sirius’s face lit up with what was probably a terrible idea.

“I’ll be right back,” he said.

---

Sirius returned a short time later with a scowling Kreacher in tow.

Harry stared at him for a moment. “Why.”

Sirius grinned.

---

This was not how Harry had envisioned his day going. It was Saturday, meaning it was one of the busier days in the Alley, meaning it was the perfect day to stay home and engage in such important activities as flying, reading some parenting books, or writing to Ivy. Not reluctantly acquiring two house elves (sorry Hermione, he thought, cringing), or an insane ex-death eater who tried to kill you in a previous world.

And also, no, he did not have any residual trauma, Sirius. He was perfectly fine. It was just that he didn’t really want to deal with... this. He mentally gestured to everything.

And now Remus was leaving. At first he had been excited that Remus was going to Hogwarts, but now he thought it was the worst idea anyone had every thought of in the history of ever. How Remus *leave* him. *He* was the one that needed Remus. Ivy had Percy, and those other sixth years that she always talked about, and all her friends in second year, and Luna, and Fred and George, and Tiger, and now the basilisk apparently and... Oh yes, Harry could see where Remus might be needed at some point.

*Fiiiine*. Still didn’t mean he had to like it.

---

September 28, 1992

Of all the terrible Mondays that had ever been, this was the worst. Severus glared down the row of seats at the third worst person Dumbledore could have possibly chosen as the new defense professor. The first, of course, was Black, since he was a terrible human being. The second was Narcissa, because there was no way he would survive her matchmaking attempts if he had to deal with her year round, and the third was sitting a few seats down from him. Remus Lupin. What was Dumbledore *thinking*?

No, don't answer that. It would probably be unpleasant.

But still, *Lupin*? Was there really *no one else* available? Although, considering how long the last one lasted he had to admit, if only to himself, that there *might* not have been a lot of options.

And hadn't Lupin seemed opposed to the headmaster the last time Severus had (unfortunately) encountered him? So why the change? Unless there wasn't a change... So if Dumbledore hadn't convinced Lupin to come, who...

Peverell. As with everything else lately, it all came back to Peverell. It made perfect sense, really. Peverell plants suspicions regarding the new professor, and, whether real or not (though Severus was inclined to believe them), limits the amount of sympathy the professor receives once he is disposed of. It was a solid plan, really, to make sure fewer people were interested in finding out what happened to the man, if, indeed, he had had anything to do with it.

Severus's gut was telling him that no, Peverell wasn't directly involved in Lockhart's disappearance, but it wasn't a possibility he was willing to discount entirely at the moment.

So once the other professor was gotten rid of, Peverell was presented with the perfect opportunity to get his own man hired. So why go through all this trouble? Why not simply get Lupin hired from the beginning? Peverell certainly had enough influence to get something like that done.

Unless he hadn't had a need until now...

So what could have changed?

Severus's mind circled back to the letter he had received from Lord Peverell shortly before the beginning of the term. Perhaps that was the change? He recalled Lucius's account of the bookstore incident. Yes, that had to be it.

Well, regardless of the reasons or circumstances leading up to this, Lupin was here now, and Severus would not let an opportunity to learn more about Peverell go to waste.

Which meant interacting with Lupin..... \*sigh\*

---

*October 1, 1992*

“This isn’t working.”

Sirius gave Harry a really-I-had-absolutely-no-idea-please-do-tell-me-more look.

“We need to do something about this.”

Sirius gave Harry the look once more for emphasis.

“We need a plan.”

Once more, for kicks and giggles.

“Well?”

Sirius loved Harry, he really did. But why did *he* have to be the adult here? As eager as he was to get crazy-mc-death-eater over there to shut up for two seconds about the dark lord and how he was going to come rescue him, he was really hoping to avoid having to deal with this situation directly. Or at all. Not at all would be nice.

“I’m sure you’ll think of something.” Sirius stood to leave Harry to his planning, but Harry stopped him.

“Oh no you don’t,” Harry said, putting a hand against Sirius’s chest and pushing him back into his seat. “If I have to deal with Kreacher you can help me deal with baby-daddy-issues over there.”

Sirius opened his mouth to protest but a glare from Harry silenced him before he could begin.

And then a thought struck. A brilliant, beautiful thought. *Sirius*, he thought to himself, *you are a genius*.

---

Harry watched as Sirius left the room with growing dread. That was Sirius’s I-have-an-idea face, which often correlated with the I-have-an-idea-that-is-probably-going-to-end-in-disaster face.

*Disaster.*

---

Sirius whistled to himself. This was the best plan he had had in months. Absolutely brilliant, and he was positive there was absolutely nothing that could possibly go wrong.

Entering the makeshift keep-a-crazy-death-eater-contained room that they were not calling a dungeon on principle (except in his mind on occasion when Crouch got really annoying), he called out to the room’s glaring occupant. “How are you doing there, Crouch? Come on, let’s take a little walk outside.”

---

“Sirius... Where are you going with Crouch?”

“We’re just going on a little walk.”

Harry kept a close eye on the two as they made their way to the back door, one whistling cheerfully and one scowling the entire way. “No murder in the backyard,” he called out, just as they were leaving.

There. That should take care of it.

---

“Alright Crouch. Here’s the deal. That guy in there, Lord Peverell? Defeated the dark lord. Did him in. Gone. And now he got you out.”

Technically Remus had, and Harry didn’t want anything to do with Crouch, but that wasn’t important right now.

“And you know what? No one even knows. He did it without batting an eye or drawing attention at all. Just went in there and BAM! One dark lord gone.”

It was best to stick with simple explanations at times.

“And not only is he Lord Peverell, but he’s also Lord *Slytherin*.”

Crouch’s head shot up at that and although he was still glaring Sirius could detect a hint of interest. Now they were getting somewhere.

“Oh yeah. He’s Lord Slytherin alright. The *real* one. So much better than that upstart wannabe.”

The shock in Crouch’s face at such a pronouncement was a memory Sirius would treasure forever.

“So obviously he’s a much better person to follow than old Moldysorts.”

Crouch didn’t even look appalled by that last statement, Sirius thought with a satisfied smirk.

---

*October 3, 1992*

“What. Did. You. Do.”

Sirius looked at Harry with perfect innocence. “Who, me? Why, I have no *idea* what you’re talking about. Did I do something? Hmm, let me think. Oh, that’s right. I just *solved our problem*. You’re welcome by the way.”

Harry’s face conveyed many emotions at the moment, but Sirius couldn’t help but feel that the gratitude was seriously lacking. Ha. Serious. Like... No, he got it. Moving on.

“What did you do to him?”

Harry's eye twitched. Sirius could agree with Ivy. It was sort of amusing to see.

“And have you heard him mention Voldie once since then? I don’t think so. So again, you’re *welcome*.”

He had a minion. He had a bloody ex-death eater minion, and Sirius saw absolutely nothing wrong with this. How had his life come to this?

Really it all boiled down to that fact that Fate hated him and being the so-called Master of Death had done absolutely nothing to change that. Some good that was.

Well, there wasn't really any other option...

That meant goblins.

“Hey Barty, come here for a second. I have something I want to talk to you about.”

“Haaaarrrrrrrrrryyy.....”

Harry tapped his finger against his leg nervously. It was always a bit of a tossup when it came to dealing with the goblins. Encounters with them could either be uncomfortable or



downright terrifying, and Harry was sincerely hoping for the former this morning.

“Ah, Lord Peverell, how can Gringotts assist you today?”

Harry took a deep breath. It was go time.

---

Something was suspicious. At first the goblins hadn't looked particularly happy with Harry's request, which ordinarily could be considered a good thing, but in this particular instance did not fill Harry with any measure of comfort. Instead, they had appeared to be rather disappointed in the reason for his visit. Were they expecting something else?

But now they were happy (\*shudder\*) again. So what was going on? Definitely suspicious.

“Alright, here you are. A complete identity for one...” The goblin peered at the top document. “Barton Varinius Parry.”

Harry accepted the stack of documents, wondering if this was really going to work.

“As per your request a limited access account has been opened in his name, with you as controller.”

Harry nodded.

“Also included there are academic records and supporting documents that will all be available per request through the appropriate ministry channels. Anything else?”

Harry shook his head, deciding it was better to leave quickly before something could happen.

The goblin led him out to the main lobby, which was a little unusual since he was usually able to show himself out at this point, but at least he was almost out.

“Have a very pleasant day, Lord Peverell-Slytherin.”

Harry was sure every witch and wizard for a mile around could hear his panicked breathing. So *that's* what the goblins were up to today.

Harry swore and apparated straight from the lobby, not bothering to walk the rest of the way out.

## Chapter 27

*October 4, 1992*

Roderick Harrington handed his wife the latest letter from their son.

“What do you make of this?” he asked.

Samira skimmed it over. “Well that is a rather particular request, but I don’t see why it should be a problem.”

Roderick waved her off. “Of course it’s not a problem, but why now? Did something happen? Is there something he’s not telling us? What if...”

Samira laughed. “Oh you worry far too much, darling. I’m sure everything is fine, and if it were otherwise Thomas would tell us right away.”

Roderick let out a breath. “I’m sure you’re right.” Catching his wife’s smirk he added, “as usual,” and leaned down to give her a quick kiss on the cheek.

“He probably just got a girlfriend and wants a better way to stay in touch.”

Roderick gasped, to Samira’s amusement. “What do you mean? He hasn’t said anything about a girlfriend. Where would he have met a girl any... Oh right, Hogwarts. But, if he had a girlfriend there he wouldn’t need an owl, right?” He paused to see his wife’s response, but the knowing smile she had was no source of comfort. “*Right?*” he added once more.

---

*October 5, 1992*

Thomas walked into his dorm room only to see Eric reading over the letter from his father.

“Since when do you have a girlfriend?”

“Since when do you read other people’s letters?”

“Since they are sitting on top of a book on courting etiquette.”

Merlin, he had forgotten to stash that book away somewhere. He was now officially doomed. There was no way this wasn’t going to get out by the end of the day.

“Right, well, let me just move these out of the way...”

“So, who's the girl?”

“...”

“Or...guy?”

“...” *Think, Thomas, think. Make up something, fast.*

“Hey Thomas, I’m going to go see Hilda. Do you want to come?”

Thomas had never been more happy to hear Ivy Potter’s voice and he didn’t even care that she was suggesting he go see a basilisk. Again.

“Who’s Hilda? Is that your girlfriend?”

The sudden look of pure joy on Ivy’s face made his heart sink into his gut and he shot a glare at Eric, who looked confused as if he didn’t know exactly what kind of trouble he was causing Thomas at the moment. The fact that he probably did not, in fact, know what he was doing was of little comfort and therefore ignored.

Meanwhile, by this point Ivy’s face had reached impressive heights of unadulterated joy and excitement. Thanks, Eric. You’re the worst.

“You have a *girlfriend*?”

Thomas winced and braced himself for the oncoming onslaught.

“How long? Is she pretty? Do I know her? Is she in Slytherin? Or one of the other houses? Is she in your year? What’s her name? Does she go to Hogwarts? Can I meet her? Do you...”

“FRENCH,” Thomas shouted, slightly startling Eric, Ivy, and Corvin who had been sitting inconspicuously on his bed up until this moment. Seeing the three stares he cleared his throat and continued on with the falsehood he hoped wouldn’t come back to haunt him. “She’s French,” he said again, “so you probably don’t know her.”

Ivy’s excitement did not abate in the slightest. “So what’s her name?”

His two roommates stared at him expectantly. Well, in for a penny...

“Adélie.” And now he really needed to write her and see if she’d be okay with this for the foreseeable future. If he was lucky he wouldn’t get a cursed note back.

“So... who’s Hilda then?”

“My owl,” Thomas said a little too quickly, wondering if Azkaban was worth strangling Eric. “We’re going to go see my owl.”

Ivy opened her mouth but Thomas rushed over and escorted her out before anyone could say anything else and further complicate his day, existence, and life expectancy.

As they left out he heard Eric ask Corvin, “since when does Thomas have an owl?”

---

“So you named your owl Hilda?” Ivy asked, stroking the bird’s feathers.

“Yes...”

Ivy beamed up at him. “I knew you liked her. I’ll tell her. She’ll be so happy to hear. I tell her about all my friends you know.”

Thomas couldn’t figure out a way to tell Ivy that he had an owl for the express purpose of covering up any evidence that she went to go see a giant basilisk regularly and just nodded his head.

---

“So who’s Adélie?”

Thomas groaned. How had this reached *Percy* of all people already?

---

*October 6, 1992*

“We need to talk.”

Remus watched bemusedly as Snape barged into his office and tossed down a newspaper on his desk. Remus looked at it for a moment and then back at the agitated Snape.

“That’s yesterday’s newspaper,” he noted, not sure why he felt the need to point that out.

“Yes I *know* that is yesterday’s paper. What I want to know is why it says this,” Snape said, gesturing to the headline.

### ***PEVERELL CLAIMS SLYTHERIN TITLE***

Remus winced. Yeah, this hadn’t been the best headline to wake up to yesterday. He had already sent a strongly worded letter to Harry and Sirius.

He cleared his throat. “Well, it seems that Lord Peverell is also Lord Slytherin.”

Snape did not appear at all impressed with that response. “Thank you, Lupin, for stating the obvious. I am already *aware* that Lord Peverell somehow claimed the title. My question is why this is coming out now and not a month or two ago?”

Remus opened his mouth and closed it again. “You, uh, already knew about that?”

Snape just glared at him.

Remus sighed. “What do you want to know?” he asked resignedly, reminding himself that Harry had said Snape was ultimately trustworthy. He really hoped this wasn’t a mistake.

“How was he able to claim the title? The last known claimant was...”

“The Dark Lord, I know.” If Snape was surprised by his choice of name he didn’t show it.

“But even he never claimed the full title.”

Remus nodded and rubbed the back of his neck. “Uh, yeah, about that. Seems like your soul has to be fully intact to be able to claim a title.”

“Explain,” Snape demanded.

“What do you know about horcruxes?”

Snape paled and Remus sighed. This was going to be a long conversation.

“Are you suggesting that the Dark Lord created one?”

Remus nodded grimly. “More than one.”

Snape paled further. “How many?”

“Five intentional, one accidental.”

“*Accidental?*”

“Ivy,” Remus said, interrupting whatever disbelieving exclamation Snape was going to make. “That night, the curse... Part of him was left behind. Ivy’s scar...”

“So she does have a scar.”

Remus nodded. “Yes. It was on her forehead, but when Harry took her to Gringotts they removed the horcrux and moved the scar to a less visible location.”

“Albus wasn’t thrilled about that,” Snape muttered.

Remus huffed. “No surprise there.”

Snape raised an eyebrow.

“He has a bit too much interest in Ivy for our... for my liking.”

Snape’s eyebrow remained raised but he didn’t comment on that further, for which Remus was thankful.

“So the Horcrux in Potter is gone.”

Remus nodded.

“And there are five others?”

Remus nodded again. “All destroyed now.”

Snape didn’t hide his surprise at that.

“After finding the one in Ivy, Harry found the others and destroyed them all.” Not the entire truth, but not exactly a lie.

“And now he holds the title,” Snape mused. Speaking louder he said, “and I take it the headmaster has not been informed of any of these events?”

Snape must of caught the darkening look on Remus’s face because he sat up a little and his hand tightened around his wand.

“No,” Remus said, trying (but somewhat failing) to relax and resume a less agitated expression. “He hasn’t been told any of this.” Remus gave Snape a pointed stare that he hoped conveyed the expectation that Dumbledore wouldn’t hear it from Snape either.

Snape gave him a nod, his hand loosening its grip on his wand slightly.

“And what of Lord Peverell?”

“What of him?”

“What are his aims? His goals?”

Remus caught the unasked question. Was Harry looking to replace Voldemort in more than one title. “No, he’s...” Remus wasn’t sure what more to share. “He’s on Ivy’s side. He wants her safe, and happy. He... Harry *cares*. So much. He cares about the people around him, and about Ivy most of all.”

Snape looked like he was about to mumble something about Gryffindor sensibilities or something like that, but to Remus’s surprise he stuck out his hand.

“Well then I believe I would very much like to make his acquaintance,” he said as Remus took his hand. “He seems like an... interesting man.”

Remus let out a dry snort. “You have no idea,” he said softly.

---

Severus couldn’t believe himself. Only a few minutes in Lupins office and the Gryffindoriness was already rubbing off on him. He had practically just committed himself to being on their side, whatever that was. A side that included (as far as he could tell), Lupin, Black, and Lord Peverell-Slytherin who he had never actually met, though based on the company he kept Severus wasn’t going to keep his hopes up. Although it apparently also included Lucius to some extent. Did Lucius know about the defeat of the Dark Lord? It was an unspoken agreement between the two of them that they did not speak about the Dark Lord if at all possible. It was actually a rather easy topic to avoid. But now it might be time to broach it once more...

---

*October 7, 1992*

Fleur looked at her friend who had nearly toppled off her bed from laughter.

“Qu'est-ce qui t'amuse autant?”

Adélie handed her the letter that was nearly crumpled from her rolling on top of it during her giggling fit.

Fleur tried to read it but it was in English and she didn't know a lot of the words. She scrunched her nose. "Ça dit quoi?"

"Thomas..." Adélie gasped for breath as she tried to regain her composure. "Thomas a besoin d'une fausse petite amie."

"Pourquoi?" Fleur asked, frowning. She remembered Adélie talking about the English boy she had become friend with, but wasn't sure why he would be writing her with something like this. That didn't seem like a good way to ask a girl out.

"Tout le monde pense qu'il a une petite amie et il essaie de les distraire du fait qu'il n'en a pas."

"Et donc il vous a écrit?" Fleur said, still frowning.

"Il m'a demandé s'il pouvait parfois m'écrire. Félicitez-moi, Fleur, j'ai un faux copain maintenant," Adélie said saucily. With that she burst out laughing again and this time Fleur joined in, if not quite as exuberantly, wondering if all English boys were this strange. Why ask her to be his fake girlfriend instead of his real one? Was this some strange English custom she was unaware of?

---

*October 10, 1992*

"Ah, Severus, come in, my boy."

Severus gritted his teeth and walked into the headmaster's office. He was thirty two for Merlin's sake.

Resignedly he sat down and prepared for the oncoming interrogation, conspiracy theory, or lecture, whatever it might be today. It was probably about Peverell, though why Albus had waited this long to bring it up was beyond him. Maybe he had exhausted his own avenues of inquiry and was now looking to Severus to provide more details? Merlin, he hoped not.

---

Two hours. It took *two hours* to convince Albus bloody something something Dumbledore that he didn't know anything about Peverell-Slytherin, Lockhart's demise (except for the rumors that Severus knew Albus had already heard), Voldemort's status or whereabouts, or anything else that Albus might possibly be interested in. It was all a lie, of course, but Severus had been successfully lying to accomplished Legilimens for years. No point stopping now.

Thank Merlin it was Saturday and he wasn't needed in the castle this particular day. Finally reaching the end of the school's wards he apparated on the spot. Time to deal with this, and if he was acting like a bloody Gryffindor it was probably Lupin's fault.

---

Lucius was enjoying his afternoon tea in peace until the wards alerted him to the presence of someone who was freely admitted. That list was rather short, so Lucius got up quickly to see what was going on. He wasn't expecting anyone today, and few people dropped by unannounced except...

"Ah, Severus. This is a surprise. Would you care for some tea?"

Severus was obviously not in the best of moods and Lucius sighed internally. His afternoon had been so pleasant up until now, and he had a suspicion that the pleasantness was about to come to an abrupt end.

"No. I need to meet Lord Peverell."

Lucius raised a single brow at that. "Indeed. And what is the occasion, might I ask?" An unbidden thought crossed his mind. "Ivy is fine, right? Nothing happened?"

Severus's eye twitched but otherwise he remained as stoic as ever. "All the students are alive and accounted for last I checked."

Lucius sighed in relief, glad that he didn't have to be the one to bear bad news to Lord Peverell who was also Lord Slytherin who confused Lucius to no end while simultaneously managing to intimidate him. And Lucius Malfoy was not easily intimidated.

---

Harry felt the little ping of someone seeking access through the floo.

"Hey, Barty, see who it is, will you?"

Barty yelled back that he'd go check, and Harry turned back to his dinner preparations, only to come face to face with two angry house elves.

If anyone claimed he jumped and let out a very unmanly squeak in that particularly moment he would deny it. Emphatically.

"Master Deathy be doing Winky's job," Winky declared, glaring Harry down. He absolutely did not take a small step backwards.

"Master Deathy be doing all our jobs, not leaving anything for poor Kreacher. Master Deathy be being a bad master."

Harry looked at the two elves glaring up at him and, deciding that discretion was the better part of valor, made a tactical retreat.

Just as he left the kitchen he heard Barty call out. "Hey, it's Malfoy. Should we let him in?"

"Yeah, go ahead." Time to see if their identity thing held. It'd better, for all the trouble it'd caused him.

"Oh, looks like he brought someone else with him."



*Please let it be Narcissa, please let it be Narcissa.*

“Oh, would you look at that. He brought Snape.”

Bollocks.

---

Severus sat uncomfortably on the sofa. Despite everything he had heard about Lord Peverell thus far, he was still rather shocked to actually meet the man. And the other wizard here, who kept alternatively throwing both him and Lucius either glares or looks of amused interest, looked very much like that Crouch kid who had died several... Suddenly Severus was much more worried about his sudden Gryffindor tendencies in showing up to Lucius's home demanding he accompany him to meet Peverell. Also, maybe Albus wasn't entirely insane, because either that was Barty Crouch Jr., or the Crouch family was much larger than Severus had known. The fact that Crouch was supposedly dead meant nothing at this particular moment.

“So, what can I do for you, Professor?”

Severus cleared his throat. “I had an interesting meeting with Lupin the other day.”

He watched Peverell's reaction carefully. Intrigued, but wary. He could work with that.

“He explained some of the circumstances surrounding your...” Severus couldn't help but shoot a quick glance at the person he was growing more and more confident was Crouch. “... new title,” he finished lamely, forcing himself to make eye contact with Peverell.

Peverell stared at him for a moment. He did not feel any sign of legitimacy, but he still felt like his very soul was being assessed.

After what felt like an eternity but apparently wasn't long enough to make anyone else uncomfortable, Peverell finally spoke.

“I see,” he said. “And you are here now because...”

Severus cleared his throat and shifted slightly in his seat. Merlin, he was doing terribly at this. He, who managed to remain calm and composed in practically any situation was now reduced to a nervous mess by a man he had just met, who had only said maybe a couple dozen words to him, and hadn't even appeared upset.

“I wanted to know for sure.”

Peverell raised an eyebrow.

“That he's gone,” Snape clarified, wincing on the inside as he did so. Great move there, Severus. Way to give up personal information right from the start. Also, not the direction he had planned to take this.

He noticed Peverell shoot a glance at Lucius. Oh, did Lucius not know then? He had suspected not, but it hadn't really been on his mind when he had made this impulsive

decision that he was absolutely regretting.

“Very well,” Peverell said after a moment. “Yes, the Dark Lord is gone.”

Lucius’s breath hitched a little but Severus paid him no mind. “As to the events leading up to his ultimate demise, I believe you said Remus already explained some of it to you?”

“Yes, he told me about the...” Severus glance over at Lucius. “...pieces.”

Peverell frowned, nodded, and sighed a bit. Crouch or the Crouch impersonator looked positively giddy. It a disconcerting combination for Severus at the moment, as memories of a certain very insane woman came to the forefront of his mind. Merlin, what was he thinking coming here? He wasn’t, that’s what.

“Well, I suppose I might as well tell the two of you everything, since if you do anything objectionable with it I know right where to find you.”

Peverell sounded cheery enough but Severus was absolutely terrified in that particular moment at the not-so-subtly implied threat. Lucius didn’t look nearly as disturbed but Severus could tell that even he was a little disconcerted.

“And we’ll need to wait for Sirius, of course. He should be back any minute now.”

The tight smile on Peverell’s face did nothing to reassure Severus. Neither did his next statement.

“Also, I’m sure both of you remember Barty? He’s legally dead but we got that all taken care of.”

---

Sirius strode through the front door, whistling cheerfully. Today had been a great day, and he had escaped Barty’s pranks for thirty six hours straight now. It was glorious. It was...

“Hi, Sirius. We have company. Why don’t you come join us.”

...the worst day of his life, at least in the last three weeks.

---

He had already heard from Lupin about the Horcruxes, but the retelling was just as horrific, especially now that much greater detail was being added. Lucius looked downright sick, and wasn’t even upset when Peverell admitted to stealing one from Lucius’s own house. Quite the opposite, in fact. If anything he looked relieved.

And it was clear Peverell had the aid of the goblins. That in and of itself was remarkable, since it was something neither the Dark Lord or Dumbledore had ever managed to accomplish. It made Peverell that much more intimidating, if Severus forced himself to be completely honest with himself.

“Does Dumbledore know?” he found himself asking softly.

“Pardon?”

He cleared his throat. “Does Dumbledore know about the horcruxes?”

Black’s face darkened, and he went to say something but Peverell stopped him.

“Yes,” he said simply. “Or at least, I believe he suspects.”

Severus drew in a breath. Of course Dumbledore believed Voldemort was still around then. But if he only suspected, how did Peverell come to know?

“How did you find them?”

“I have my ways,” Peverell replied, cryptically. “I am very well-informed.”

Severus felt like that was a bit of an understatement. “Indeed,” was all he could reply.

Soon the topic shifted and came around to Hogwarts and the going ons there. Inevitably the Lockhart debacle was brought up.

“And why that fool decided to go searching for Slytherin’s monster is beyond me.”

At Severus’s statement Lucius choked a bit, and all eyes turned towards him.

“Something you’d care to share?” Peverell asked, though he appeared amused.

“I may have... *hinted* that Lockhart was engaged in such an endeavor, yes.”

“Still don’t see why we couldn’t just use the file,” Severus heard Black mutter.

“So now everyone thinks Lockhart was eaten by a basilisk?” Peverell did not seem at all perturbed by that admission. Wait, *basilisk*?

“Slytherin’s monster is a *basilisk*?”

Peverell winced and Black burst out laughing. Severus did not see how this was a laughing matter.

“Ha! And I wasn’t even the one to say it,” Black crowed. Lucius too looked amused, and Severus couldn’t help but feel that he was missing something here.

“Ah, yes,” Peverell said, clearing his throat. “Slytherin’s monster is a basilisk. Makes sense though, if you think about it. What else would he have had besides the king of snakes. Or queen, I suppose, in this case. In any event, it does make sense that Lockhart would try to find it, and be, er, caught, so to speak.”

Severus frowned. “Wait, what do you mean queen? Are you saying the basilisk is *female*?” How on earth would Peverell know something like that?

Black burst out laughing for the second time as Peverell’s face flushed slightly.

Lucius frowned slightly though and asked, “so it appears the rumor has spread successfully, but what had the reaction been?”

All eyes turned back towards Severus and he resisted the urge to gulp. The meeting with Dumbledore was still fresh in his mind and he wasn’t sure he wanted to divulge the man’s suspicions to their subject. Oh well. He was already apparently a Gryffindor for the day. May as well get it out of his system entirely so he could never, *ever*, act in this way *ever* again.

“Well Dumbledore seems to think that you may be somehow responsible for both Lockhart and Quirrell, and that you may be working with the Dark Lord or may actually be the Dark Lord reincarnated or...” He trailed off, seeing the looks on the faces around him. He knew when he was outmatched, and against Peverell he was sorely, bitterly outmatched. He only hoped that that anger was not directed at him.

---

“Harry,” Sirius said softly. “Harry, calm down.”

Harry glanced up at the frightened faces around him and deflated. He was *not* Voldemort, and he was determined never to be Voldemort, or anything like him, regardless of what Dumbledore apparently believed. Couldn’t that man just leave them alone?

Making a conscious effort to rein back his magic, he used every trick he could think of to force his anger down. It would do none of them any good for him to lose control right here in this moment. Later he could let it out, but right now he needed to be in control.

“Sorry,” he said, hoping he was giving a reassuring look. “Sorry, I just... All I wanted was Voldemort gone, and Ivy safe and now, to think something believes I could be like him, or actually *be* him, I just...” He placed a hand over his face and Sirius put a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“What do you need us to do?”

---

Severus wasn’t sure how he was getting roped into this, but not seeing a way out, he too leaned in in anticipation of what Peverell might say. How was he going to handle this? Severus’s curiosity was getting the better of him. Ever reasonable part of his mind told him to get away while he still could, but he couldn’t quite bring himself to do so.

---

Today had been a day of revelations for Lucius, and he wasn’t sure he could handle any more. The Dark Lord was gone. He had hoped for such, but there had always been a traitorous part of his mind that told him the Dark Lord wasn’t gone for good. Until last spring, that is, when his mark had vanished, and he had allowed himself greater hope that he would not have to face the Dark Lord again. And now he knew why.

He could understand why Peverell had not trusted him with this information until now, even if he disliked that fact, but he wasn’t quite sure how to take the sudden trust placed in him now. Despite bearing the Slytherin name, Peverell was unlike any Slytherin he had ever met. He could be the perfect pureblood Lord one moment, and then behave shockingly

Gryffindorish the next, part of which he felt he could attribute to Black's influence, but part of which he felt was likely just Peverell's nature, as confusing as it was.

If Lucius came out of today with one certainty, however, it would be that Peverell was *not* aiming to be the next Dark Lord. In fact, the entire idea seemed completely revolting to him, regardless of the power he possessed or the striking similarities he bore to the previous one.

And Severus... Severus's behavior had been unusual to say the least. He had behaved in a way unlike anything Lucius had seen from him before, but he had not had time to press Severus for an explanation before he had had to return to Hogwarts. What was going on with him?

He had shown more emotion than Lucius could ever remember him showing before, and he had seemed quite intimidated by Peverell, who, to be fair, was rather intimidating when angered. Or anytime, really. Best to just stay on his good side. But for Severus to show anything of the sort meant that he had been deeply affected. Lucius would have to keep a close eye on his friend.

---

*October 12, 1992*

"Harry, you have to leave the house sometime."

"No, I don't. And you can't make me."

Sirius sighed, closed his eyes, and counted to ten. Then again in French, and once more in Italian. Peeking his eyes open he saw Harry sitting with his arms firmly crossed in front of his chest and closed his eyes again, repeating the exercise in Bulgarian, Russian, Latin, Greek, and German for good measure.

"I didn't know you spoke all those languages," Harry said, drawing Sirius out of his musings over the number eight in Estonian... He couldn't quite remember...

"Oh, I don't," Sirius replied.

"But, you're speaking them," Harry countered.

Sirius chuckled. "I can count to ten, maybe twenty, ask a girl out, and insult your family honor, but that's about as far as I got in most of them."

Harry laughed. Good. Distract him, then drag him out when his guard was down. "Any you do speak?"

Sirius shrugged. "My French is fine, my Italian is decent, and I can get by in Russian in a pinch, but everything else is limited to flirting and insults, mostly."

Harry grinned. "So maybe not things to go teach Ivy then?"

Sirius mock shuddered. "I don't need Lily coming back from the afterlife to kick my arse, thank you very much."

Harry laughed again and Sirius saw his chance. He lunged at Harry, pulled him towards the fireplace and shouted out their destination as he threw a hidden handful of floo powder in. Time for Lord Peverell-Slytherin to make an appearance.

---

“I hate you.”

“I know.”

“So much.”

“I know.”

“You owe me for this.”

“Always.”

Sirius was not at all affected by Harry’s scowl, although plenty of other people were giving them a wide berth.

“Where are we even going?” Harry demanded.

“Public,” Sirius replied.

“I hate the public.”

“I know.”

“I still hate you.”

“I know.”

Harry, finally noticing the people giving him wary looks and parting the way as he stormed down the road, gave in a little and slowed his pace, putting on the I’m-not-happy-but-you’re-never-going-to-be-able-to-tell face that was part of the standard Pureblood facial expression arsenal. Sirius was actually rather impressed that he could pull those faces off.

He wiped a fake tear off. “If only James could see you now. He’d be so horrified he’d probably roll over in his grave,” he teased. Harry’s face broke into a sneer worthy of any member of the Wizengamot, but he wasn’t able to hold it and instead burst out laughing.

“I take it he wasn’t a fan?”

Sirius scoffed. “Understatement of the century right there,” he said. “Probably because he couldn’t pull a face like that to save his skin,” he stage whispered.

Harry rolled his eyes. “And you could?”

Sirius puffed up. “Of course I could. I learned from the bastards. I mean best,” he said, obviously not at all sorry about the “slip.”

Harry snorted.

“How else do you think he managed to get the most detentions out of all of us?”

Harry raised an eyebrow. “By causing the most trouble perhaps?”

Sirius smirked. “No, that honor would have to go to Remus.”

He thoroughly enjoyed the shocked expression on Harry’s face.

“You can’t be serious,” Harry said, before realizing what he said and groaning.

“Well as a matter of fact,” Sirius said, laughing at Harry’s put upon expression.

---

A few minutes later they had arrived at what was apparently their destination.

Harry’s face fell. “You can’t be...” He caught himself just in time. “Please tell me you’re joking,” he said, sending a pleading look Sirius’s way.

“Nope.” Sirius looked far too smug.

“I hate you.”

“I know.”

Harry breathed in, resigning himself to his fate and thinking of creative suggestions he could give Barty when they got home.

As they entered, Harry caught sight of some familiar faces (as well as a few unfamiliar ones), and his heart sank. Sirius was so in for it when they got home.

“Ladies,” Sirius said, greeting the group. “Thank you for joining us.”

Harry gulped and managed a nod at the six ladies seated at the large table.

“Harry, you know Narcissa, Sabrina, and Anthea, of course, but may I present Lady Samira Harrington, Lady Remei Parkinson, and Lady Carita Burke.”

Harry suppressed an eye twitch. For supposedly hating Slytherins Sirius sure knew a lot of them. Or at least the witches. Actually, no, that made sense. Then again, it was possible they weren’t actually all Slytherins, not that it mattered entirely, but still. And of course it was entirely coincidence that these were all the mothers of children Ivy associated with regularly...

Right. Coincidence.

“Did Ivy put you up to this?” Harry asked, although not quietly enough it seemed because all six ladies gave him a knowing smirk. It was scary.

“Nope. I can ask her if you want,” Sirius said with a grin.

All of them laughed at Harry’s scowl.

---

“So, Sirius tells us that you are single,” Lady Harrington said. At least he was pretty sure that’s who it was.

Harry’s face must have betrayed him because Sirius chuckled and said, “don’t worry. All these lovely ladies are married or otherwise engaged...”

“I’m not so sure about that,” Sabrina chimed in. “I’d consider an upgrade.”

Harry’s face flushed at her wink and Sirius continued on as if he hadn’t heard a thing, although a bit louder than before.

“All spoken for, and none of them have daughters they’d try to pair off with you so you’re safe from that at least.”

“Thank Merlin,” Harry muttered. All the ladies (and Sirius) laughed. “Great, so why am I here?”

Narcissa placed a hand on his arm. “Sirius told us how uncomfortable you are in society, dear, and we thought we could all lend you a hand.”

Harry let himself relax and he let out a breath he hadn’t realized he had been holding.

“And maybe help you find a nice young woman...”

He’d let his guard down too early. He looked at Narcissa and panicked. He’d seen that expression before. Draco’s twenty first birthday, to be exact, to which he had reluctantly gone, per Narcissa’s persistent request. Command was perhaps the more accurate description. Regardless, he had shown up fully prepared to stand unnoticed on the sidelines, but Narcissa had grabbed him and introduced him to so many witches... So many. He let go a mental shudder at the memory. Narcissa’s face looked far too similar at the moment for his liking, and he knew that if she (and the other ladies present he suspected) had her (their) way, he would find himself married within the year. He had held out once but Narcissa had been acting alone with only occasional assistance from Andy. Now there were six of them.

Harry gulped.

---

“So, how did it go?”

Harry glared at Barty. “You *knew*?”

Barty looked puzzled. “Of course I knew. Black said it was important.”

Harry’s eye twitched.



Barty grinned. “And I was the one who suggested Lady Burke. She used to set everyone up.”

Harry’s eye twitched some more, but Barty looked so proud of himself that Harry couldn’t bring himself to say anything. Instead he decided on a different plan of attack.

“So Barty, Sirius was the absolute worst today, and...”

“Torture?”

“What? No. But maybe a prank or two.”

“I’m in.”

If Barty was determined to be Harry’s minion, well, at least there was *some* benefit.

“So here’s what I was thinking...”

---

Lucius and Narcissa looked up startled as Sirius Black came hurtling through their floo.

“How did he...” Lucius started to say. “You know what? Never mind. Black,” he said, turning his attention to their unexpected guest, “what are you doing here?”

“Narcissa, you’ve got to help me. He’s after me and he won’t stop.”

Lucius muttered a “thank Merlin” and left his wife to deal with her relative.

Narcissa smirked. “So he didn’t appreciate being ambushed after all?”

“What? No, but he’ll live. No. It’s the *other* one. Barty won’t give up. And Harry put him up to it I just know it.”

Narcissa laughed. “And you didn’t go to Sabrina because.”

Sirius mumbled something she didn’t quite catch.

“Sorry, what was that?”

“She laughed at me,” Sirius muttered a little louder. Narcissa smirked.

Just then Barty came flying through the floo as well.

Sirius squeaked and ran behind Narcissa. “You have to hide me.”

Narcissa rolled her eyes. “You are a grown man, Sirius. You can handle it yourself.”

Sirius gasped. “You can’t prove that!”

Suddenly Barty was nearly on top of him but paused suddenly at the sight of Lady Malfoy.

“Oh, uh, hello, Lady Malfoy,” he said, clearly debating whether he should focus on his manners or on catching Sirius.

“He’s all yours, Barty dear,” Narcissa said.

Sirius gasped again. “You would side with him against me? But we’re *family*,” he whined.

“*He* came to my wedding.”

“He was *thirteen*.”

“But he was *there*.”

“You’re never going to let that go, are you.”

Narcissa smiled serenely and Sirius knew he was on his own. Only one thing left to do.

“LUCIUS!”

---

Lucius, hearing some commotion or other in his house and figuring his wife could deal with it, took a seat in his study, opening up a book and settling in for a nice relaxing evening. It would be better if Narcissa was there to join him, but she was rather preoccupied with family matters at the moment, so he would leave her alone to take care of it as she wished.

A few minutes later he heard his name being shouted and the unmistakeable sound of footsteps drawing closer. Muttering a curse he grabbed a handful of floo powder and called out the first address that came to mind. There was not enough gold in the world to convince him to deal with his wife’s family.

---

Harry looked up, expecting to see Sirius or Barty, since by now at least one of them must have tired from the chase. He was actually sincerely impressed at both of them for having lasted this long. But instead of either of his somewhat permanent houseguests, he was greeted with the sight of Lucius Malfoy stumbling out of the floo. He had left it open for emergencies, since two people he was somewhat responsible for were chasing each other across Wizarding Britain, but he still hadn’t expected anyone else to actually show up.

Lucius looked frazzled but it only took a moment for him to regain his composure and his standard pureblood mask.

“Would you mind terribly if I joined you for a little while this evening? I apologize for showing up unannounced.”

Harry gestured for Lucius to take a seat. “I think it’s probably my fault for making you leave in the first place, so make yourself at home. Tea?”

Lucius thanked him and settled into a seat.

“So. Sirius?”

Lucius nodded, only slightly betraying his displeasure at the evening's events.

"Yeah, sorry about that. Like I said, it's probably my fault. I... Actually, you know what? It is Sirius's fault. Feel free to stay as long as you'd like though."

Lucius thanked him again and Harry settled into one of the strangest one on one conversations he had had in a long time, mentally calculating the chances that Sirius would capitulate before Barty.

---

"Thank you, Winky. Now, how is the deal for new school brooms going?"

When Harry didn't receive an answer he looked up to see Lucius staring blankly at the space Winky had occupied just a moment ago.

"Um, Lucius? You alright?"

Lucius was broken out of his trance and turned his focus to Harry. "That was a..."

"House elf?" Harry finished for him. "Yes, that's Winky. I thought you had house elves," he said, frowning, thinking of Dobby. Ah, bloody... He'd forgotten to get Dobby out. Hermione was going to show up from another universe at some point and kill him. Brutally.

"Yes, but you were..."

Harry sighed, bracing himself for the oncoming discussion of house elves and their welfare. It wasn't that he didn't care, it was just... Hermione was way better at this than he was, or at least more dedicated. He tried so hard to explain it to people in a way that didn't involve calling them stupid, heartless monsters at some point while simultaneously offending the elves themselves, but he was really bad at it and failed most of the time.

"Yes, I find it works better when I am polite to them, don't you?" He wasn't sure why he had said it that way, but he was still grumpy from Sirius's "intervention" that afternoon and he was feeling a tad snarky.

"Oh, um, no, I mean, I..."

Never mind. Seeing Lucius Malfoy trip up on something like this was worth all the pain he had suffered today up to this point.

---

Lucius was panicking and using all his willpower to not show it. This was clearly a test of some kind, and he had no idea what the correct response was. And *house elves*? No one cared about house elves, hence his complete unpreparedness for this situation. Worst of all, Peverell seemed *amused* at his discomfort.

This was terrible. What was it about this man that caused everyone around him to lose their composure? Severus had been his way just the other day as well. And why was Lucius so desperate to be in his good graces? His usual answers of political leverage, influence,

business connections, and so on and so forth seemed inadequate to describe this particular situation.

---

*October 14, 1992*

“Hey, are you writing your girlfriend again?”

Thomas cringed. He was never, ever, going to live this down. Someone would find out eventually and he would be doomed. “No, just writing mum.”

Ivy looked excited at that for some unknown reason. “Perfect! Would you mind sending my letter with yours?”

“Why are you writing my mum?”

“Well she is helping Sirius help Henry meet people to date and I wrote all of them telling them exactly what they ought to look for.”

Thomas’s eye twitched. “You godfather asked my mum to help play matchmaker?”

Ivy nodded. “And Kenneth’s mum, and Draco’s mum, and Daphne’s mum, and Pansy’s mum, and Blaise’s mum,” she said, counting off on her fingers.

Thomas suddenly felt the distinct need to absolve himself of any responsibility regarding any possible outcomes of this situation. “Here,” he said, handing his newly finished letter to Ivy. “Would you mind sending them both off?”

Ivy took the letter. “You want to come see Hilda with me?”

“No, I’m good.”

Ivy shrugged and began walking away. “Say hi to my owl for me,” he called out for the benefit of no one in particular. Better safe than sorry.

---

*October 15, 1992*

Harry had received plenty of strange letters over his lifetime but this had to rank somewhere up there.

*Dear Lord Peverell,*

*I promise I had absolutely nothing to do with Ivy’s letters and would like to assure you of my complete innocence in the entire matter. Also, please do not hold my mother’s actions against me and if she tries to suggest you meet one of her cousins I would advise you to please decline.*

*Sincerely,*

*Thomas Harrington*

Harry walked around for a minute until he found Sirius, who was seated next to Sabrina, both poring over something or other.

“Hey Sirius, do you know anything about some letters Ivy sent out?”

The panicked look that turned to sheer, unconvincing innocence was enough answer for Harry.

“Is it true you despise the color orange and prefer plums to any other fruit?” Sabrina asked amusedly.

“What? Where did you hear that?”

“Ivy sent me a letter.”

Ivy sent her a... Oh no. Oh no no no.

“And was yours the only one sent?” Unlikely, but he deserved hope.

“Remei and Samira both commented on the lovely letters they received for Ivy.”

Harry let his head fall forward to the table with a bang and groaned. It was going to be Montréal all over again.

---

***LORD PEVERELL-SLYTHERIN: MOST ELIGIBLE BACHELOR LOOKING FOR LOVE?***

“I hate you.”

Sirius winced. “I know.”

“This is all your fault.”

“Would it help if I said I originally got the idea from Ivy?”

“What would possibly make you think that would help?”

“It was worth a shot?”

Harry’s eye twitched continuously for nearly an hour. It was a record even Ivy hadn’t beaten yet, and he was determined she would never find out. She didn’t need any more encouragement.

## Chapter 28

*October 31, 1992*

“Something dreadful is going to happen.”

“You don’t know that.”

“Something dreadful always happens on Halloween.”

“I thought you weren’t superstitious.”

“It’s not superstition, it’s a well-thought out conclusion drawn from previous experience.”

“But you can’t make me go by myself.”

“Watch me. Besides, you won’t be by yourself. You have Sabrina.”

“That’s why you have to go with me. She’s making me go and it’s going to be all Slytherins there,” Sirius pleaded.

“You didn’t seem to mind a couple weeks ago.”

“Are you still on about that?”

“Yes.”

“I said I was sorry,” Sirius muttered.

“No, you said you were sorry for making me have to explain to half a dozen people why someone who looked like Barty Crouch Jr. was running around chasing you.”

“On the bright side we know his new identity will hold up.”

Harry sighed. “I can’t believe that worked,” he said, shaking his head and looking up at the sky.

Sirius shrugged. “Well, everyone here is related anyway, so it’s not that big of a stretch to have some second cousin that looks similar.”

Harry kicked an invisible rock in front of him. “So, do you think it’s too late to back out of this?”

Sirius mumbled something that Harry couldn’t quite make out.

“What was that?”

“Hmm? Nothing. Just calculating the probability that I would meet an early death if I left you here by yourself.”

Harry raised an eyebrow. “Very high. Higher when you consider that you’d be leaving Sabrina here as well.”

Sirius gulped. “Well, let it not be said that I lack self-preservation instincts.”

Harry snorted.

“Okay fine. Let it not be said *again* that I lack self-preservation instincts.”

“Better.”

“Tomorrow’s no guarantee though.”

“But of course.”

“Once more unto the breach?”

Sirius and Harry shared a glance and both stood up a little straighter.

---

“Ah, Lord Peverell, or should I say, Lord *Slytherin*. How good to see you.”

Harry grimaced a bit and turned around. “Lord Deverill,” he said with a polite nod.

“What luck it is running into you here. I was hoping for an opportunity to hear your stance on...”

---

“Henry is looking rather uncomfortable, isn’t he,” Anthea said. The other two ladies nodded.

“Shall we help him?” Remei asked.

“Leave it to me,” their hostess replied. “I’ve been dealing with Magnus for years.”

---

Harry was only mildly panicking. He had no idea what Lord Deverill was asking him about. He probably ought to pay more attention to the current political climate, but it was a little late for that right now. Suddenly he spied Carita Burke coming their way. He allowed himself the tiniest ray of hope that...

“Ah, Magnus, so good to see you. Thank you so much for joining us this evening.”

Lord Deverill and Lady Burke exchanged pleasantries, and soon Harry found himself whisked away from the uncomfortable conversation. As he was pulled towards a small group of familiar faces he couldn’t help but feel that he had a new favorite person in the world.

---

An hour later he decided he actually had six new favorite people, although Narcissa was technically on the list already. For once he was actually *enjoying* a social event. What a pleasant way to spend an evening.

“Henry, do you have a partner for the first dance?”

Never mind.

His face must have given him away because Narcissa laughed and said, “Don’t you worry, dear. We’ll take good care of you.”

---

In the end he ended up dancing with each of the six ladies who may or may not be working with Sirius to set him up, but as it prevented him from being forced to dance with any of the witches giving him flirtatious smiles he wasn’t about to complain. A couple of them had tried to introduce him to some unmarried witches, but Lady Burke had once again come to his rescue and had kept introductions to a minimum. Thus, he made it through the entire evening without a single uncomfortable dance or awkward encounter of unfortunate length.

As they made their way home Sirius asked, “So, does this mean I’m forgiven?”

Harry simply grinned. “Nope.”

---

Ivy wasn’t sure she really felt like celebrating tonight. Despite what had happened on this day years ago she didn’t feel a particular somberness in association with the day itself, but it did tend to make her think a little bit more than usual about her family. Last year had been fine, but this year she was a little preoccupied with thoughts on her family, and it left her in not the most celebratory of moods.

Most of her friends seemed to sense this, and several offered their condolences, no doubt assuming she was thinking of her parents. She was, in a way, but it was too difficult to try and explain what she was really focused on, so she just accepted their words with a heartfelt smile and thanked them for their concern. This seemed to satisfy most people, but some of her closest friends were not as easily persuaded that she was, in fact, alright.

In fact, she had been rather ganged up on when it was time to go to the feast. The twins and Draco had both tried a distracting technique, Neville had shrugged his shoulders in apology for their antics, and Hermione had insisted that they head towards the great hall now so they wouldn’t be late for the feast. When she didn’t respond in the way they had probably hoped, they all shot each other looks of concern that were hard to miss.

In the end it was Luna that had come to her rescue, skillfully directing the others in a way Ivy was almost sure she would never be able to replicate. There just wasn’t anyone else quite like Luna, and Ivy loved her for it.

Finding herself alone with Neville, they walked together in companionable silence towards the hall, making no efforts to catch up with the rest of the group.



“Is it hard today?” Neville blurted out, looking apologetic as soon as he did so.

Ivy shrugged. “Not really. Not in the way people keep thinking, I guess.”

Neville looked like he wasn’t quite sure what to say, so they continued on in silence for another minute.

Finally, Ivy broke the silence. “Neville, do you miss your parents?”

His breath caught a bit and she felt bad for asking him. “Sorry,” she mumbled.

Neville shook his head. “It’s alright. I do. I think I miss what it could have been like, you know? If they had been okay?”

Ivy nodded. “Do you think...” She trailed off, and Neville paused, turning towards her.

“Yeah?”

Ivy stared at the ground, kicking an imaginary rock on the ground. “Do you think I’m a bad person if I don’t?”

“Don’t what?” Neville’s voice was concerned, but kind.

“If I don’t miss them,” Ivy said softly.

Neville seemed to think about it for a minute. “No,” he said finally, shaking his head. “I don’t think so.”

Ivy smiled slightly, though it didn’t reach her eyes. “Thanks, Neville.”

He smiled back at her but made no move to continue walking.

Ivy looked up at him, wondering what he was thinking.

“Ivy, remember last year, with the mirror?”

Ivy frowned. “Yes?”

Neville shifted on his feet a bit. “Did you, I mean... You didn’t see your parents, did you?”

Now it was Ivy’s turn to shift uncomfortably and Neville flushed. “Sorry,” he said. “You don’t have to tell me.”

“No, no, it’s okay,” Ivy reassured him. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you then, but I wanted to get us out of there and...”

“Why?”

Ivy was taken aback by Neville’s question. “Well, it seemed like a dangerous thing. It showed us something that wasn’t real. It showed us what we wanted, but how did it know that? It didn’t seem like a good thing to be around for too long.”

Neville sighed. "Yeah, I guess you're right."

"Sorry, Neville."

Neville shrugged. "It's okay. I think you're probably right. But why did you say you saw your parents?"

Ivy clutched her arm across her chest. "I said I saw my family, which wasn't really a lie. I... I did see my family. Just not my parents."

Neville gave her a questioning look. "So you saw Henry?"

Ivy smiled softly. "Yeah. And Sirius, and Remus, and you..." Neville blushed. "And Fred, and George, and Draco, and Percy, and Thomas, and a whole lot of others, but there were some people I didn't recognize, and..."

Now she brushed off a rogue tear that threatened to fall. "There was someone with Henry. And he looked so happy, and it was like we were a real family," she finished softly.

In a slightly uncharacteristic move for the shy boy, Neville threw his arms around her and gave her a big hug. "Does this mean we can be family?" he asked.

She returned the hug with equal force. "Of course we are."

Neville smiled at her and she smiled back. "Thanks, Ivy."

---

Percy turned at the feel of someone tapping on his shoulder. He was surprised to see Neville Longbottom there, but was even more surprised at what the younger boy whispered in his ear. Percy nodded and got up from his seat at the Gryffindor table, to the relief of Longbottom who went to go find his own seat. Fred and George shot him a concerned look and he mouthed "Ivy" at them, but at their move to get up also he shook his head and they reluctantly sat back down.

A few minutes later he found Ivy, and she expressed her surprise at seeing him there instead of at the feast. He explained that Neville had told him she was out there and could use his assistance.

Ivy grinned. "Well, he did say you're the smartest person he knows."

Percy couldn't help but preen slightly at the compliment, even if he wasn't entirely confident his intelligence extended to giving advice on emotion and life problems to preteen girls. Ginny certainly hadn't been impressed with his efforts in that regard.

"So... Lon... *Neville* said that you needed someone to talk to. Is everything okay?" He mentally cringed, because of course it wasn't okay. At least Ivy didn't seem to take offense.

"Yeah, it's fine I guess. You know, today is the day my parents died."

Percy felt in no way adequately prepared for this type of conversation, but he wasn't a Gryffindor for nothing. Taking a deep breath, he nodded, wondering what he could say. "Sorry" just didn't seem to cut it.

"Neville said it was okay that I don't miss them a lot. Do you think that makes me a bad person?"

Percy had been frantically preparing for several sorts of conversations but that was not one of them. "No," he said. "I don't think so."

Ivy looked at him hopefully.

Percy cleared his throat. "It's just, you didn't know them, not really." Great job, Percy. Way to be sensitive. Where was Penny when you needed help with uncomfortable emotional discussions? "And you can still care about them without spending all your time missing them," he continued. There. That was a little better.

Ivy smiled up at him. "You're right," she said. "I do care, so that's alright then, right?"

Percy nodded and smiled at her, feeling relieved that he didn't completely screw this up.

"Say, Percy, do you think Henry will get married?"

Oh boy.

"Um, maybe? Why?"

Ivy mumbled something that he couldn't make out. Percy nudged her and grinned. "Couldn't hear you."

"Because I want us to be a real family."

Once again, oh boy. Percy frowned slightly. "How are you not a really family?"

"Well, it's just Henry and I. And Sirius, and Remus, and Neville and..."

Percy chuckled. "Sounds a lot like a family to me."

Ivy looked up quizzically. "How so?"

"Lots of people," he said, grinning. She rolled her eyes.

"But we're not actually related."

"So?"

"So, it's not real, is it?"

"Why not?"

Ivy looked thoughtful.

“They all care about you, right?”

“Yeah,” Ivy said, still looking rather contemplative.

“And you care about them?”

“Yeah.”

“Sounds like a family to me.”

“So you really can be my family?”

Percy felt a little lighter at that question. “Of course I can. I could always use more sisters.”

Ivy grinned. “And Charlie,” she added.

“You sure you don’t want the twins?” Percy said with a mock groan.

“Them too,” Ivy said in complete seriousness.

“Why don’t you just take all my siblings while you’re at it,” Percy said teasingly.

Ivy seemed to consider it for a moment. “Done,” she said, sticking out her hand, which Percy took and gave a firm shake.

“Well, should we go into the feast now?”

Ivy stared in the direction of the Great Hall. “Do we have to?”

“I suppose not...”

“Great!” she said enthusiastically. “To the kitchens!” With that she grabbed Percy’s hand and dragged him down the hall.

“Wait, how do you know where those are?” he asked.

“Fred and George.”

“Of course it was.”

“It was one of the first things they showed me.”

“Of course it was.”

“One time we met there in the middle of the night and the elves gave us all the leftover puddings from dinner.”

“I really did not need to know that.”

Ivy just grinned.

---

*November 1, 1992*

“Molly, is everything alright?” Arthur looked nervously at his wife, who was clutching a letter and had silent tears running down her face. To his relief she smiled at him and handed him the letter she had been holding.

He read it and was completely surprised by the time he got to the end, nearly choking up himself.

“Oh Arthur, do you think Percy is alright? It’s so unlike him to write something like that.”

Arthur smiled and wrapped his wife in a tight embrace. “I think everything is just fine,” he whispered.

With a smile and a nod Molly took the letter again and went to place it in the box she kept her most treasured letters and mementos in.

Neither one stopped smiling the rest of the day.

---

“Alright, ladies. What do we have?”

All six ladies presented their findings from the previous evening. Ivy Potter’s suggestions had been helpful, but it appeared some of them were slightly exaggerated. What had not been exaggerated, however, was Henry Peverell’s discomfort in society. They had their work cut out for them.

Nearly three hours later they had something resembling a plan of action. They had a list of social events they felt would be most conducive to their ultimate goal of acclimating Henry into wizarding society, and had a list of people to help him get to know, as well as a list of people to avoid. Priscus Walmsley was a sweet boy but his boisterous behavior and tendency to draw unfavorable attention to himself was not really in keeping with their plans.

“Do you think Henry would be more suited to someone like Julia Botterill or someone like Helen Plaskitt?”

Remei Parkinson’s question began a whole other round of discussions. It could never be said that these ladies didn’t take their goals seriously.

---

*November 6, 1992*

Several students scurried around the two sixth year boys guarding a corner of the Hufflepuff table. Most were willing to give them a wide berth due either to their imposing stance or the glares that they gave anyone who came too close or made too much noise.

Much further down the hall, seated at the Ravenclaw table, five fourth years stuck their heads together.

“How do we get her out?” Fred whispered.

“Why do we need to get her out at all?” Terence whispered back.

“Guys, why am I even here?”

“Shut up, Diggory,” came the other four voices.

“We need a neutral party,” George explained. Cedric nodded but didn’t look particularly appeased.

“We could snatch and grab?” Adrian offered.

George and Terence looked at him skeptically. “You want to try that against those two?” George asked, pointing towards the self-proclaimed bodyguards.

Adrian cringed. “Yeah, maybe not.”

Terence snorted. “No kidding.”

“Okay, well what about a distraction?”

“What are you going to do, release a bludger?”

The look on Adrian’s face was apparently not what Fred had in mind.

“No, kidding, let’s definitely *not* do that,” Fred said quickly.

“Yeah, we do place some value on our lives,” George added.

“And if we died in a bludger accident the day before the game Oliver would kill us.”

“Aren’t you two supposed to be beaters?” Terence asked, frowning slightly.

“Yes,” the twins said in unison before turning their attention back to Pucey.

“So no bludgers. That’s a terrible idea.”

“Although maybe a great idea for another day.”

Terence glared at Adrian, who shrunk in his seat a little, worried that he might have accidentally given the Weasley twins an idea. Never a good thing, in the opinion of most of the rest of their year.

“So, any other terrible ideas?” Fred asked.

“Hey, I don’t see you coming up with any.”

“That’s because genius takes time, my dear fellow.”

“Hey, where’d Diggory go?”

The four remaining boys looked around.

“Wait, is that...”

“What’s he doing?”

“Is he actually just trying to *talk* to them?”

“Like that’s ever going to work.”

“Merlin, are they actually letting him near her?”

“What do you suppose he said to get them to do that?”

“Wait, is she getting up?”

“And Flint is *letting* her?”

“Is he... *smiling*?”

“Did we seriously just get outsmarted by a Hufflepuff?”

“We’re never going to live this down.”

“Should we go after them?”

“Quick, look away. Flint and Wood are coming over here.”

“Make it look like we’re studying or something.”

“With *what*?”

“I don’t know, one of you has to have a book, right?”

“Why would you assume that?”

“Well anytime we see Harrington with Percy he always has a stack of books.”

“Yes but they’re like the two smartest people in the school and also Harrington is crazy scary. Have you *seen* some of those books he carries around?”

“Do you think they’re gone?”

“Hello, boys.”

The four fourth years each gulped and looked up to see their respective quidditch captains.

“Hey, Wood. Just talking about you,” Fred said jokingly.

“And I hope it had absolutely nothing to do with Ivy or any plan to distract her today, would it?”

Fred laughed nervously. “Of course not. Why would you say that?”

Both captains lifted an eyebrow in sync, making the other boys shrink in their seats a bit.

“Just so we’re clear, *no one* will distract her from quidditch, *is that clear?*” Flint said quietly but with an effective amount of intimidation in his voice.

“Yes sir,” the two Slytherins said quickly, the Gryffindor beaters nodding along with wide eyes.

After staring their players down for a moment, the two quidditch captains appeared satisfied with the results they had brought about and nodded to the boys before turning and stalking off.

When they were safely out of range the four boys turned back to each other.

“That was scary.”

“Whoever let them together?”

“Any chance we can get them to hate each other again?”

---

“So, where are we going?”

“Quidditch pitch.”

Ivy nodded. “Should I go get my broom?”

Cedric shook his head. “No. Unless you want to go flying.”

Ivy shrugged. “I wouldn’t mind, but I did already go today. Twice.”

Cedric chuckled. “Yeah, I figured as much. You know the others were trying to figure out how to rescue you?”

“Really?” Ivy said, laughing. “From what?”

“Your bodyguards, apparently.”

“Oh, you mean Oliver and Marcus?”

Cedric grinned and nodded. “They were plotting how to help you make your escape.”

Ivy laughed. “That’s silly. They just wanted me to get my homework done quickly so I wouldn’t be distracted tomorrow.”

“Alright, well what’ve you got?”

“Well, there’s this part in the transfiguration book I don’t get. I mean, it works when I do it but I can’t figure out *why* and I have this essay I’m supposed to do.”

“Well let’s take a look, shall we?”



Ivy beamed. “Thanks.”

“No problem.”

---

“So how do I fix it?”

“I honestly have no idea.”

“Really?” Ivy deflated slightly.

Cedric chuckled. “Most people don’t have a problem with not knowing what spell they’re using to get something done.”

“Oh, why is that?”

Cedric laughed out loud. “You do realize most people actually *say* their spells, right?”

Ivy’s mouth opened and shut. “But what about when I can’t remember which spell it is?”

“Is that what’s happening here?”

Ivy nodded.

“So you are just, what? Waving your wand around and hoping to get the right result?”

Ivy nodded again.

Cedric looked up at the sky. “Okay, tell me what you’re thinking when you do it.”

“Well, I’m thinking about what I want to happen.”

“So are you visualizing the result?”

“Yeah, I guess so.”

Cedric grabbed a rock off the ground and tossed it to Ivy, who caught it automatically.

“Okay, how about this. See if you can change that into a stick.”

Ivy put on her best concentrating face and did just that.

“Okay good. Now change the color.”

A moment later the stick was blue.

“Now change it into a glass cup.”

Another moment later she handed him a glass cup.

“Okay, so what did you do?”

“I made it do what I wanted.”

“How?”

Ivy’s brow furrowed as she considered the question. “I... I think I pushed a lot of magic into doing what I wanted it to do.”

“Did you think any spells or words?”

“Just to change the color. I remember that one.”

“Did it feel any different?”

Ivy considered her answer for a moment. “I guess. It was easier, I suppose. I didn’t feel the magic moving so much.”

Cedric grinned. “Great. So how about you try using a spell for the other ones.”

He demonstrated the correct spell a couple times and then Ivy mimicked his actions.

“Like that?” she asked.

Cedric nodded. “Just like that. Feel any different?”

Ivy frowned. “I didn’t feel much of anything. Is that normal?”

“Yeah,” he said, chuckling. “You’re not using as much of your magic to make it do what you want, so you’re not feeling it as closely.”

Ivy nodded in understanding before scrunching her nose. “Does this mean I have to remember all the spells?”

Cedric laughed. “It’d probably help, yeah. But that shouldn’t be too hard. Aren’t you way ahead in most of your spellwork anyway?”

“But that doesn’t mean I *remember* them,” Ivy pouted. “I just remember what they *do*.”

Cedric laughed again and shook his head. “Only you, Ivy. Only you.”

---

“What are they doing?”

“I can’t see. Budge over.”

“They’re not flying. Why aren’t they flying?”

“Are they doing... *homework*?”

“You mean to tell me that Diggory got Ivy out of there just to do *homework*?”

“Looks like it. Here, see for yourself.”

Fred gasped. "He's corrupting her."

Terence frowned. "How so?"

"He's going to make her be all *boring*."

"We have to put a stop to this."

"Come on, this can't be the first time you've seen her studying."

"But she's studying on the *quidditch pitch*. That's not what it's *for*."

"That's true," Terence admitted.

"So are you in?"

"Yes."

---

"And what are you four doing here?"

As they scampered away Adrian turned to Fred and asked, "Where did they even *come* from?"

Fred just shook his head. "No idea."

---

*November 7, 1992*

"WELCOME TO THE FIRST QUIDDITCH MATCH OF THE SEASON," Jordan's voice bellowed across the speaker. Cheers erupted throughout the stands, particularly in one section of the Ravenclaw section. Pansy wondered why she had let herself be talked into sitting there.

The teams came onto the field, and the cheers grew louder.

"...PRIDE AND JOY OF THE GRYFFINDOR TEAM AND THE NEW SLYTHERIN SEEKER, IVY POTTER!"

The rest of second years sitting in Ravenclaw cheered particularly loudly at that part. Pansy cheered also, but she wasn't about to embarrass herself by making a scene.

What followed was one of the most exciting quidditch game the school had seen for sometime. It was also the *only* quidditch game most of the students had seen for some time, it being the first one of the year and all, so the general mood was one of excitement. Still, the game was rather exciting. Or at least that's what everyone around Pansy kept telling her. She didn't particularly care for quidditch (to Draco's everlasting horror), and she couldn't be bothered to follow along too closely, but there were some occasional highlights she found entertaining.

One of the Weasley twins performed some stunt or other that, while ultimately effective as far as she could tell, very nearly resulted in him falling off his broom. It was comical and Pansy decided that regardless of what else happened during the match that would be the highlight of the game for her. She found the twins incredibly annoying and didn't understand at all why Draco and Ivy both insisted on hanging out with them all the time.

She watched the other players, trying to remember all their names. Paying attention to the commentary in an attempt to catch the names was far too much effort. The Slytherin team was easy, especially since they had all routinely interrupted her claim on Ivy's time the past two weeks. Not that she was bitter about that or anything, but didn't people realize that the second year Slytherin girls' girl time was far more important than all this quidditch nonsense? She could almost hear Draco's gasp in the distance... But even Millie left her precious little Herbology club for their girl time. But did any of those boys appreciate it? *No*. For them it was all "quidditch this" and "quidditch that" and "no, Parkinson, you can't kidnap Potter and keep her away from quidditch practice."

So how had Diggory managed it? For a Hufflepuff he sure was holding well against her usual threats. He hadn't even appeared frightened, instead he had looked almost amused, and it was annoying. Oh well. That was a problem for another day.

Oh look, Draco made a shot. Even Pansy knew Wood was really good so that was probably impressive. She was sure she'd hear all about it later.

Just then Ivy and the Gryffindor seeker whose name Pansy didn't know and didn't care to try and figure out sped by. Had someone seen the snitch? She smiled smugly to herself. And Draco thought she didn't know anything about quidditch.

Someone passed the Quaffle to someone else (ha! Draco), and eventually someone scored. Terence eventually scored for Slytherin. He was cute. Oh, and then one of the Gryffindor chasers scored. Did her fellow second years ever get tired of cheering? And did they have to cheer for *every single score*? It didn't even matter who scored. Maybe they liked the sound of their own yells.

Next time she was sitting with the rest of the civilized people over in Slytherin.

Flint did something that was apparently impressive because a loud roar went up from the Slytherin section. Never mind. They were just as bad.

Pansy looked around to see if there was any decent group of students she could join. Up on the top row she spotted Granger who was focused entirely on a book and not at all on the game. She sighed, but resigned herself to her fate. It was worth the sacrifice to have a few moments without someone screaming in her ear.

---

Hermione looked up, startled at the unexpected sound of someone sitting down next to her.

Seeing who it was, she frowned slightly and opened her mouth to ask Parkinson what she wanted.

“Are you going to cheer fanatically at any point in this game?” Parkinson asked.

Surprised, Hermione just shook her head.

“Good,” was all Parkinson said, before turning her face back towards the match.

Hermione waited for a minute to see if the Slytherin was going to say anything else, but the other girl seemed determined to ignore her, so she eventually returned to her book, puzzled, but not entirely upset.

---

“...caught the snitch of course, but it was getting close in points, and did you see that shot I made?”

“Mmhmm.”

“And then...”

Pansy tuned Draco out. A few minutes later she realized he had stopped talking. “Sorry, what was that?”

“I asked if you think the bludgers should go faster.”

Pansy frowned. “Can’t you just throw them harder?”

Draco’s eye twitched. “You don’t *throw* bludgers, Pansy. You hit them. And they go flying through the air and try to crash into you.”

“Sorry. I forgot.”

“But I just explained it to you on Tuesday.”

“Which I totally paid attention to until I got bored and stopped listening.”

Draco threw himself dramatically onto the sofa. “I can’t believe my two best friends don’t even care about quidditch,” he whined into the cushion.

“Ivy is literally on the team with you.”

“But she doesn’t *care*.”

Pansy shrugged. “Well I’m sure she’ll go throw bludgers around with you if you ask. Isn’t that what she goes and does with Flint all the time?”

Draco’s eye twitched again.

---

“Why are we even celebrating?”

“No idea. Do you think Wood realizes Slytherin won?”

“I don’t know. Pretty sure he’s lost it, mate.”

The two fifth year boys surveyed the party in front of them. It was unlike any other Gryffindor party they had even seen. Gryffindor had lost the quidditch match, but still Wood insisted that they celebrate. Worst of all, Potter was there. The very reason Gryffindor had lost in the first place. And Wood was *happy* she was there. They both had to admit though, she could down those candies like it was nobody’s business.

Eventually, the braver of the two boys (or the one who had drunk some of the firewhiskey that had somehow been smuggled in), called out to Wood. “Hey, why are we even celebrating. We didn’t even win.”

The room quieted down a bit and many pairs of eyes turned towards the two.

Oops.

---

Oliver surveyed the rest of Gryffindor House, satisfied that he had done what he needed to do. He had explained in no uncertain terms that tonight they were celebrating *quidditch*. It didn’t matter if they won or not (alright it did, but it was Ivy so Oliver could live with that and crush Flint in the overall score for the year), because they were celebrating the greatest game ever invented. He had even made sure Percy was safely away on his rounds. No need to give his friend a heart attack at the sight of the unruly bunch, and certainly no need to worry him over the firewhiskey that had somehow ended up here. Besides, Oliver was a responsible person. He made sure only the sixth and seventh years could access it. Well, and that one fifth year, but that hadn’t been on purpose and he had brought it to a swift end. See? Responsible.

And while there were quite a few faces that looks confused as to why Ivy Potter was celebrating with them instead of her own house, a few well placed glares were enough to make sure that no one caused a scene. Thankfully the wide variety of food the twins and Ivy had managed to procure had made most people quite content to have Ivy as an honorary Gryffindor for the night. Now if he could only make it permanent and get her on his team...

---

“Hey did you see that...”

Fred and George turned to look at Ivy but she had disappeared.

“Where’d she go?”

“I don’t know. Do you see her?”

“No. Should we go get the thing?”

“Wait, there she is.”

“Is she...”

They looked helplessly at Ivy, who lay fast asleep in a small corner of the common room, apparently undisturbed by the noise all around her.

“Hey, Fred...”

“Yeah?”

“How many of those candies did she have?”

“I don’t know. Why?”

“I think she got a bit of a sugar crash.”

“What do we do?”

“Don’t worry. I’ve got this,” a voice from behind them said, surprising them both but definitely not causing them to jump a bit. Not at all.

As they watched Flint pick her up and sling her over his shoulder, Fred leaned towards George. “How’d he get here?”

“No idea.”

“Should we be concerned that so many Slytherins know how to get in the tower?”

“It’s probably fine.”

---

As Marcus made his way into the Slytherin common room, he glared at everyone who dared make a noise.

“Um, Flint, is that Ivy?” Adrian asked.

Marcus grunted and nodded.

“Is she *asleep*?”

He glared at Hyslop who had asked his question a little too loudly.

“So, um, are we going to have our party or not?”

Marcus handed Ivy off to Thomas, who was silenced from whatever protest he was about to make by a glare. They were really quite effective things.

Thomas glanced around the room, but no one paid him any attention and he eventually headed towards the girls’ dormitories.

“Now we can celebrate,” Marcus said after the two were out of sight.

“How’s Harrington supposed to get her there? You can’t get to the girls’ rooms,” Marcus heard some boy say.

“He knows all sorts of things like that,” some other kid said. “Haven’t you seen him and Weasley? I heard they’re going to take over the ministry when they graduate.”

Marcus rolled his eyes but ignored the rest of their conversation. As long as they didn't bother him or try and recruit Ivy away from quidditch it didn't really matter to him what Thomas and Weasley did.



# Chapter 29

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*November 10, 1992*

“Are you sure you want to do this?”

Harry glanced at the concerned look on Sirius’s face, but couldn’t quite bring himself to make eye contact. “Yeah, I’m sure.”

“Because you don’t have to do this, you know. I’m sure there’s another way, and we can find other things to go off of. I...”

“It’s okay, Sirius, really. I’ll be fine. Besides, I need to know. I can’t... I need to know.”

Sirius sighed and nodded. “Are you sure you want to do it *now* though? I mean, I’m going to the shack tonight and I don’t want to leave you alone to deal with this. Maybe it’d be better to do it tomorrow?”

Harry shook his head. “I’ll be fine, Sirius. Go to Remus. Besides, I have Barty here,” Harry said with fake cheerfulness.

Sirius gave him a unconvinced look. “Barty. Your plan for dealing with potential trauma is Barty.”

“Takes one to know one?”

“That is not at all what... You know what? No. I’m staying. There is no way I’m letting the two of you work through trauma on your own.”

“Sirius...”

“No. If we’re working through trauma I get to do it too.”

“Sirius...”

“I have trauma too, you know.”

Harry groaned. “Sirius, we’re probably discovering new trauma, not dealing with the trauma we already have.”

Sirius stared at him for a moment. “Fine. You discover your newest trauma, I’ll go help Moony with *his* monthly trauma, and sometime all four of us will sit down and cope with our collective trauma.”

“Somehow I don’t picture that going too well,” Harry said with a wry grin.

“Nope,” Sirius said affirmatively. “But sharing is caring and all that rubbish.”

Harry laughed. “We’re a right mess, aren’t we.”

Sirius chortled. “We should form a club.”

“The we-all-live-at-Harry’s-house club?”

“Hey, would you look at that. We’re way ahead of schedule.”

“Go, Sirius.”

“Alright, fine, I’m leaving,” Sirius said with a wave before walking out the door past the wards to where he could safely apparate. Just before he did so he turned around and called out, “Don’t do anything I would do!”

Harry chuckled and waved at him. Alright. Time to uncover suppressed trauma, because how else was he going to spend a Wednesday evening at home?

---

Harry let out a long string of curses. A *very* long string. It may have included the only Russian words he had managed to really pick up, but by Merlin he knew them. Suddenly noticing Barty’s wide eyes, he paused mid rant. “Um, you okay?”

Barty just nodded his head, eyes still wide.

“Um, sorry about that,” Harry said, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Does this mean you’re going to go kill someone?”

Barty looked far too eager for Harry’s comfort.

“No, no. Uh, the guy’s already dead.” At Barry’s disappointed look he added, “sorry.”

Barty nodded but then frowned. “Wait, does that mean you were talking about Lockhart? Because I thought you already knew what he did and that’s why he got eaten by the basilisk?”

Harry winced. “Uh, yeah, yeah. Lockhart was a terrible person, but, uh, that wasn’t the only person who did the memory charms.”

Barty’s eyes grew wide again. “How many obliviates did you break through?”

“Uh, fourteen, I think? Not entirely sure.”

Barty gave a low whistle in appreciation. “So, Lockhart wasn’t the only one. Who else?”

Harry saw no good way to get around this conversation, which was unfortunate because the only explanation he could think of to give was the whole, oh I’m actually from another universe and Dumbledore obliviated me as a kid but he died and now I’m here and this

Dumbledore hasn't done anything like that but I'm pretty sure he also thinks I'm the Dark Lord and oh yeah by the way we may or may not need to find a way to stop him from doing the same thing to Ivy and did I mention that I'm Ivy's alternate universe self just older and with far more near death experiences, except that one time where I really did die?

Because that would go over so well. Also, as much as he liked Barty, he still had some less than pleasant memories associated with that face and he'd rather not have someone try to kill him tonight. He was tired.

Meanwhile, Barty was still looking at him expectantly.

"Uh, it was a really powerful wizard who won't be a problem anymore."

Barty gasped. "The *Dark Lord* obliterated you?"

"What? No. No, not Voldemort."

To Barty's credit he didn't actually flinch at the name. Harry felt they were making such good progress.

"Well, then who? Oh wait, must have been Dumbledore then, huh. Well how come he's not going to be a problem? He's still alive, isn't he?"

Barty came to conclusions way to fast. "Uh, yes, and also yes, he's still alive, and seriously, how is that the first thing you thought of?"

Barty shrugged. "It's not like there's that many wizards you actually consider powerful."

Barty was far too observant for Harry's own good. He felt the eye twitch coming on but suppressed it.

"Right... So, just to be clear, this stays between us, yeah?"

Barty nodded and Harry sighed.

"Okay, well I just uncovered an entirely new set of traumas to add to my apparently already extensive list if you listen to Sirius, and I realize I am not entirely processing it right now, but it's inevitably going to hit me at some point in the future, so for the moment I'm going to eat something with absolutely no nutritional value and then get completely wasted. You in?"

---

"And I didn't even do \*hiccup\* it, but no one believed me and I saw it over and over and my \*hiccup\* father let my mum *die* there."

Harry nodded, vaguely aware that this was something he should maybe ask Barty about. Later. Much later.

"And what about you? Did your mum die in Azkaban too?"

"No, she was murdered."

Barty gasped, then hiccuped again. “Was it your dad,” he whispered loudly.

Harry shook his head.

“Oh, that’s good then.”

Harry grunted in reply and the two lapsed into silence.

“Barty, what did you want to be?”

“What do you mean?”

“When you grew up. What did you want to do?”

Barty frowned. “But I did grow up.”

“But before. What did you want before?”

“I \*hiccup\* wanted to be a... a teacher.”

“Really?” Harry said, somewhat understanding that this was something unexpected, although he couldn’t remember why.

“I wanted to teach things.”

“What kind of things?”

“I wanted to teach all the things.”

“Barty, you can teach all the things.”

Barty burst into tears and Harry reached out to comfort him, remembering that that’s what you were supposed to do when people cried. Someone had said so.

“I want to teach all the things.”

“You’ll be the best.”

“Do you really think so?”

“Mmhmm.”

---

*November 11, 1992*

Sirius walked into the house and was immediately assaulted by some very...pungent... smells. He wrinkled his nose and walked further into the house. It didn’t look like anything had burned down, so that was a good sign. Eventually he came to the two men sprawled out on the floor, and subconsciously began counting up the empty bottle lying around, calculating the amount of damage he was dealing with.

And to think he had told Harry not to do this without him.

A stream of cold water woke the two, and he tapped his foot impatiently as he waited for them to gather their senses.

“Well,” he inquired, once Harry was sitting upright. “What happened?”

“Henry says we can’t go kill Dumbledore,” Barty said with a pout.

“Yet,” Harry amended, gesturing vaguely at the ceiling. “Hey, Padfoot, did you know that Barty is going to teach all the things?”

Sirius looked at the two. “Uh-huh. And what happened to not doing anything I would do?”

“Oh sorry, do you want some?” Harry made to hand him a bottle, but realizing it was empty, frowned and put it back on the ground, repeating the same set of actions a few times before Sirius called out for the two elves and got them to help him move the two wizards to their beds.

Harry could thank him later.

“Winky,” he asked once the two were safely tucked in, “why were they both on the floor?”

Winky frowned and looked at the ground. “Master Deathly said not to move them,” she replied.

“Master Fleabag wasn’t here to be the responsible one,” Kreacher said chidingly.

Sirius stared at him a moment and then wondered whether there were any more of those drinks left.

---

*November 13, 1992*

“Why am I here?”

“Because we asked you so nicely.” Draco shot Fred a glare, but really, Draco was just too easy to rile up.

“You didn’t *ask*, and it certainly wasn’t nicely,” Draco retorted. “You dragged me halfway across the castle and now we’re staring at a painting of fruit. So I ask again, *why am I here?*”

“Because, young dragon, we are here to introduce you to the wonder that is the Hogwarts kitchens. Also, Ivy was unavailable.”

Draco gaped. “Ivy *knew* and she didn’t *tell me?*”

Fred was about to tease Draco some more but his brother interrupted. “Did you ask her?”

Draco opened his mouth and closed it again. “No,” he finally mumbled.

George made a well-there-you-go motion with his hand. The fact that Draco didn't argue the point was proof of the fact that if you wanted Ivy to tell you something, you probably needed to ask her directly. Or just wait until she casually mentioned it at some point. How else could Percy have learned of their late night kitchen raids?

Fred tickled the pear and they dragged Draco into the kitchens. Fred smirked at the less than perfectly concealed look of awe on Draco's face. There was hope for him yet.

---

"I can't believe you two kept us there past curfew. We're going to get caught and it's going to be all your fault."

"Worry not, little dragon," Fred replied gallantly, "we are far too experienced to get caught."

Suddenly George stopped in front of them and the two barely managed to not run into his back. "Shh," he said, "did you hear that?"

Draco began ranting about how it was Friday the thirteenth, and no, he wasn't suspicious, but wasn't it just oh so coincidental that they were about to die after curfew and it was all his fault and Fred and George were the best friends anyone could ask for and... Alright, so maybe he hadn't said all of those things, but to be fair Fred wasn't really paying attention, since he was busy trying to find the source of the sound George had heard.

"There," George cried out a few minutes later.

The three walked to where George had pointed. It looked to be a broom closet of some kind, but the door didn't open when George tried the handle.

"It's not working," George muttered.

Fred was about to give it a go but noticed the absolutely incredulous look on Draco's face. "What?" he asked.

Draco pointed to the wand in George's other hand.

Oh, right.

Fred nudged George, who caught onto what Draco was getting at. George sheepishly pointed his wand at the door and watched as it opened with a soft click.

The previously unidentified sound turned out to be a soft humming, and its source was none other than Luna Lovegood, who sat on the ground of the closet, seemingly undisturbed at being locked in there.

"Hello," she said softly, pausing her humming for a moment as she looked at the three boys.

Fred wasn't sure what to do in this situation.

"Uh, hi, Luna. What are you doing here?"

“Oh, some of the other students locked me in here and took my wand, so I was humming to pass the time.”

Fred scowled. “Who did this?”

Luna looked at him. “Does it matter?”

“Yes,” Fred said, realizing a second later that George and Draco had said the same.

Luna seemed to think for a minute before she responded. “Alright, well if you are sure you want to know it was...”

---

“Malfoy, what are you doing? It’s past curfew.”

Draco cringed. He had been *so close* to getting to the Slytherin dormitories without being caught, only for Burke to find him a mere twenty yards... He had told the twins something dreadful was bound to happen.

“And what is Lovegood doing with you?”

Luna seemed content to leave Draco to explain on his own. Why was he doing this again? He sighed.

“We found Luna locked in a closet and some of her housemates took her wand, so we didn’t want her to go back to Ravenclaw by herself, and so now she’s coming with me to go spend the night in Ivy’s room?” Draco did his best to only cringe a tiny bit as he finished his explanation-that-turned-into-a-question-in-case-there-was-a-better-answer-that-didn’t-get-him-in-trouble.

Burke seemed really upset by this, but his anger did not appear to be directed at Draco, so he breathed a small sigh of relief and let himself relax.

“Don’t worry,” the prefect said. “I’ll take care of this.”

With that Burke stalked off into parts unknown, leaving Draco to wonder just what he was going to do this late at night. Deciding it probably wasn’t important, he shrugged and went to go give the password for the Slytherin dormitories, but coming to an abrupt halt when he saw Luna standing there with the door wide open.

“How did you...”

“I gave the password,” she said simply, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

“But how did you...”

“Come on, Draco. It’s time for bed you know.”

Suddenly visions of Luna Lovegood and Ivy Potter taking over the world together flashed unbidden before his eyes and he shuddered. Maybe she should have gone with the twins to

Gryffindor.

---

*November 14, 1992*

“Uh, hey Ivy. What are you doing here?”

When she didn't respond Terry followed the line of her glare to where several older girls were sitting, looking annoyed at the Slytherin's attention.

“Ivy?” He tried again.

“What? Oh, sorry Terry. What are you doing?”

“I came to see what you were up to. No offense, but why are you here? Isn't it kind of early for a visit?”

Terry's own grumbling stomach served to reinforce the point that it was early Saturday morning and not even breakfast time yet.

“Luna needed to get ready,” Ivy said, returning her glare at the older girls.

“Okay... But why are you here?”

Terry checked to make sure fire wasn't coming out of Ivy's eyes. You never could tell with her.

“*Some people,*” she spat out, her glare giving a fair indication who she was talking about, “locked Luna in a closet last night and took her wand.”

Terry winced. This was going to be bad. So bad. Was it too late to switch houses? Hufflepuff didn't sound terrible.

“So, uh, what are we going to do?” he asked, cautiously optimistic that he might not actually get dragged into this. Not that he would tell Ivy no if she asked him to get involved, it was just that...

“No,” she ground out.

Terry looked up at her in surprise. “Come again?”

“Kenneth told me he would take care of it.” Ivy did not sound particularly happy about that. Terry hid his own joy at that statement.

“Oh, well, that's nice. So, what are you going to do?”

She abstained from responding in favor of continuing to glare at the fourth year girls across the room. Seriously, did they have no self-preservation skills? That couldn't be an entirely Slytherin trait, could it?



Just then Terry noticed Padma coming down the stairs. He shot her a pleading look and, as inconspicuously as possible, motioned her over. Padma walked towards them, a puzzled frown on her face.

“Hi, Terry, Ivy. Are you...”

“Going to breakfast? Yes, what an excellent idea,” Terry exclaimed, quickly so no one would have time to protest. “Ivy here was just waiting for *Luna*,” he said, jerking his head towards Ivy who was still glaring at the fourth years. “And then we can all go to breakfast. Won’t that be great?”

Padma, Merlin bless her very soul, caught on very quickly. “Oh, I can wait for Luna here. You two go. We’ll catch up with you in a moment.”

Terry nudged Ivy, who finally broke her death stare.

“Oh, hi Padma. It’s okay, we can wait.”

“No,” Terry said, a little too loudly. “Thanks, Padma. That’s really nice of you, isn’t it Ivy?”

Ivy went to open her mouth but Terry spoke before she could say anything. “Alright, let’s get going. We’ll meet you both there?” he asked Padma pleadingly.

Padma seemed slightly amused by his unease, which he did not understand at all, but she was agreeing so he let it slide.

Ivy went to do something that looked suspiciously like protest, but he was determined. He began pulling Ivy towards the door, but Ivy managed to get out of his grasp.

“Here,” she said, pulling a wand out of her pocket and handing it a surprised Padma. “This is Luna’s.”

After that she went along willingly with Terry, to his utter relief.

Once they were safely down the hall he asked her, “how did you get that?”

“Well,” she said, proceeding to explain to him exactly how she had retrieved Luna’s wand from where the older girls had hidden it.

By the time they reached the Great Hall Terry was not certain whether or not he was ever going to ask Ivy Potter how, when, why, or where she had done something ever again. On the other hand, some of the spells she described were really interesting...

“So, about that catapult spell, is that something you can do on objects, or does it only work to propel yourself? Also, how do you gauge the force needed to land you in the right spot?”

“Well, if you’re using it on something smaller than a boulder, what you have to do is...”

---

Kenneth was frustrated. It was a matter of house pride at this point to make sure that Luna Lovegood was properly protected and looked out for, and they were failing. *He* was failing. Unacceptable. That he hadn't actually been able to do something about it late last night, something he had only realized when he was halfway to the Ravenclaw dormitories, only added to his frustration.

But now it was a new day, and he was absolutely going to destroy every single one of them.

Ah, and there were just the right people to help him.

---

"How would you two recommend going about destroying someone?"

Percy's eyes shot up from the book he had been reading. It was actually a rather fascinating one about delayed reaction curses and... Oh, right. Person. Vaguely disturbing question.

"Sorry, what?"

Percy was thankful Thomas seemed as confused as he was about Burke's question.

"Hypothetically, of course."

Burke's tone did anything but convince Percy of the truth of that statement.

"Yeah, sorry, why are you asking us?"

Percy felt Thomas's question was valid.

Burke just gestured to the pile of books they had in front of them.

Oh.

Percy shrugged at Thomas's questioning look.

"Yeah, that makes sense," Thomas said, turning back to Burke.

---

"BURKE!" Thomas shouted, nearly crashing into Corvin as he made his way into their dorm room. "What the hell did you do?"

Kenneth looked neither perturbed nor guilty at Thomas's inquiry. "I took care of it."

"You put three *fourteen year old girls* in the *hospital wing*."

"They'll live."

"That's not the bloody... You know what? I don't even want to know. Actually, no, I do. *What were you thinking?*"

"There was a problem, I took care of it."

Thomas felt his eye twitch. “What problem could three fourth years possibly cause you.”

“They locked Luna in a closet and took her wand.”

Thomas felt all the energy drain out of him. Taking someone’s wand was one of the biggest no-no’s there was, and he was positive the fourth years knew that. *Everyone* knew that. But then to lock a first year in a closet and... Oh, and it was Ivy’s friend, and...

Thomas cleared his throat. “Well, uh, thank you for providing such a swift and relatively bloodless response. Does this, er, does this mean the problem is all taken care of then?”

“Yep,” Kenneth said, popping the “p.”

“And Ivy’s not...”

“Nope.”

“And Luna is okay?”

“Mmhmm.”

“And nothing is on fire?”

Kenneth looked a little puzzled at that.

“Just checking,” Thomas muttered. He cleared his throat again. “Well, thanks for that, and, uh, I’ll just... I’m just going to go now.”

---

“So, did you figure out what happened?” Thomas seemed nervous for some reason. Percy began to worry that it was worse than they had originally thought.

“Yeah, it’s, um, it’s all good. Kenneth found out about a little problem of sorts that was going on and he deescalated the situation.”

Percy wasn’t sure he had heard right. “I’m sorry, did you say *deescalate*?”

“Well it was Luna and...”

Percy groaned.

“And it’s not like they were actually hurt or anything...”

“There was *blood*.”

“*Fake* blood.”

“They are in the *hospital wing*.”

“But only until tomorrow.”

“He put *fourth years* in the *hospital*.”

“It could have been worse...”

“...”

“And on the bright side he got Ivy to let it go...”

“Oh, well I suppose that’s a good thing...”

“Exactly! Way to focus on the positive, Weasley. Now, where were we.”

“Well I found an interesting possible use of armadillo bile and powdered moonstone in the cultivating of venomous tentacula. See, I think that if you coat the seed in the bile before planting, and then administer a mixture of the two during the early cultivation stages, you may be able to get a plant that responds to simple commands from the caretaker. Now, theoretically, if you were to add boiled rose thorns at the moment the seed first erupts, then...”

---

*November 19, 1992*

“Hey, Harry, do you have any photos of yourself lying around?”

“Er, why?”

“Ivy wants one.”

“Why’d she ask you?”

“No reason,” Sirius squeaked out. Harry looked momentarily suspicious but apparently decided it wasn’t anything to be worried about. Phew. That was close.

“Okay... well, I’m not sure if I have any. Not of just me anyway. Would one of Ivy and I together work?”

“Uh, no. I don’t think so. She specified she needs a picture of just you.”

“Well I guess we can always take one...”

“Great! I’ll go grab a camera...”

“Do we even have a camera?”

“I’ll just go buy a camera, and then... Yeah, okay. Be right back.”

---

*Dear Ivy,*

*Enclosed are three pictures for you to choose from. In exchange, I demand both photo evidence and a memory (vial enclosed for your convenience). I expect you will choose well.*

*Your loving ~~accomplice~~-godfather,*

*Padfoot*

---

*November 24, 1992*

“Lupin, I don’t know how, but somehow I am certain this is all your fault.”

Despite having heard Severus long before he arrived, Remus still jumped a little. He almost went to protest that it wasn’t him, but realized that wasn’t actually the best thing to lead with in this moment.

“What happened?”

“The *headmaster* wants a dueling club started. And for some reason he has decided that *you* are the person to do it.”

“Er, maybe because I’m the defense teac...”

Severus waved him off. “Yes, yes. But why, pray tell, was *I* brought into this? Surely it can’t be *that* hard to run, can it? And why not ask Filius? Seeing as he is the actual *dueling champion*.”

“Well, I believe he was asked, but cited a lack of time due to two side projects he is already engage in with some students.”

“And what precisely are those projects?”

Remus refrained from shifting in his seat. He was the pinnacle of calm, he was the pinnacle of calm. “Well, I am not sure of the projects’ exact parameters...”

Severus glared at him.

“...but I believe one has to do with Harrington and Weasley, and the other one is with... the other Weasleys.”

Remus allowed no emotion to cross his face at the mixed expression of weariness and horror that crosses Severus’s.

“Filius is a responsible individual, I’m sure...” At Severus’s glare Remus cleared his throat. “Well, anyway, I believe that may have had something to do with why the headmaster asked the two of us to head this... undertaking.”

Remus decided it might not be in his best interest to inform Severus that he resembled a pouting child at the moment, as that was unlikely to aid his cause whatsoever.

“You really don’t want to be around students more than you have to, do you.” It was uttered softly, but Remus could tell he had been heard.

“This is all your fault.”

Remus sighed. This was going to be a long next few weeks. Not for the first time this school year he sent a small mental curse the headmaster’s way.

---

*November 28, 1992*

*Why did Ivy send Sirius a memory*, Harry wondered, looking at the package, not yet noticing the pictures that slipped out the bottom. He placed it on the table, figuring he could ask Sirius later when he got back from whatever party the ladies had graciously excused him from (Harry, not Sirius. Sirius was still made to go, despite his protests that it was a “boring” one).

Just as he turned to walk towards the kitchen in search of some less than healthy evening snack, he spied something on the ground. Picking it up, he realized it was a picture, though it took him a minute to figure out what it was a picture *of*. Wait a minute, was that...

---

*November 29, 1992*

Sirius came strolling through the door, whistling as he went. It had been a pleasant party, an even pleasanter night, and now he was cheerfully optimistic that he was back in time for breakfast. Sundays were Scotch pancake days, and Sirius was behind any breakfast that included that amount of sugar.

“Hello, Sirius.”

Sirius stopped in his tracks and looked up at where Harry sat, seated on the velvet throne (the high wingback chair they kept around for purely aesthetic purposes, none of which included the fact that it made for an excellent and completely necessary throne-in-the-shadows look. Not at all).

“Uh, hey, Harry. How long have you been sitting there?”

Harry’s eye twitched but he just waved off the question. “Not important. What I *do* find important, however, is this.”

Harry handed him a picture and Sirius immediately grinned before realizing that that was not going to help him in this situation.

“I have no idea what this is?” It probably would have been more convincing had he not phrased it as a question.

“Oh, I think you know *exactly* what this is. Tell me, what did Ivy want a picture of me for again? It seems that little detail was never quite made clear.”

“Oh, nothing. I’m sure she just misses you.” At Harry’s unimpressed look Sirius continued. “And, you know, it might be the tiniest bit possible that someone, I don’t know, a friend or something, may have asked for a copy. Probably just a fan of sorts or something.”

Harry’s eye twitched with furious vigor. It was... mildly impressive to tell the truth.

“This,” Harry said through gritted teeth, gesturing to the photo in Sirius’s hand, “is a bloody *shrine*.”

“Well, I hear you’re quite popular in Slytherin House these days...”

Harry had once told Sirius that all his life (well, post introduction to the magical world at least), people had constantly told him how much he looked like James. To be completely honest, Sirius didn’t see it. Harry was in no way the carbon copy of James he had supposedly been told he was growing up, or at least Sirius did not think so. Still, the resemblance, when he knew what to look for, was definitely there. This look, however, was entirely Lily. It was a look he was familiar with, and so he did what any rational person would do if they knew what was good for them.

He ran.

---

“SIRIUS ORION BLACK, I am going to FIND YOU and I am going to EVISCERATE you and I am going to feed your remains to the first bloody HIPPOGRIFF I can find.”

Harry’s shouts (and threats) rang through the house. For the very first time in their acquaintance Sirius wished Harry had a bigger house. Or maybe that he had bothered to get his own house. And no, Grimmauld Place did not count. Even still...

“Thanks, Barty, for letting me hide out here.”

Barty murmured something in response that Sirius didn’t pick up.

“Say, how long was Harry sitting there waiting for me to get back?”

“Seven hours, forty two minutes.”

“That is... oddly specific.”

“He’s running on fumes and at least eight cups of coffee. You’ll be safe in another thirty minutes or so.”

“Thanks. That’s a relief.”

“It’s when he wakes up from his nap that’ll you’ll really have to worry.”

“Thanks, Barty,” Sirius said dryly.

“No problem,” Barty said. His eyes had not once strayed from his book.

“Hey, whatcha reading there?”

Barty didn't reply, instead holding up his book for Sirius to read the title.

“Lesser known spell crafters of the eighth cent... Are you serious.”

Barty lowered his book but did not meet Sirius's incredulous stare. “Pretty sure you are,” he said, no hint of anything beyond slight disinterest in his voice.

He... had walked right into that one.

---

*“Hey, Millie, why is Poinston sitting on the floor in that corner?”*

*“Oh, I think Burke told him to go sit there.”*

*“Why?”*

*Millie shrugged. “I think he broke one of the rules or something.”*

*Ivy nodded. “Okay, but why is he staring at the picture of Henry?”*

*Millie frowned for a moment. “I think Burke said something about going there to think about what he had done and whether Lord Slytherin would approve of his actions.”*

*Ivy stared at Millie for a moment and then burst out laughing. “This is the best. Oh, I know what I'm sending Sirius now.”*

---

Harry and Sirius exited the pensieve.

“You have to admit it looked rather effective,” Sirius said with a cheeky grin.

Harry glared at him. “It's a *shrine*. And my... my *name* is being used to keep students in line. I'm like... the *boogie man* or something,” Harry said, the horror in his voice growing more evident with every word.

“On the bright side you are having a positive influence on the bright minds of the younger gener...”

Sirius found himself drenched in ice water before he could finish.

---

“Burke, how is Slytherin keeping everything in order? There hasn't been a single incident since...” Percy cleared his throat. Since *Burke* landed three Ravenclaws in the hospital wing. “...for a while,” Percy finished lamely.

“Oh, its simple,” Burke said with a casual shrug and a smirk. “Any time any of the younger kids mess up I make them go sit in the corner and think about what they have done.”



“That’s *it*?” Percy was fairly certain it hadn’t worked on any of his siblings past the age of maybe six, and likely never on the twins. “They’re actually doing that?”

“Mmhmm,” Burke said, brushing off an imaginary piece of lint. “They sit in the corner, stare at a picture of Lord Slytherin, and think about how disappointed he would be in them if he found out they are disgracing his house.”

“That’s...” Percy had no words. “That’s nice.”

Burke smirked again.

After a moment Percy asked, “So, you wouldn’t happen to know who the heir of Gryffindor is, would you?”

---

*December 4, 1992*

“So, I’ve noticed Ivy has been spending a lot of time with the Ravenclaws lately.”

Percy looked up at Thomas, the sudden conversation change catching his attention. “Oh, yeah. Ever since the thing with Luna, I think.”

“Right. Is that why she keeps showing up in Slytherin?”

“Hmm?”

“Lovegood. She’s just there sometimes. And thing is, no one has given her the password as far as I can tell.”

Percy groaned on the inside. There were two of them. At least it was happening in Slytherin, so therefore not his problem.

“Has anyone said anything?”

Thomas shrugged. “Someone kicked up a fuss at some point but Kenneth shut them up pretty fast.”

“Oh? What’d he say?”

“Told them she had the password so they could go... Well, basically that she had the password so it was fine.”

“He seems to be following her around a lot.”

“Yeah. Hey, did you know Luna called him her big brother the other day?”

“No. Really? What did Burke do?”

“Nothing. He didn’t even react. I’m not sure if he realizes he’s practically adopted her at this point yet.”

“You sure he was the one to do the adopting?”

“True. Hey, didn’t Ivy do that with your brother or something?”

“Try my whole family, but yeah. Charlie especially.”

“The one with the dragons?”

“That’s the one.”

“Yeah, that makes sense.”

The two boys sat in silence for the next few minutes, thinking of Ivy near dragons. After several minutes of silence they both shuddered simultaneously.

After a few more minutes Percy frowned. “Thomas...”

“Yeah?”

“Do you think its a good idea for Ivy to be spending so much time around the Ravenclaws?”

“Yeah, why? Won’t they rub off on her and get her to study more or something?”

Percy continued to frown. “Yes, but that’s the thing. What if she gets too good at it. What if she starts getting more *ideas* and... She only researches things she’s really interested in. But what if the Ravenclaws introduce her to *more*. I don’t think we can cover the library that fast.”

Thomas’s eyes grew wide at the horror of that realization. “We have to stop this,” he whispered.

Percy nodded. “But how...”

A moment later their eyes met. “Quidditch,” they said together.

And for that they needed two particular people...

---

“We need to talk about Ivy.”

Thomas looked at Marcus and Wood who were busy plotting... something. He wasn’t sure he wanted to know.

“We’re not giving up any flying times,” Wood said immediately, Marcus nodding along with a determined scowl on his face.

“No, not that,” Percy reassured them. “We need her to redirect her focus a bit more to quidditch.”

“Why?” Marcus asked, one eyebrow raised.

Thomas and Percy shared a glance, and at Percy's nod Thomas went to explain. "See, the thing is, Ivy has a particular fondness for certain books and topics that are..."

"Chaotic," Percy said.

Thomas nodded. "And potentially destructive. Remember the hurricane?"

Marcus grinned and leaned back in his chair. "That was a classic," he said wistfully.

Thomas's eye twitched only slightly at that.

"*Anyway*," Percy said, "we would like to limit the amount of... destruction that occurs."

"So you want us to distract her with... more quidditch?" Wood asked.

"Yes," Thomas replied. "Lots and lots of quidditch."

Wood seemed immediately content with this proposition, but Marcus still looked a bit skeptical. Darn him for being a Slytherin and doing Slytherin things at inconvenient times. "What's in it for us?" he asked.

"What do you mean," Percy asked with a frown. "I thought you two wanted her involved in quidditch."

"Involved, yes. But this is us doing *your* job now. So, what's in it for us?"

Thomas looked at Percy but only got a shrug. What job was Marcus talking about?

"What do you mean our job?"

"I mean," Marcus said, leaning forward and grinning slyly, "that our job is to make sure she has her chance to be brilliant at quidditch, while *your* job," here he pointed to the two, "is to make sure the fires don't destroy anything."

Percy frowned. "Metaphorical fires, right?"

"Sure, we can go with that."

Percy's voice got a bit higher. "You haven't, er, *seen* Ivy anywhere today, have you?"

Marcus shrugged. "Last I saw she was headed out with your brothers. They were saying something about some new fireworks that Flitwick gave them an idea for. Some project or other they've been working on with him."

Percy and Thomas shared a brief glance of panic.

"We, uh, we gotta go," Thomas said, before turning and sprinting out the door, following closely behind Percy who had left right before.

Due to his fast exit he missed the smirk that crossed Marcus's face at their rapid departure.

---

---

“Okay, so what about this one?”

“Well this one should turn into a dragon...”

“Should?”

“Only one way to find out,” George said with a grin.

“Hey is that Percy?” Fred asked, looking over at what looked to be Percy and... Harrington, probably, running out of the castle and shouting... something. It was hard to make out at this distance.

George shrugged.

“Maybe they wanted to see too,” Ivy offered.

“Well good thing these are viewable from a distance,” Fred said.

“Okay, ready?”

“Three, two, one...”

---

That evening Thomas Harrington and Percy Weasley made a solemn pact that under no circumstances was anyone to know or hear of their reactions to seeing a dragon made of fire headed their way. There was to be absolutely no talk of girlish screams, panicked shields that were wholly inadequate, or curses that would get them each grounded if their mothers should ever learn of it. But they wouldn't, because no one, absolutely no one, would ever know. Ever.

## Chapter End Notes

This is... This gets crack-ier by the chapter, I swear. A couple events coming soon (next chapter probably?) that will shake things up plot wise a bit, but seriously, this whole thing had gone off the rails. Also, I got an idea for a different fic, and it's pretty stuck in my head right now, meaning it's also distracting me from this one big time. It's terrible. How do people write more than one of these things at a time? Anyway, I realized that I write the most for this when I'm tired and all of a sudden the level of ridiculousness contained herein makes so much more sense.

# Chapter 30

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*December 17, 1992*

“Hey Sirius, have you seen Barty any...”

Sirius watched in horror as a flash of light burst right above Harry’s head, followed quickly by a loud thunk. Harry had just been knocked out by the largest book Sirius had ever laid eyes on. The fact that it had appeared mysteriously in a flash of light was also somewhat concerning.

---

Harry awoke with a pounding headache and an audible groan. Who had let a bludger into the house?

Slowly he sat up, only to find himself being forcibly returned to his previous position by an irate elf.

“Uh, hi Winky. What’s going on?” His mistake was trying to sit up once more as he asked.

Winky glared him down until he relented and laid back down, and after a minute she must have been satisfied that he was not going to try to escape again, because she finally began explaining what had happened, not that her explanation made much sense. A book fell out of the ceiling? And Sirius had tried to get him wet?

Eventually he gave up and asked her to go find Sirius.

When Sirius arrived he looked equal parts nervous and relieved, and after Harry assured him that he was okay, Sirius too began to explain.

His explanation was not much better.

“So let me get this straight. There was a light...”

Sirius nodded.

“And a book appeared in midair, crashed onto my head, knocked me out...”

Sirius continued nodding along.

“You tried to wake me by shooting water at me, Winky made you stop, I was left unconscious because I wasn’t getting enough sleep, Barty is downstairs reading the mysterious book, I could have been dying, and...”

“Wait, I thought you said you couldn’t die?” Sirius asked, frowning.

“That’s the part you focus... Never mind. I said I wasn’t *sure*, and point is I could have been. Anyway, did I leave anything out?”

Sirius shook his head.

“Great,” Harry muttered. “And now I’m stuck here because...”

“Because Winky said so.”

“Uh huh. And you started listening to her when?”

Sirius fidgeted in place and Harry finally burst out laughing.

“Merlin, you’re scared of her, aren’t you.”

Sirius scowled. “Of course I am. Have you seen her angry?”

Harry grinned. “Nope.”

Sirius muttered something about how Harry managed that and Harry grinned some more.

“I guess it’s just my natural charm or...”

Sirius threw a pillow at his head which shut him up.

“Master Fleabags will stop throwing things at injured Master Deathy *RIGHT NOW*,” Winky said from the doorway she had suddenly reappeared in.

Harry was fairly certain his howls of laughter at the sight of Sirius running out of the room at a record pace could be heard all the way at Hogwarts.

Then Winky’s glare leveled on him and he realized Sirius might actually have had the right idea...

---

When Harry was finally let out of his own bedroom he decided he should probably investigate what had caused the accident in the first place.

That eventually led him to Barty, who was reading... oh yes, Harry could see how that would have knocked him out. Suddenly being knocked unconscious by a book of all things didn’t sound quite so lame.

“So, you’re from another dimension then, huh,” Barty said before Harry could say a thing.

And now Harry didn’t exactly know what to say.

“I was thinking time traveller myself, but this actually makes a lot more sense if you think about it.”

Harry did not want to think about it.

“That means you’ve been here, what, four, five years maybe?”

“Three and a half,” Harry said, immediately regretting it. He wasn’t supposed to be *confirming* this for Barty.

Barty merely hummed, apparently not at all uneasy about the fact that Harry was from a different universe.

Harry decided he didn’t want to know how Barty had come to any of those conclusions really, and a change of topic seemed hugely appropriate at the moment.

“So, what’s that you’re reading?”

“Oh this?” Barty looked up from the massive tome. “Something one of your friends put together for you by the looks of it. Haven’t made it far yet. Should make for some interesting reading though. There’s this whole section on How-To-Be-A-Dark-Lord.”

“There’s a *what*?”

Harry snatched the book away from Barty, a “Merlin, that’s heavy,” mumbled under his breath as he did so.

*A Guide to Your Interdimensional Travel Experience* was printed in beautiful lettering across the cover, and in small, neat letters at the bottom was printed *compiled by Hermione Granger*.

Harry cried.

---

It was nearly dinner time and between the three of them they had still only managed to look into a tiny portion of the massive book. It was like the book had been made into a version of Hermione’s bag from when they were on the run. It *never ended*. Okay, so technically it had an “end,” but Harry wasn’t sure anyone could feasibly read the entire thing in their lifetime. So how had Hermione managed to put it all together? And in only three years? And how had she gotten it to him? And why had it landed on him and not a table or other nice surface to place books on (that were not his head)? And why by Merlin was there an *entire section dedicated to becoming a dark lord*?

Harry had many questions. So many questions. This was definitely Hermione’s work, though, and the thought made him nostalgic in a way he hadn’t experienced since his first few months in this world.

“Hey, not to break up the party, but maybe we should eat something. Come back to this a bit later?”

Sirius’s suggestion was met with only mild reluctance on the part of the other two, and to dinner, they went, their meal courtesy of Kreacher, who looked happy to not have to fight anyone for control of the kitchen for once.

---

“Alright, we need a plan.”

Sirius and Barty both nodded.

“And we need to lay some ground rules.” Harry felt that this applied to both Sirius and Barty, though for different reasons.

“First, no showing the book to Ivy when she gets home. No *mentioning* the book to Ivy. And no mention of me being from a different universe or anything either, to *anyone*,” Harry said, pausing his pacing back and forth to give Barty a pointed look. Both nodded again, so so far Sirius and Barty seemed to be in agreement, which was good for Harry’s overall health.

“Second, no using the dark lord how-to section. And no suggesting *I* use the dark lord how-to section,” Harry said at Barty’s excited look, which quickly settled into a pout.

“Third, it’s going to take us a long time to go through this. So let’s try to save the plots for when we’re finished, yeah?”

Harry had learned something from Hermione. Namely, that reading about what you should have done after you had already done (the wrong) something was not nearly as helpful as reading about it first. It was tedious work, but such were the trials of life.

“Okay, so plan. We divide up the sections, sort through them, organize them into main topics, figure out which ones would be the most helpful, and... yes, Barty?” Barty had his hand raised in the air like a student.

“You mean like the table of contents at the beginning?”

Harry’s eye twitched. “Yes, that’ll do.” For a second there he had forgotten about who they were dealing with. Of course Hermione had a table of contents.

“Where is it?” Sirius asked.

“Oh, well it starts here,” Barty said, flipping to one of the first pages, “and it goes until here.” Harry was certain Barty had just flipped through at least a dozen pages.

Sirius peered over the book and gasped. “The table of contents is *thirty seven pages*?”

Okay, so maybe a little more than a dozen. But he had thought at least a dozen, so he technically wasn’t wrong...

“Your friend is very thorough,” Barty commented, with what Harry thought might be awe in his voice.

Harry was brought back to memories he had long since put behind him. It didn’t do to dwell on the past, since doing so only brought him pain. Since being here he had been focused almost solely on Ivy, and then on Sirius, and now on Barty as well, but this unexpected link to his old world brought those memories to the forefront of his mind once more.



His reminiscing was brought to a swift end by Barty's seemingly innocent question of, "Why are there fifty one subsections for how to save the house elves?"

Oh, Hermione was going to murder him.

---

Remus sighed. He didn't need to be a Legilimens to know what was going through Severus's mind at the moment. Tonight was the first meeting of the new "dueling club," though why it couldn't have just waited until *after* Christmas at this point was beyond him. Severus's enthusiasm for the club had not, er, *grown*, to say the least, though he had made sure all the Slytherins would be there. Remus figured it was a I'm-suffering-so-you-must-also sort of thing. Really, it couldn't be *that* bad, could it? He made a mental note not to stick Weasley and Harrington together, or Ivy and either of the Weasley twins. Or Ivy with Granger. Or the other Weasley. Or any of the Ravenclaws in her year or... You know what, maybe he should stick her with a third year. Just to be safe.

---

"Alright, let's have Claridge and..." Remus paused to see Ivy giving him her very best puppy dog eyes. Sirius had some explaining to do. He sighed. "And Potter." She seemed very eager to go up against the third year Slytherin, and he thought he saw a twitch in Severus's eye. The bad kind, not the humorous kind. He decided he didn't want to know.

---

*Two hours earlier:*

*"And then he chased me up the stairs and they moved right as I was about to get off, and he almost pushed me off! And then he yelled at me and said he didn't know why I was in Slytherin and I called him an idiot and he said he was going to tell on me but I said I'd tell on him first and then he shot something at me and I was stuck to the stairs for forever and that's when you guys found me."*

*Daphne looked about ready to go show Claridge exactly what she thought of him, but Pansy surprised them all and held her back.*

*"So, whose turn is it to get back at him this time?" she asked, perfectly calm.*

*"What do you mean? Of course it's my turn," Daphne fumed. "Tracey got it last week."*

*"Mhmm, well, don't you think the rest of us ought to have a turn? I mean, by insulting Tracey he's really insulting all of us," Pansy said.*

*Millie's eye lit up in a sort of realization that was so far lost on the rest of the girls still. "Tonight is the dueling club."*

*"Why, would you look at that. So it is," Pansy said, her words suggesting surprise but her tone indicating otherwise.*

*Tracey was the next one to catch on to what Pansy was thinking. "So now one of us just has to go up against him at the dueling club tonight?" She frowned slightly. "I don't think I know*

*enough good spells to beat him."*

*"Of course you do," Pansy reassured her. "But I was actually thinking maybe Ivy would like to have a go. She does have a particular... talent, after all."*

*When the other girls all just looked at her in confusion Pansy huffed. "Last year? Hyslop? This year? The ones who didn't figure out it was you?"*

*Ivy nodded. "Oh yeah, I almost forgot about them."*

*"Wait, what happened?" Daphne asked, rather excited at the prospect of another Ivy-taking-on-idiot's story.*

*Ivy went to tell her but Pansy shushed them. "Not now, later. Right now we have to focus on the enemy at hand."*

*"You mean Claridge?"*

*"Exactly."*

*Ivy shrugged. "I have a couple things I could do I think."*

*Daphne pouted. "Why can't I just go stick Tiger on him again?"*

*After a moment deep in thought Ivy's face lit up. "I have the perfect one," she said excitedly. "Oh, this will be great."*

*Despite the enthusiasm of the other second year Slytherin girls at the prospect of getting back at enemy number one, Ivy refused to share her idea. "Just wait," she said. "And help me make sure I'm paired with him."*

*The girls all nodded their assent. Their plotting sufficient for the moment, they headed towards dinner, dreams of terrifying older students dancing through their heads.*

*And if Harrington looked mildly panicked at the sight of them coming into dinner and raced off into parts unknown, well, it was probably nothing to be concerned about.*

---

*"Alright, Claridge, you stand here, and Potter, yes, that's right. Right there. Okay, on the count of three. One, two..."*

*Claridge shot off a tripping jinx which Ivy avoided easily. They exchanged mostly second and third year spells for a bit, and Remus wondered briefly if he should have stuck to disarming only. A bit too late for that now, but...*

*"Serpensortia."*

*Well then. Yes, Remus had heard Claridge had a rather dim view of snakes, ironic really considering his house, but then again not everyone shared Ivy's enthusiasm for the reptiles. Of course, not everyone could *speak* to them either and... Oh.*

Yep. That was Ivy, hissing something at the snake. That was... Not entirely fantastic.

Remus made a quick survey of the room. Most of the looks were looks of surprise and/or shock. Severus looked particularly pale, as did a few of the other students. Most of the younger Slytherins looked at the snake and at Ivy in awe. Harrington looked... resigned? More to think on later. For now, the issue at hand was... Oh dear.

---

*§No, not that one. No, go over... Oh, for Merlin's sake. Sstop it. Now go lick him. No, not that one, the other one. §*

Why didn't the snake just *listen*. Claridge was *right there*, but no, the snake seemed determined to terrorize the Hufflepuffs. Finally Ivy marched over and picked him up.

*§Lissten up, misster, if you can't go to the right persson than I'm going to have to ssend you back. §*

With that she gave him a bop on the nose and proceeded to vanish the conjured snake. When she finally looked up she noticed the pale look on Claridge's face. Well, at least it had kind of worked. It would have been better if the snake had actually gone over and licked his hand like it was *supposed* to, but the moment was over now.

She turned to find her friends and see their reactions. Pansy, Tracey, Daphne, and Millie were all displaying various degrees of shock mixed with satisfaction, so Ivy was fairly certain she hadn't entirely botched the payback attempt. She turned to where the Hufflepuffs had been standing, ready to apologize to Justin for the snake.

Justin did not look, um, particularly coherent at the moment... He was probably just surprised at how cool the snake had been. It was quite a bit bigger than Tiger, after all.

Wait, why was everyone else staring at her like that? And why did Thomas have a pained look on his face?

“What?”

---

Remus rubbed his face. He should have just said no.

---

Severus was desperately doing his best to recover from the shock that was the revelation that *Ivy Potter* was a *Parselmouth*. Several things made more sense at the moment, but already he could hear the inevitable questions that would come from this. He really should have just said no to this entire thing.

---

Thomas grimaced. Well, at least she hadn't mentioned the basilisk, but... He straightened. Nope, no time for idle thoughts. It was time to go full protection mode. He marched over to Percy, who, despite his own shock at the revelation, seemed to understand what Thomas was

getting at. Ivy was about to be scrutinized to an entirely new extent, and it was unlikely that people would be altogether kind in their reactions. So protection mode it was.

---

Fred leaned over to his twin. “Do you think she could teach us?”

---

This was not Justin’s evening. First there had been a snake in his face, one Ivy Potter hissing behind it, and then Zach had started ranting about how evil Ivy was and how the snake had been about to kill him. Justin tried to point out that the snake have been in front of *him*, not Zach, but his fellow Hufflepuff was having none of it.

Finally he gave up and went to go find Theo.

“Are you okay?” Theo blurted out when Justin finally reached him.

“What? Yeah, I’m fine. It’s not like Ivy would tell the snake to hurt me or anything.”

“What do you think she was saying then?”

“I think she was trying to get it to go over to Claridge probably.”

Theo seemed to relax a bit. “Yeah, yeah, that makes sense.”

“So, um, everyone looks like they found out we have a test on Christmas. So was all that...”

“Yeah, it’s um, it’s kind of a big deal. Parselmouths are really rare, and the last one was the Dark Lord.”

Justin nodded in understanding. “Except Lord Peverell, right? And now Ivy?”

Theo nodded. “Yeah. And Lord Peverell turned out to be Lord Slytherin too, and Ivy, well, I have no idea about that actually.”

Justin tilted his head. “Wait, so if Lord Peverell is Lord Slytherin, and he adopted Ivy, does that make her the heir or something?”

---

Draco scowled all the way up until Ivy finally came by him.

“Hi, Draco,” Ivy said cheerfully.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Draco asked, scowl still firmly in place.

“Tell you what?”

“That you are a *Parselmouth* of course,” he said.

Ivy frowned. “Sorry, I must’ve forgotten.”

“You must’ve...” Draco leaned his head back and sighed. “Any other secrets you feel like telling your best friend today?”

Ivy thought about his question for a moment. “Well, I love chocolate, but I don’t really like chocolate ice cream. And... Hmm. Well, Uncle Henry likes to go by Harry, but I always call him Henry because otherwise I picture him with hair all over like a porcupine and that’s just weird so...”

“Porcupines don’t have hair,” Draco interjected.

“...him Henry and besides Harry doesn’t go with Peverell and that’s what all the goblins said too, but I think he doesn’t believe me. Anyway, that’s why I always call him Henry.”

Draco blinked a few times. “You know, I meant more secrets like you being a Parselmouth. And what do you mean you don’t like chocolate ice cream?”

Ivy shrugged. “I like vanilla better.”

Draco gasped. “You heathen,” he accused.

“Who’s a heathen?” Blaise said, coming up on them suddenly.

“Ivy,” Draco said, giving no further explanation.

Blaise just shrugged. “So, Ivy, does this mean you can tell Tiger to stop eating the raspberry mice pops? Tell him to eat the cherry ones instead, please.”

“Sure.”

“Thanks, Ivy.”

Draco watched as Blaise wandered off, wondering how he seemed to be so okay with this. Unless... “Wait, Blaise didn’t know, did he? Please tell me you didn’t tell Blaise before me.”

Ivy laughed. “No, I didn’t tell him. Actually, I think only Remus and Thomas knew about it actually. I don’t remember telling anyone else, and nobody asked about it.”

“Why would someone ask... No, you’re right. No one asked.” Draco sighed. He was going to be getting *much* more creative with his list of questions for Ivy. Just to cover all potential scenarios and what not.

---

A little while later Ivy and Draco made it back to the Slytherin dorms.

“Hey Draco, what’s the password?”

“You mean you don’t know?”

“No.”

“But it’s been the same one for two weeks!”

“The password changed?”

Draco felt it. It was coming. Oh, yep, there it was. The eye twitch. Yep, that was a big one. Okay, now breathe in, breathe out... “How have you been getting in then?”

“Hmm? Oh, I just ask Clu.”

“Who?”

“Clu. The snake? That one.” Ivy pointed to the snake that marked the entrance to the Slytherin dormitories.

“You just ask...”

“Clúmhach,” Ivy said helpfully.

“Great. Any other snakes you want to tell me about?” Draco asked sarcastically.

“Oh, well there’s Hilda. She told me yesterday that...”

---

Thomas looked up at the two students entering the common room. He and Percy had decided on a divide and conquer approach. Percy would divide up the gossiping students, and Thomas would conquer Slytherin. It was foolproof.

“And really, Hilda is very nice. Tiger loves her too.”

Thomas took in the excited look on Ivy’s face and the pale, terrified look on Malfoy’s face. He groaned. And maybe died a bit on the inside, but that was neither here nor there.

Quickly, but in a way he hoped was more nothing-to-see-here than disaster-is-imminent, he walked up to the two second years. “Ivy, Draco,” he said, nodding to each of them. “Let’s take a little walk, shall we?”

---

They had barely stepped foot in the common room before Draco found himself being ushered back out. He huffed, but it did nothing to dissuade Harrington.

Finally Harrington pulled them off to a small unused classroom where they were unlikely to be disturbed. Draco watched with mild interest as the sixth year erected several privacy charms, not all of which Draco was familiar with. He was half tempted to ask Harrington about those later.

“Okay, Ivy,” Harrington began, “were you telling Malfoy about Hilda?”

“Yeah?” Ivy looked a little sheepish.

“Can I ask why you were doing that?”

“Well he asked if I had any secrets I hadn’t told him yet, and I told him a couple, but then when we got to the entrance I told him about Clu, and he asked if there were any other snakes, and he already knows Tiger, and the only other one I really know is Hilda.”

Harrington rubbed his hand over his face. “Malfoy,” he said, turning to Draco. “Just so we’re clear, nothing about Hilda will be repeated. To *anyone*, am I clear?”

Draco’s mind helpfully supplied an “or else,” and he nodded. Vigorously. “So, is there really...”

Harrington sighed. “Yes, there is a basilisk in the school.”

Draco’s mind sort of froze at that point. When it finally resumed functioning again he heard himself say, “There’s a *basilisk* in the school?”

Harrington looked pained. “You didn’t know?” he asked Draco. “You didn’t tell him?” he asked Ivy. Both shook their heads.

“I hadn’t gotten to that part yet,” Ivy said. Then she frowned. “Wait, when you said not to tell anyone about the basilisk did you mean Draco too?”

Harrington’s eye twitched and Draco felt sympathetic.

“Yes, I did, in fact, mean everyone, but I suppose it’s not the end of the world if Malfoy here knows. Just no telling anyone else, alright? Please?” he practically pleaded with Ivy, who nodded solemnly.

“Wait, what about Fred and George? And Neville?”

Harrington didn’t answer her for a minute. “How about this, I’ll talk to Percy, and we’ll tell the twins.” He mumbled something that Draco didn’t quite catch. “And if you want to tell Longbottom, that’s fine, but please remind him not to tell anyone else, alright?”

“Okay. And what about everyone else?”

“Not telling anyone kind of includes everyone, Ivy.”

Ivy pouted slightly but Draco was far from brave enough to call her out on it.

“Fine, but why can’t I tell them?”

“Because if word got out that there’s a basilisk in Hogwarts someone would try to kill it. Also because most normal people tend to freak out at the mention of a giant snake that can kill them with its eyes.” Harrington gestured to Draco as he spoke, and Draco wasn’t even offended.

Ivy gasped. “They’d try to *kill* her?” She looked suddenly furious as she met Draco’s eye. “No telling *anyone*,” she said, jabbing a finger in his direction.

With two pairs of eyes now watching him for his response to that demand, he felt there was no other option than to nod. He wouldn't tell anyone. He'd try not to think about it even. Maybe one of the older students would be willing to obliviate him later. Yes. Great plan.

---

Thomas needed... something not available at Hogwarts. Or to someone technically still underage... But what was age but a number. An unfortunately small number in his case that prevented him from obtaining something stronger than... Well, anyway. Today could probably have gone better. At least Ivy hadn't *conjured* a basilisk. No, she had just asked to tell all her closest Gryffindor friends about Hogwarts' resident serpent queen, had revealed herself to the entire school as a Parselmouth, and had shaved another year off of Thomas's life span. So no, nothing to see here, just one sixth year student wondering if Hogwarts will still be standing come her fourth year. He and Percy needed to start training some replacements.

---

*December 18, 1992*

Hermione really did think of everything, Harry mused, as he read through the table of contents. Because yes, he was still on the table on contents. Not everyone can be a speed reader, alright?

He wasn't quite sure he would ever need a guide on tenth century combat techniques, but who knows, maybe it'd be something interesting to look at in his spare time. Which he was about to have a lot less of, he thought, looking once more at the sheer size of the book.

A bright light similar to the one yesterday flashed in front of him, and his first thought was, "not again."

When he felt no impact he ventured his eyes open a bit, and relaxed his arms from above his head where they had instinctively gone.

"Hello, Harry Potter."

## Chapter End Notes

I have been thinking about this chapter for soooo long. And yet, it ended up being completely different. So anyway, here is... something. Also, sorry about the tiny little cliffhanger. I wasn't originally going to end the chapter there, but I'm tired so now that's the end. Sorry not sorry. On the bright side I'm pretty sure that if people were to guess at least most of you would get it right, so does it really count as a cliffhanger? Oh, and once again for those in the back, I have no idea what I'm doing, I claim no control over this \*gestures vaguely\* thing, and I'm really just here for my own entertainment factor. Glad some of you are joining in with me. I love all the comments btw. Sorry I don't respond to many of them, but I do enjoy reading them all. Okay, this became



unnecessarily long. Until next time, which, as always, will hopefully be sooner than later.

# Chapter 31

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Hello, Harry Potter.”

As Harry brought his arms down he paused awkwardly part way through and stared. “*Luna?*”

Luna gave him an amused smile. “Were you expecting someone else?”

Harry stared slack-jawed at the woman in front of him. “*Luna?*” he asked again, softer this time.

“Hi, Harry,” she said, smiling softly.

After what would probably have been an uncomfortable length of silence for most people later, Harry managed to wrap his brain around the fact that Luna, *his* Luna, was standing in his living room.

“How did you get here? *Why* are you here? I can’t believe it’s really you. It is you, right? I’m not just making this up? Merlin, I think that book hit me harder than I thought.” Harry frowned and rubbed the bump he still had on his head. Winky had refused to get rid of it after she had caught him trying to sneak out of bed before she gave her permission.

“I’m fairly certain it’s me. I don’t know who else I would be,” Luna said with complete sincerity.

“I can’t believe it’s you. You’re really here. It’s been so long and I...” First the book and now Luna... It was a bit much for Harry’s repressed emotions. And he had been doing so well...

Luna laughed. “Six months isn’t *that* long,” she said lightly. “Although I suppose it might feel...”

“Wait, six months? What do you mean? It’s been three and a half years?” Harry was confused. Not an entirely unusual state of being, but that didn’t mean it was one he particularly enjoyed.

Luna’s laugh died quickly. “What do you mean three years? Has it been three years here?”

“Three and a half, yeah. Wait, so does that mean... Is time moving *faster* here?”

Luna thought about that for a moment. “I suppose. Different universes don’t have to move at the same time, do they. It’s not like there’s a rule about it.”

Harry couldn’t argue with that. Mostly since he had no idea what the rules of alternate universes were, if there were in fact any to begin with.

“And Hermione did say you might have time travelled. Or ended up in a universe that was at a different time.” Luna got her “I’m a Ravenclaw and I will now figure out the universe” face. Harry had missed that face. “Well, I suppose the best place to start is the year. So what year is it?”

“1992.”

“Hmm... Oh, that reminds me...” Luna proceeded to pull out a piece of parchment from her pocket. “I think I was suppose to ask these first, but I’m sure it’s fine. Now, let’s see. Since it’s you I don’t have to ask a lot of these...”

Harry tried to peek over to see what was on the list. The writing was so *tiny* though... Probably Hermione’s doing then. Luna moved her finger down the lengthy list, and Harry was happy when she had nearly reached the bottom before starting.

“Ah. Here we go. You know, it really is lucky that I found you so fast. I wasn’t looking forward to trying to figure out if magic existed here. Now, who are you?”

“Uh, Harry?”

“Mmhmm. Alright, and you are how old?”

“Twenty seven.”

Luna tilted her head for a moment. “I suppose you are older now. When did you get here?”

“April 12, 1989.”

“And what is the date now?”

“December 18, 1992.”

“That’s nice. Well, Hermione wanted me to ask you these other questions, but I don’t have a way to tell her the answers so you can tell me if you like, but I think we can just skip them.”

“Wait, you mean you can’t get back?”

Luna shrugged. “I’m not sure. Maybe there’s a way, but I haven’t found one yet. Have you?”

“Uh, no.” Harry grimaced. “So how did you get here then?”

“Same way as you of course.”

Of course. “You were playing, er, working in the Department of Mysteries too?”

“No. I just touched the same thing you did to come here. We sent the book a little bit before I came, and nothing exploded on this end so I thought it was safe enough to try. It did take them a while to figure out what had happened to you, you know. And even when I left no one was sure where, or when, it had taken you. A few of them were able to pinpoint your magical signature on it though, so we used that and hoped the book would come straight to you.”

“Yeah, well, it sure did that,” Harry said, rubbing his bump again with a small scowl. “So, why did you come? I mean, if there’s not a way back? What about your friends, and your dad, and, you know, everything?”

Luna smiled sadly. “Daddy died, and I didn’t want you to be alone too.”

Harry pulled her into a big hug. “I’m so sorry, Luna.” He held her tightly as a single tear fell from her eye.

After a moment he pulled away slightly so he could look her in the eye. “Luna, why did you come here?” he asked in a way that he hoped did not come across as unkind.

“Maybe it was my turn for an adventure,” Luna said, giving him a small smile.

Harry chuckled. “We might make a Gryffindor out of you yet.”

She rolled her eyes good-naturedly as he pulled into a hug once more.

“I’m so glad you’re here,” Harry murmured.

“Since when do you have a girlfriend?” came a voice from the doorway.

Harry and Luna both turned to face the intruder, Harry’s face perhaps a little redder than it was before.

“Uh, Barty, this is Luna. Luna, this is Barty.”

“Hello, Barty. I never got to meet the real you before,” Luna said, extending her hand to Barty.

Barty stared at Luna for a moment as if he was processing something... And then he got a look on his face as if he had just figured something big out. Harry did not like it.

“Wait, so you’re Luna Lovegood, and you know Harry?”

Luna nodded.

Barty seemed to be getting more and more excited by the second. Harry desperately wanted it to stop.

“So that means... And you are...” He turned towards Harry. “Wait, then how come you’re a *boy* and Ivy is a *girl*?”

Harry felt the twitch coming. Barty was too smart for Harry’s good.

“Who’s Ivy?”

Harry groaned.

---

That was it. Harry was kicking everyone else out his house. Luna could stay, of course. He had practically begged her to stay, though in the end she had agreed without too much trouble. Barty on the other hand? Out. Sirius? Out. Remus? Well it was his fault that Barty was here in the first place, so also out. The fact that Remus didn't even live there didn't matter. They were all getting kicked out.

Why?

Barty was too smart and he and Luna were getting along far too well. This was terrible. Harry hadn't seen Luna in *three and a half years*, and now *Barty* was stealing all her attention. And Sirius was doing nothing to help, so therefore they were all out.

Harry wasn't a huge fan of the way Barty put all the pieces together so quickly. He had figured out that Harry was from another universe, he had figured out that Ivy was this universe's version of Harry, and he kept shooting knowing little glances Harry's way. Harry wasn't sure what it was Barty thought he knew, but he didn't like it.

---

Sirius was confused. This lady that had apparently appeared à la yesterday's book was from Harry's universe, was the grown up version of Ivy's friend of the same name, which, Sirius didn't even want to think about how that was going to work. Oh, and she was maybe Harry's girlfriend? Harry had not mentioned having a girlfriend before he ended up here, but the glares he was sending Barty's way were of a rather familiar sort.

So yes, that was all a bit confusing, and Sirius would need to unpack all that later, but then there was the woman herself. Luna Lovegood. Sirius had been talking to her for forty minutes and he still had no idea what was going on. She was nice though, and Harry seemed happy (when he wasn't busy sending mental daggers Barty's way). Then a thought struck Sirius.

"Wait, does this mean you're leaving?" he asked Harry.

"What? No. Why would you think that?"

"Well didn't she come to get you?"

"Oh no, I'm staying. I don't know of a way to get back to our world," Luna said matter-of-factly.

Sirius opened his mouth a bit and then closed it and frowned. Okay, there had to be something going on between the two. But just in case, "So why did you come here?"

Harry shot him a glare but Sirius ignored it.

"To see Harry, of course."

Yep. Definitely something going on.

Well, it had been a long time since they had last seen each other. So, Sirius did what every good wingman did. He abandoned his friend at the opportune moment, with subtly and

strategy, and...

“Hey Barty, time to go. Let’s let the lovebirds catch up, shall we?”

As he pushed an amused Barty out the door had thought he heard someone choking on something. He momentarily thought about turning back to make sure everything was okay, but Harry was a competent wizard and from his brief experience with Luna (and Harry’s past descriptions of her), he was fairly certain she was more than capable herself. So, putting aside his concerns, he continued pushing Barty, all the way to the apparition point.

Harry could thank him later.

---

As happy as Harry was that Sirius and Barty were finally leaving Luna alone, he did have to wonder where the fire was. It was *really* warm in here.

“Look, Luna, I’m really sorry about them.”

“Oh it’s alright. They seem sweet.”

Harry wanted to argue that no, they were terrible people, but that would mean arguing with Luna and he didn’t want to do that so he just nodded reluctantly.

“They were cute.”

Sirius had better not show his face here ever again.

“They obviously care about you a lot.”

Oh. Well that was a little better, he supposed.

“Still, I’m sorry about them. And what they, um, what Sirius...”

Luna laughed softly. “You don’t need to apologize.”

Harry joined her in laughing. “I’m so happy you’re here, Luna. I missed you.”

“I missed you too.”

---

“Lucy!”

Lucius came to an abrupt halt. “How did you get in here?”

“I’m *family*. Narcissa added me to the wards ages ago.”

Lucius felt his eye twitch.

“Malfoy,” came the voice of the second intruder.

Lucius was certain these two existed solely to torment him at this point. “I don’t want to know,” he muttered. “Narcissa is outside. Go bother her.”

“It’s *cold* outside.”

“Then use a... oh, forget it.”

For being smart the two current banes of his existence could be idiots.

---

“Lucius, come join us for tea.”

Lucius was always happy to see his wife. He was much less excited to see the two wizards with her.

“You’re still *here*?”

Black smiled smugly at him and Barty looked like he knew something. Then again, that was a normal expression for Barty to have. Stupid Ravenclaws.

With great reluctance Lucius sat down as Narcissa waved her wand for the tea to start pouring.

“So Sirius, tell us more about Harry’s girlfriend.”

Well maybe this afternoon wouldn’t be a complete waste after all...

---

“Okay, we have 65 and a half hours before the train leaves. How’s the plan coming along?”

Percy checked over his notes. “All the second years seem fine, except for one, but apparently Smith is a bit of a drama queen, or so I’m told.”

“Who told you that?”

“Uh, Parkinson, Abbott, Brown, and Patil.”

“The Ravenclaw?”

“Gryffindor,” Percy said with a resigned sigh. “Did you know twelve year old girls could be so ruthless? Do you think they’re all like that? Were the girls in our year like that?”

Thomas sympathized, he really did. But, “Don’t you have a sister? Shouldn’t you already know this?”

Percy’s face went a little pale. “They *are*.”

Thomas nodded. “I think so. Remember Sarah Marchand our first year?”

They both shuddered at the memory.

“Greenhouse Four was shut down for *months* after that.”

“Well, that’s the second years at least,” Thomas said, clearing his throat. “What else did you find?”

“I asked the twins about the fourth years. Seems most of them were content to follow along with what Ivy’s friends in that year had to say, so no worries there.”

“Wait, who else is she friends with in that year?”

Percy pulled out his ongoing Ivy’s friends list from his bag. “Let’s see, so far we’ve got, Fred, George, Lee, Angelina, Alicia, Higgs, Pucey, Diggory, Walker, and Holmwood.”

Thomas frowned at the last couple names. Diggory he knew from Marcus’s numerous quidditch talks, but...

“Both in Hufflepuff,” Percy added helpfully.

“Right, okay, so fourth years are good. Anything else?”

“Well sixth year Gryffs apparently decided that anything to do with Ivy was somehow Oliver’s and my job so... Yeah, pretty sure they couldn’t care less.”

“Same for Slytherin. Sort of. Mostly I think the girls find it all funny. Something about the ongoing plight of us sixth year guys? Not really sure.”

“Any luck with the other houses?”

“Not yet, but I don’t think most of them will care to be honest.”

Percy nodded. “Probably not. Alright, so that leaves us with... First, third, fifth, and seventh.”

“All the seventh years I saw yelled at me for disturbing them, so I don’t think they care all that much. At least not until tomorrow when they are officially done with the term.”

“Fair enough.”

“And fifth years in Slytherin... Okay this one was split. About half of them think it’s really cool and have declared Ivy the new Slytherin mascot, and the other half also... don’t seem to care.”

Percy frowned. “That’s good though, right?”

“I guess,” Thomas said, shrugging. “But doesn’t it seem like there should be, I don’t know, more of a reaction to this?”

Percy nodded, leaning back in his chair. “Maybe because Lord Peverell was already discovered to be a Parselmouth? And Lord Slytherin? I mean, it might have made everyone a little more, I don’t know, blasé about the whole thing now?”



Thomas raised an eyebrow. "So you're saying that because *one* other person was discovered to be a Parselmouth, that it's what, not a big deal this time around? Old news and all that?"

Percy shrugged. "Not saying it is, just that it might be." He paused and frowned for a minute. "I suppose you'll hear more about it over the holiday. Maybe keep an ear out? Hear what kids go home and tell their parents about this?"

Thomas nodded. "Good idea. Okay, so what about the other fifth years?"

"They seem to be going with the sixth years on this one."

"Not their problem?"

"Pretty much."

"Any luck with first or third years?"

"Well I asked Ginny about first years. She said that a lot of them were nervous about it at first but then saw that the second years all seemed fine with it, so at least in Gryffindor they are fine. A few comments about Ivy being the next dark lord or something but someone mentioned Lord Slytherin obviously already doing that so they apparently settled down after that."

Thomas frowned. "Peverell is trying to be a dark lord."

Percy shook his head. "Not that I've heard, but you know how people get with Slytherin and..." Percy gestured vaguely and Thomas nodded in understanding.

"I asked around about the first years and Kenneth said Ravenclaw and Slytherin firsties are all fine. I think he, uh, may have *talked* to a few of them."

"And I think I probably don't want to know."

"Probably wise."

"Third years?"

Thomas grimaced. "They're the only real problems I've seen so far. Slytherin third years are a bit mixed. Obviously Claridge is going around spouting off that Ivy tried to kill him."

"Did she?"

"Pretty sure not, but to be fair I didn't actually ask."

"Fair enough. And the others?"

"Claridge has a few friends, mostly Slytherin and Ravenclaw from what I've gathered, that are taking his side, but the others seem mostly torn between wanting to express outrage of some kind and not wanting to get shown up by the first years."

“Sounds a bit like Gryffindor then. The third years don’t want to be outdone by the firsties.”

“Any word on Hufflepuff?”

“Not much. I did hear that Scrivens yelled at some of them to stop whining about it until the term was officially over though. So maybe a bit mixed as well?”

“If Audrey yelled at them then I’m not worried,” Thomas said. “Remember third year?”

“Our third year?”

“Yeah. Our third, her fourth. When she yelled at all those seventh year Gryffindors?”

Percy chuckled. “Yeah. Charlie went on about that for at least a week.”

Thomas grinned. “Been my favorite Hufflepuff ever since.”

“So mix her distaste for the all-Slytherins-are-evil spiel and the fact that some kids were annoying her on the last day of the term and...”

“Like I said. Not worried.”

Percy laughed. “Yeah, makes sense. So, does that mean we’re all set then?”

“For now. We still have to wait to see what the reaction over the holiday is like. And the reaction from parents.”

Percy winced. “Yeah, that might not go over so well with some of them...”

“Yours?”

“No, I think they’ll be fine, they know Ivy. But some of the others, especially ones whose kids don’t know Ivy well or actually don’t like her...”

Thomas grimaced. “Yeah, well, I’ll keep an ear out. So I guess we need a plan for the new term then, huh? Just in case?”

“Yes. So here’s what I’m thinking. If we keep the gossip focused now, then...”

## Chapter End Notes

So this ended up being one of the larger gaps between updates. And on that little cliffhanger moment too... This chapter also isn't the longest, because it was what was originally going to be part of the previous chapter. You know, before I decided to split it and leave y'all hanging there for a bit? Anyway, here's this, sorry it took longer, as I thought a lot of you got it right, and next up we have Christmas, which means Ivy meeting Luna and Barty among other things. Thanks everyone for reading! Cheers!



## Chapter 32

*December 20, 1992*

“Okay, so Ivy and Remus will be back tomorrow, and we’re going to the Lovegoods’ for Christmas, and... oh, that might pose a problem... oh, and then there’s the Malfoys’ party, which we can totally skip if you want, and then... What are you smiling at me like that for?”

“You’re looking much better than you were before. I was starting to worry about your sanity.”

“Thanks, Luna.”

---

*December 21, 1992*

“Ivy, meet Luna. Luna, this is Ivy.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Ivy.”

Remus nudged Sirius. “Is it just me or does it look like Ivy has hearts in her eyes?”

Sirius smirked. “I’d say so.”

“No, I mean *literal* hearts. Wait, what did you do?”

“It’s a rather nice effect, don’t you think?”

---

“No need to look so smug, Remus,” Harry said with a scowl.

“Told you,” Remus replied. Alright, so maybe his smile was a little smug...

“How did you know she’d like Barty so well anyway? They’ve never met. *You* have barely met him. You dumped him on us and *left*.”

Remus shrugged. “We wrote.”

“You wrote... What exactly did you write about? ‘How not to be a death eater?’”

“Among other things, yes. Mostly about you, Ivy, his hopes that you might decide to take over the world... Things like that.”

“Well isn’t that just bloody fantastic,” Harry muttered under his breath.

“Yes, it has been working out quite well I’d say, wouldn’t you?”

Remus didn’t try to hide his smug smile or the chuckle at Harry’s eye twitch.

---

“...kept trying to tell it to go lick *Linus*, but it wasn’t very good at listening, and that’s why everyone knows I’m a Parselmouth now. Oh, but Thomas made me keep Hilda a secret.”

“Hilda?”

“The basilisk, remember?”

Sirius nodded. “Right. And Thomas knows because...”

“Because he was with me when I met her. Oh, but he did say he would talk to Percy, and then I can tell Fred and George and maybe Neville. He said it needed to wait until next term though. Oh, and Draco knows.”

Sirius gulped. “Yes, well, listen to Thomas. Maybe it’s not such a good idea to go telling everyone about the basilisk?”

Ivy shrugged. “I won’t. He said some people might try to kill it. Wouldn’t that just be *awful*?”

Sirius could think of other ways to describe it, but let it be. At least the basilisk had proven useful. Still, this was a bit of a contrast to Harry’s own basilisk adventure. He really hoped Ivy knew what she was doing. Actually, he really hoped that Thomas knew what he was doing, and that Ivy could somehow be convinced to keep listening to him.

---

*December 25, 1992*

“Are you sure you’re alright with going? It’s okay if you’re not, you know.”

Luna smiled at him in the “you’re adorable” way she did sometimes. Or at least that’s what he hoped it was. It was possible that it was more of a “you’re sort of an idiot but it’s okay because I like you” sort of look. Although if she thought he was adorable and an idiot he would still take that.

“Was it hard to see Sirius?”

“What? No. Why?”

“Why not? You watched him die, and then you saw him here.”

Luna was as blunt as ever. Merlin, Harry had really missed this.

“Well, it wasn’t *my* Sirius, you know? I mean, yes, it’s Sirius, and I love him, but they feel... I don’t know... Different? I... Oh.”

Luna smiled. “You love them both, but you recognize that they are different, even for all their similarities. I think it’ll be the same way seeing Daddy here.”

Harry nodded along. “But, so *soon*, and...”

Luna squeezed his hand. "Thank you, Harry. But it will be fine."

Harry exhaled. "If you're sure," he said, squeezing her hand in return.

"Yes," was all she said in reply.

"Okay, we all ready to go?" Sirius's voice came, followed shortly by the fast chatter of Ivy and Barty. Remus too eventually followed, and soon they were on their way, a rather odd mix of people ready to spend Christmas with the Lovegoods'.

*This will be fine*, Harry thought to himself a few times between his home and their destination. *It will be fine*.

---

Surprisingly, given most of his past life experiences, it was, in fact, fine. Pleasant, even. There had been that brief moment of panic when Xeno told Luna (older Luna) that she looked just like her mother, but everyone not already in the know seemed to take the fact that there were two Luna Lovegoods in stride. It had taken exactly four minutes to decide exactly how it was all going to work. Luna would keep her name, and she would be claimed as a Lovegood cousin. Other details such as her origin, the fact no one had ever heard of her, the fact that the two Lunas shared a name and a birthday (since Luna was insistent on keeping hers the same, and why hadn't Harry been able to manage that?), and the fact that she really did look just like Luna only older, well... Those other details were deemed mostly unimportant. No one else seemed concerned by them, so Harry decided to just enjoy the day and work out details with the goblins later.

Speaking of goblins...

"So, would Monday work to go to Gringotts? It might help if you are there," Harry said, speaking to Xeno, "to properly claim Luna as a relative and all."

"Yes, Monday would be fine. I'm sure the girls would enjoy meeting with their friends as well."

Ivy turned toward younger Luna. This was going to get confusing fast. "Are *you* friends with Bogrod and Gornuk *too*?"

Ivy's Luna (yes, that would work) looked back at her. "No, I don't think I've met them. Maybe you could introduce us? I do know Griphook and Ragnok though."

"Oh, can you introduce *me*?"

"Of course."

Harry smiled. It was so nice to see everyone getting along so well.

---

There was something seriously wrong going on here. How else could Harry talking so nonchalantly about visiting the goblins be explained? And when the girls spoke about

meeting each other's goblin friends, Harry had smiled. *Smiled*. Definitely something wrong here.

It was a while though before Sirius was able to get an answer out of Harry.

"Harry, why are you suddenly okay with going to the goblins?"

"It's Luna," Harry replied, as if that explained everything.

Sirius sighed. Perhaps it did.

---

*December 26, 1992*

"Why are we going there again?"

"Ivy insisted she see her brother."

"She has a brother?"

Remus gave Barty a side-eye. "Didn't you read the letter I sent you? The one clearly outlining the Weasley family?"

Barty scoffed. "Of course I did. But you never mentioned they were *related*."

"Oh, they're not."

"Wait a minute, you just..."

"Remember what I told you about Longbottom?"

Barty shot him a scowl at the mention of his third least favorite name (coming somewhere after Crouch and LeStrange). "Yes, I remember what you said about Longbottom," he said petulantly.

"And the part about how she considers him to be a brother?"

"Yes, yes, I remember all that. And the part about their mothers being each others godmothers, and isn't it just so sweet how they are getting to experience the pseudo-sibling relationship their mothers would have loved them to have, if not for the fact that they'd much rather of had them married at some point, but what can you do. Yes, I *remember*."

"Well it's essentially the same for the Weasleys."

"Wait, *all of them*?"

Remus opened his mouth but didn't reply right away. "You know, I'm not actually sure about that..."

---

Bill watched their guests with... surprise? Interest? Mild fascination? It was difficult to put a name to what he was feeling and thinking at the moment. Sure, he had heard stories about Lord Peverell, who had at some point apparently become Percy *and* the twins' idol (and he wasn't sure he wanted to know how *that* came about), and he had heard plenty about Ivy Potter, who was every bit the picture of sweet, innocent chaos that he had imagined her to be. He had also heard a lot recently, especially since being home, about Professor Lupin, who was apparently the best defense teacher any of them had had (and no, he was not at all jealous Fred, shut up).

But nothing compared to actually seeing them here.

Seeing them... well, fighting wasn't the most accurate term, but it would need to do for the moment.

And not one of them was even using magic.

Lord Henry Peverell-Slytherin, widely rumored to be one of the most powerful wizards in the world, was currently engaged in a very magic-less scuffle with Lord Black, Professor Lupin, and four of Bill's brothers. Charlie and the twins weren't too much of a surprise, but Percy was not someone Bill had expected to see rolling around on the ground, not to mention the fact that he was actually doing something akin to winning whatever...*this* was.

Mr. Parry was watching on in amused silence, though to Bill it looked like he was actually considering joining in. Ron looked both excited and confused as to what was going on, Ivy and Ginny were cheering loudly, Ivy having procured popcorn of all things from who knows where, and Miss Lovegood was offering occasional commentary as if it were a sports match. Meanwhile his parents had displayed several reactions before both settling on fond exasperation. It was a hybrid mix of the at-least-they're-doing-it-outside look and the I've-given-up-trying-to-get-them-to-stop look, both of which were rather familiar in the Weasley household.

So why were Bill's brothers and a few fully grown wizards rolling around on the ground in a (probably) mock free-for-all?

Well. Here's how it started.

### ***Flashback***

*"Why did she just call Charlie her brother?"*

*Percy glanced over at him. "She claimed him as her brother and wants to adopt him."*

*That didn't exactly help Bill understand the situation, so he asked another question. "And how did that happen?"*

*"Oh, she met him last summer and decided she really liked him."*

*"And now he's her brother?"*

*"Mhmm. I am too, apparently."*



*“And the twins?”*

*“No clue. She calls them her best friends all the time, but the only best friend of hers I’ve heard her also call her brother is Longbottom. Of course then there is Luna, but she’s a girl.”*

*Yes, astute observation there, Perce. Thanks for that. Truly helpful. “So... How many, er, ‘siblings’ does she have then?”*

*“I’m not certain. There is Charlie, obviously, and me, and Longbottom, as I mentioned. And then Luna, who seems to be the only girl so far. And then there’s Thomas, who I think is a brother, but I’m not one hundred percent sure on that one. And Malfoy, though he seems to be more like the twins. Best friend, maybe not brother. Actually I’m fairly certain he has a massive crush on her. And then Oliver and Marcus, but I actually have no idea how she views them. I think they’ve more or less claimed her as their little sister, but I’m not sure that she has done the same. Oh, and then of course you have Kenneth Burke, who Luna claimed as her older brother, and who has unofficially claimed the same of Luna, but he and Ivy are just friendly, and I don’t think he’s part of Ivy’s group in the same way. There are several other people Ivy is fairly close to in some of the older years, but I think that is it as far as her declared siblings go.”*

*Bill was not sure whether or not he regretted asking.*

*“So, essentially she has several older students that she looks up to that she considered brother figures?”*

*Percy snorted. Bill wondered briefly what had happened to his brother and who this imposter was. “See her over there? With Charlie?”*

*Bill did. Ivy was currently waving her arms around excitedly and Charlie looked as if he were about to burst out laughing. “Yeah, what about it?”*

*“See those papers?”*

*“Yes... ”*

*“Do you know what those are?”*

*Bill rolled his eyes at Percy. “No, I don’t know what those are. I’m assuming though by the sun look on you face that you know what they are?”*

*He chose that moment to take a sip of the drink in his hand. It was a very poor decision.*

*“Those are adoption papers.”*

*See previous statement on poor decisions.*

*“She’s trying to get him to adopt her?”*

*Percy looked exasperated at that. “No, of course not. Haven’t you been listening to anything I told you?”*

*Bill had, but didn't bother pointing it out, figuring it would not do much good at the moment.*

*"She's trying to adopt him."*

*Lord Peverell, who had been chatting with their father about some muggle thing or other that Bill had no idea about, suddenly paused mid-sentence and half-ran over to them.*

*"Sorry, did you say Ivy's trying to adopt someone?"*

*Percy gestured over to where Charlie and Ivy were sitting.*

*Bill watched as Peverell's eye twitched furiously.*

*"Just a moment," Peverell said with false cheerfulness, before making his way quickly over to his...daughter? Bill hadn't actually gathered that bit of information yet.*

*He watched as Peverell whispered quietly but animatedly back and forth with Ivy, Charlie watching the entire thing with a grin on his face. Obviously Charlie wasn't worried about the fact that a twelve year old girl was trying to get him to sign adoption papers.*

*Finally Peverell seemed satisfied, though by the pout on Ivy's face Bill was certain that she was not. Peverell made his way back to where Bill and Percy stood, and began talking to Percy about some book or other that sounded suspiciously like one of the ones Bill had come across in Egypt a couple years back... No, there was no way Percy was reading stuff like that, was there?*

*No, of course not. No need to be worried at all.*

*He turned his attention back to Charlie and Ivy, Charlie now trying to comfort Ivy or something like that. Eventually he pulled out a small little package from behind his back and handed it to her. She opened it and her face immediately went from pout to full out grin.*

*A small model dragon, because what else would Charlie possibly get anyone who showed even the slightest enthusiasm for his favorite creature.*

*Ivy gave Charlie a big hug, and Bill could see why she had declared him her brother. From here it looked like Charlie had decided having two little sisters was better than one as well.*

*"How come she didn't look that happy when I gave her presents." Bill glanced to his right only to find Lord Black standing there with a rather convincing kicked puppy look on his face.*

*"Uh, did you get her a dragon?" Bill offered.*

*Black muttered some curse or other not in English and Bill suppressed a chuckle at the pout on Black's face.*

*"What do I have to do?" Black whined.*

*Just then Charlie and Ivy joined them, Ivy proudly showing off the model Dragon to Peverell, and Percy shooting Charlie a glare that Bill couldn't quite make out the interpretation of.*

*"Charlie, my good man, I need to ask you something," Black said, getting Charlie's attention.*

*"Yeah? What's up?"*

*"How?"*

*Charlie gave Black a puzzled look.*

*"How are you doing it?"*

*"Doing what?"*

*Black let out something that sounded a bit like a whimper. "How come she likes you so much?"*

*"Charlie's my favorite," Ivy interjected, before turning back to Peverell. Bill thought he could make out something along the lines of "no dragons in the backyard" and "but there's room," but he couldn't be sure, due partially to the high pitched whine coming from Black.*

*"...only met her twice," Charlie was saying.*

*"What am I doing wrong," Black muttered none too softly.*

*"You could always settle for seventh," Peverell piped in. There had to be some connotation to that comment that Bill was missing, because Black took immediate offense to that.*

*Then all of a sudden there was no longer a wizard standing next to Bill, but a grim, who proceeded to chase Peverell outside.*

*Lupin appeared seemingly out of nowhere, and with a sigh said, "I'd better go after them."*

*Still not entirely sure what had just happened, Bill followed Lupin and everyone else as they made their own ways outside to where the grim that he was fairly certain was Black was jumping on Peverell, who didn't seem the least bit concerned.*

*Lupin managed to get in between them for a moment, before he too was pulled in, though he pulled Charlie along with him, making four wizards in all, or three and an animagus as it currently stood, that were rolling around on the cold ground. Then two red-headed blur shots past Bill and joined in.*

### ***End Flashback***

Bill wasn't entirely sure at what point Percy got involved, but very soon there they all rolling around on the cold ground. At no point had anyone actually drawn a wand or uttered a spell. No, they were just going at it like a bunch of muggles. It didn't appear to be too serious

though, and the sides seemed to change every twenty seconds or so, if you could even call it sides.

---

“Hey, do you want to join in?”

With Ron and Ginny’s attention now firmly on her Ivy repeated her question with a grin.

Neither looked particularly thrilled at the prospect, but then Ivy pulled out her wand and grinned wider.

“But, we’re not supposed to use magic outside of school,” Ron said with a frown.

“Well it’s not like anyone is going to be able to tell.”

Ginny gave her an unimpressed look. “Except mum.”

Ivy grinned. “I’ve got a plan.”

Ron groaned, and Ginny looked excited.

Ivy skipped over to Barty and whispered in his ear. He too grinned, and soon was chatting to Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. A moment later all three had disappeared back into the house.

“There,” Ivy said. “Okay, who wants to go first.”

---

It was complete chaos. Bill wasn’t sure who had shot the first spell, but now the only person sporting red hair was Professor Lupin, and anyone not previously involved in the skirmish was now. Oh, and did he mention they were all using wands now? Himself included, because yes, he too had been dragged into this. Not that he was complaining, really. It was pretty enjoyable, and a good chance to use some of the funny little spells he had picked up over the past few years. Ha. Try finding the counter for *that*, Charlie.

---

“WAIT!”

Everyone turned to face Ivy, a few shooting glares at various people who might have dared to hurt one of the girls.

“We need teams.”

---

Girls against boys. A classic division of teams. And rather lopsided at the moment, it seemed, since there were three girls, only one of whom was actually an adult, versus six adult wizards and four teenagers. Wait, when had Barty showed up again?

---

“You’re not doing anything. *Why aren’t you doing anything.*”

“Come on, Sirius. You can’t expect me to actually shoot spells at them. What if I hit them?”

Sirius felt his eye twitch. “Harry, I love you, but they are *winning*.”

“Yes, but...”

“*Harry...*”

---

“Okay, so new teams.”

“Yes. We, your humble minions, beg leave to join your team.”

“*Fred...*”

“Hey, I claimed rights as first minion *ages* ago.”

“But Henry said I couldn’t have minions.”

“Fred, George, why are you two over here anyway?” Ginny asked.

“Joining the winning side, of course.”

“We tried to tell them, but *nooo*.”

“Okay, so team name?”

“Well, most of us are still at Hogwarts, so maybe team Hogwarts?”

“We could each be one of the houses.”

“Someone would have to share, there’s five of us.”

“I don’t mind sharing.”

“Perfect. So I’ll be Hufflepuff, *obviosuly*. George, you can be Slytherin.”

George gave Ivy a mock salute.

“Ginny, you want Ravenclaw? You’re smart.”

Ginny beamed and nodded her agreement.

“Hey, what about me,” Fred protested.

“Yes, yes, you’re smart too. How about you be Gryffindor then?”

“Nah, I think I’ll join up with Forge over here. We’d look great in green, wouldn’t we.”

“I can be Gryffindor,” Luna offered.

“Perfect! Then we’re all set.”

---

“So can we be team Gryffindor?” Sirius asked hopefully.

“I’m out,” came Barty’s reply.

---

“Oh, hey Barty. You joining our team too?”

“They decided to be team Gryffindor.”

“Ah.”

“Wait, so does this mean we can’t have Gryffindor anymore?”

---

“We are badgers and we are going to *destroy you*.”

“Wow, Ivy looks really into this. Are you sure this is going to be okay?”

Harry and Percy both shrugged.

“It could be worse,” Percy said.

“At least Nott isn’t here,” Harry added.

No one had any reply for that.

---

“And I was so looking forward to wearing green,” Fred said with false sadness.

George adjusted the transfigured yellow tie tied around his head. “Just steal one from Draco when we get back.”

Fred’s face lit up. “Oh, that just gave me a wonderful idea.”

George grinned. “I think I know. But later, we have to go get Charlie.”

“On it.”

---

“Where did she even *learn* that spell?” Bill asked to no one in particular.

Next to him Percy cleared his throat awkwardly.

Bill gave Percy a sideways look. “What have you been *do*...”

He didn’t get to finish his sentence, as he was suddenly quite distracted by the rabbit feet he was sporting.

---

---

“You know... it’s just a little bit... ironic... that you’re on... team Gryffindor... when you’re... literally Lord... Slytherin...” the Weasley who had the dragons huffed out in between spells.

“You have no idea,” Harry muttered.

Barty tucked that bit of information away for later.

---

“But Arthur, they aren’t allowed to use magic outside of school.”

“I’m sure it’s fine, dear. They are well supervised, anyhow.”

Molly took a good luck at the fully grown wizards getting their butts kicked by her youngest kids who had apparently all joined up at some point. She wasn’t sure this exactly counted as “supervision.”

---

“I can’t believe we got our arses handed to us like that,” Sirius said with a groan.

“Told you,” Fred, Percy, and Barty all said at the same time.

Harry grinned at Sirius’s scowl. “Come on, Padfoot. You know you were holding back a bit. Nothing to be ashamed of.”

Sirius muttered under his breath.

“What was that? Didn’t quite catch that there,” Harry said with a cheeky grin.

“I didn’t want to get them hurt,” Sirius said. “Besides, where did she even *learn* that one.”

Harry chuckled nervously and noticed Percy doing the same. He shot the boy a commiserating look and Percy visibly relaxed. He laughed again, this time more sincerely. Of course Ivy would have bugged Percy about learning spells. At least someone other than Remus was trying to make sure Ivy learned something that wasn’t likely to result in widespread destruction while at school. And Harry had to admit, seeing Sirius with cat whiskers and a tail was hilarious.

---

*Achoo.*

A dozen pair of eyes shot to the harumph that followed the innocent sneeze.

---

“Please adopt me,” Sirius groaned into his cup of hot chocolate. “Or marry me, I’m not picky.”

Arthur chuckled and Molly rolled her eyes good-naturedly as she finished handing out hot mugs.

---

“Sorry your plan didn’t work out,” Percy said to Ivy, giving her a sympathetic smile.

Ivy shrugged. “It was worth a shot.”

“You know, you don’t have to be official to be family.”

Ivy smiled. “I know. Thanks Percy. I’ll give you your papers on your birthday.”

Percy only partially choked on his hot chocolate.

---

“What was that all about?”

“Apparently Charlie’s not the only one she got papers for.”

Bill couldn’t help but smile. “Determined, is she.”

Percy rolled his eyes. “You have no idea.”

“Why your birthday though?”

“Legal adult. Don’t need mum and dad’s signatures,” Percy murmured.

Bill laughed outright at that.

---

“And I had no idea Xenophilius had a cousin. And such a wonderful girl. Oh, and they make such a lovely couple, don’t you think dear?”

Arthur chuckled. “They do.”

---

*December 31, 1992*

“Remind me why I have to go,” Remus muttered under his breath as he fixed his tie.

“Because. I can’t go *alone*.”

“Harry, Luna, *and* Barty are all going, not to mention Ivy.”

“But Harry and Luna are going together, I’m not going with Barty, and Ivy doesn’t count.”

“Don’t let her hear you say that,” Remus said with a chuckle, enjoying the look that flashed across Sirius’s face.

“That’s not what I meant. But she’s going to go off with her friends, and I’d be left alone, Remus. *Alone*.”

“And you’re not going with Sabrina because...”



“Because she’s still in Italy.”

“Remind me why she’s there again?”

“Visiting family.”

“You mean the Zabinis?”

“Yeah.”

“I thought she hated them?”

“Well her first husband wasn’t *terrible*, and yeah, she despises his parents, but she loves his grandfather. She’s his favorite grandchild.”

“I...” Remus wasn’t quite sure what to say to that. “Okay, so she’s not going to be there. But why do I have to go?”

“It’ll be fine.”

“None of those people like me.”

“I like you.”

“Doesn’t feel like it,” Remus muttered. “You owe me.”

---

“Ah, Professor Lupin. So nice to make your acquaintance. I’ve heard excellent things about you. It seems you are quite the hit among the students.”

“Lord Harrington,” Remus said with a polite nod.

“I see Sirius managed to drag you here after all.”

Remus frowned slightly and Harrington let out a soft chuckle. “Samira mentioned how much he’s been complaining about Sabrina begin gone. I believe you have Remei and Narcissa to thank for your forced presence here.”

Remus groaned under his breath and Harrington let out another laugh.

“Come on, let me introduce you around.”

Remus didn’t even get a protest out before he was dragged away.

---

“You look like you would rather be anywhere else than here right now.”

Remus turned towards Lord Greengrass. “Is it that obvious?”

“Only to those of us that feel the same,” he said with a smirk.

Remus groaned. “How do you do it?”

“Watch.”

---

“Hey, have you seen Remus anywhere?”

Harry frowned. “Not for a while. Last I saw he was talking to Greengrass.”

Now Sirius frowned. “I’ll go ask Anthea then. Maybe she knows where they went.”

---

“Ladies,” Sirius said with a smile. “Have any of you by chance seen Remus around here lately? He was talking to Nate, but we can’t seem to find either of them.”

Narcissa and Anthea both smirked. “It seems your friend was dragged into Nate’s little party group,” Anthea said.

Sirius frowned. Remus wasn’t much of a partier...

“Perhaps it would be more accurate to call it the party avoidance group, dear,” Lady Burke offered.

That made a little more sense.

“Try the library,” Narcissa said. “They are probably trying to initiate Lupin into their secret Ravenclaw club as we speak.”

---

“Harry, help me. We have to go save Remus.”

“What? Why?”

“They’re trying to make him a Ravenclaw.”

Harry sighed. “I don’t think Remus needs rescuing from something like that. And who is doing this anyway?”

“Greengrass, Westbrook, Thorburn, and Bromford.”

“I literally only know one of those names.”

“*Harry.*”

A rather loud crashing sound interrupted Sirius’s protest.

“Do you think we ought to...”

“Maybe we should...”

“It’s fine,” Lucius said, walking past them. “It’s just the children.”

Harry and Sirius watched him walk off.

“Is that supposed to make us feel better?” Harry asked.

---

“...AVENGE YOUR HONOR AND I WILL...”

Greengrass closed the door. “See, everything is fine.”

Remus reminded himself that he was not at Hogwarts, so the kids were not actually his problem at the moment.

“So, *Ignatius*...”

“*Basilus*...”

Bromford rolled his eyes. “Nate, Bas, cut it out. We’re going to scare the Gryffindor.”

---

As Harry opened the door they were met with five surprised faces.

“See Sirius? Nothing going on. Just five men meeting in the library talking about...”

“Changes made in the most recent edition of *Grammatica*.”

“See, Sirius? Changes made in... yes, well. Nothing to worry about, is there.”

“Merlin, you are all nerds,” Sirius said in a horrified mutter.

Not one of them looked the least bit offended. Remus just rolled his eyes.

“Sirius, you already know Ignatius Greengrass...”

“*Nate*,” Greengrass corrected.

“Sorry, right. *Nate* Greengrass. And this is Basilus Westbrook, Dunstan Thorburn, and Sebastian Bromford. Gentlemen, Sirius Black and Henry Peverell.”

Pleasantries were exchanged, and Harry left feeling rather amused at Sirius’s growing horror at the suggestion that he too join in their discussion. Apparently Sirius’s eagerness to skip out on social events ended when it came to philosophical and academic discussions. Harry made a mental note to introduce Percy to Bromford though. He had a feeling they’d get along quite nicely.

---

“Did you know Lovegood had a cousin?”

“I certainly did not. Where is she from again?”

“I heard Canada, but maybe it was New Zealand?”

“Well I heard Henry is from Canada, so maybe that’s where they met?”

“They make a lovely couple, don’t you think?”

“Oh absolutely.”

“I’d say our work here is quite done, wouldn’t you agree?”

“Yes.”

“Now onto politics. If we can just get him comfortable enough to start showing up…”

“And Sirius too. Henry will be more likely to go if Sirius does.”

“That’s true. Now, about how to raise the topic…”

---

Lucius paused mid-sentence at the loud crash he heard. It was only the fourth one of the evening, so overall a quiet night. But, just in case…

“Dobby.” The elf popped into sight. “Please go make sure no one is injured.”

The elf popped back off to make sure the children were alive, uninjured (relatively), and still confined to the Gryffindor looking room. Lucius could hardly care less if anything happened to that room, but he’d still just as rather not have any serious injuries to deal with.

Turning his attention back to the conversation at hand, he noticed the surprised look on a few of the wizards faces. Then someone made a comment about being nice to house elves. Well, since the opportunity had presented itself…

---

Barty smirked. It was always amusing to see Lucius doing his yes-you-should-all-definitely-listen-to-me thing. At the moment, not only was he displaying his closeness with Lord Peverell, which, after figuring out more about Harry’s past, was becoming an infinitely amusing source of entertainment for Barty, but he was also making the whole house elf issue appear to be *his* idea. Only Lucius could give credit to someone else while simultaneously claiming credit for himself.

Very amusing.

---

“Oh have you seen the lady with Lord Peverell?”

“I have. Do you know who she is?”

“I have no idea. I heard she was a foreign cousin of one of the minor families here.”

---

“No, I don’t know her name. I did hear she is a magizoologist or something along those lines.”

“Oh, how fascinating.”

---

“You know, I heard she does some sort of specialized creature work.”

---

“I think she specialized in rare and undiscovered species and creatures.”

“Oh doesn’t that sound interesting.”

---

“I heard she was looking for help from a Parselmouth.”

---

“I heard they met when Lord Peverell discovered a new species of snake.”

“What a perfect love story.”

---

“I hear they were childhood sweethearts.”

---

“I heard they just met this summer.”

---

“I heard they met in Brazil.”

---

“I heard they met in India.”

---

“How can someone be a specialist in undiscovered species?” Harry asked.

Luna laughed lightly. “Well someone has to be.”

“Apparently,” Harry said, rolling his eyes. “Wizarding logic at it’s finest.”

“Of course.”

Harry laughed and pulled her a little closer as they danced. Why was it so much easier dancing with Luna?

---

“Almost as many people like looking at you here as they did before,” Luna said with a small laugh.

Harry did a theatrical groan. “It never *stops*,” he whined. Harry glances around and brightened. “But it does look like they’re looking at you more than me.”

Luna giggled. “How would you tell.”

“It’s obvious, isn’t it? You’re much prettier than I am. So *obviously* they’re all looking at you.”

“Only because I’m with you. People don’t look at me.”

“No, pretty sure it’s all you. It just took them longer.”

“Longer for what?”

“To see what I see.”

---

Unnoticed by Harry and Luna, Barty let out an audible “aww.”

“You too?” Narcissa said with a conspiratorial smile.

Barty rolled his eyes. “Like you aren’t already.”

“Never said I wasn’t.”

“Ten galleons says end of the year.”

“Twenty says end of summer.”

Barty sighed. “I really should know better than to bet against you, shouldn’t I.”

Narcissa made a noncommittal hmm.

“Well, I’m fairly certain Ivy already has a wedding planner going. I’m sure she’d be open to taking suggestions.”

The gleam that flashed across Narcissa’s face gave Barty a brilliant idea.

“What do you think about Sirius and Sabrina? They seem to be taking their time.”

“You’re right,” Narcissa said, frowning slightly. “Perhaps we ought to give them some encouragement.”

Barty just smirked.

---

*January 2, 1993*

“And you have everything packed?”

Ivy rolled her eyes. “Yes, *Dad*. I have everything packed.”

Harry just rolled his eyes in return. “Hey, wait, what is this?” He picked up a notebook that had a few things sticking out of it.

“Oh, it’s nothing. Just some ideas Aunt Narcissa gave me.”

Harry frowned. Well, Narcissa didn't seem the type to give Ivy any suggestions that would be *too* awful...

"What kind of ideas?"

"Oh, just some wedding ideas. Nothing too big. Anyway, can I go over to Daphne's house now?"

"What? Yeah, sure. Just be back for dinner," Harry called out, as Ivy skipped out of the room.

---

"Sirius, I think Ivy is planning a wedding."

"What?"

"I mean, she hasn't kissed him, right? She's twelve. She's not kissing anyone yet. *Right?*" Harry's voice was somewhat pleading.

"Who?"

"*Ivy.*"

"Who is she kissing?"

"Draco."

"Wait, they're getting married?"

Harry nodded, grimace firmly in place. "I think Narcissa is helping them plan it."

Sirius shrugged. "They're a little young, but you know how some families are. Like to have things planned well in advance." He frowned. "You haven't gotten a marriage contract yet, have you?"

"A *what?*" Harry's voice was about three octaves higher than normal.

---

Narcissa watched Sirius and Harry's faces with amusement. Eventually Draco came into the room and her attention turned towards her son.

"Draco, dear, is Ivy your girlfriend?"

Draco sputtered for a moment before regaining his composure. "What? Of course not. She's my best friend."

Harry seemed relieved at that statement, even if Sirius did not.

---

Sirius fidgeted with his fork. He couldn't really concentrate on dinner, fantastic though it was.

“Ivy,” he said finally, “is Draco your boyfriend?”

Ivy looked puzzled by the question. “Of course he is. Don’t you remember telling me about my boyfriends?”

Sirius and Harry both choked a little.

“*Boyfriends?*” Harry coughed out, before invoking Merlin’s name for something that Sirius couldn’t quite make out.

“Yeah. I mean, there’s Draco, of course, and Fred, and George, and Neville, and Cedric, and Blaise, and Theo, and Terry, and Justin, and...”

Apparently Narcissa hadn’t covered the definition of “boyfriend” in her talk. Sirius did feel a little better though.

---

“Wait, so if she doesn’t like Draco that way, then who *does* she like?”

Harry and Sirius shared a horrified glance. Draco Malfoy was one thing, but at least they *knew* him. What if she liked some other boy that they had never met and knew nothing about and...

Remus rolled his eyes at them. “She’s only a second year. Give it another year at least.”

“You don’t *know* that,” Sirius said indignantly. “We need to know these things, Remus.”

“Fine, I’ll keep an eye out,” Remus said, after giving them a look. “Happy?”

Sirius would be happier if Remus didn’t laugh at their reactions to the very real possibility that their sweet, precious, completely innocent Ivy might have a *crush*, or even worse, a *boyfriend*.



## Chapter 33

*January 3, 1993*

“Hurry up, we’re going to be late,” Harry called up, tapping his foot ever so slightly.

“Uh, Harry, the train doesn’t leave for two hours,” Sirius pointed out.

So maybe it was ever so slightly possible that Harry’s past experiences with the Weasleys and the how-many-seconds-before-the-train-leaves-can-we-get-there game had left an impression somewhere along the line. Maybe.

“I’m coming, I’m coming,” Ivy said, coming down the stairs, trunk floating behind her.

“Okay, not that this is going to change absolutely anything, but you do realize that you’re not supposed to use magic outside of school, right?” It was a token effort but Harry felt it was sufficient to check off that box on the list of parental responsibilities.

“Yep!”

“Okay, just so you’re aware.”

“Does it still count if I didn’t use my wand though?”

“Uh, not sure about that actually. Sirius? Barty?”

“It’s probably fine,” Sirius said.

“You haven’t been expelled yet.”

“Thanks, Barty, for that contribution,” Harry said dryly.

“What are minions for?” Barty said with a grin.

Ivy came to a sudden halt. “Barty’s your minion? I thought you said I couldn’t have minions. Why do *you* get a minion then?”

“Because...” Harry scrambled for an answer. “I’m an adult.”

Surprisingly, this seemed to work. Ivy was instantly mollified, and appeared to take Harry’s answer as a reasonable explanation. “Oh, that makes sense,” she said, much to Harry’s relief. “I’ll let Fred know then.”

“Wait, let Fred know what?” Harry watched Ivy walk out the door, trunk still following behind. “*Ivy...*”

---

So maybe they were just a tad early to the station, but it wasn't *that* bad. Ivy didn't seem particularly convinced of that statement, but what can you do.

"Hey, remember when we waited for that train in Bergen?"

Harry sighed. "Why couldn't you have brought up the train in Frankfurt? Or the one in Sri Lanka? Or the one in Darjeeling? Did you have to bring up the one in Bergen?" What was he saying, of course she would have brought up the one in Bergen. And... Yep, there it was. She was grinning. She was a little menace sometimes and she knew it.

Harry sighed. Dramatically. He felt he had earned that much. "One time. It happened *one* time."

Ivy was still grinning. "I still can't believe they thought your accent was real."

Harry felt his eye twitch. "It wasn't *that* bad."

Ivy grinned wider. Just as she was about to say something though she seemed to have some sort of realization. Harry braced himself. "Wait, is that why we went to the States after that?"

"No?" Harry held onto the tiny, minuscule, infinitesimal hope that somehow he had come across as convincing.

Ivy gaped. "It *is*. Oh, wait 'till I tell Sirius about that. I can't believe you took us to the States just so you could try to fake an American accent."

"Hey, I can fake one," Harry declared stubbornly. "Now," he added under his breath.

Ivy just shook her head as if he were saying something terribly amusing.

Harry most definitely did not pout. Not at all. And there were no witnesses so ha.

---

Okay, so maybe they had been really early. Their conversation had strayed all over the place, per usual, but they had ended up spending a long time talking about Luna Lovegood. Both of them, actually. Ivy loved Harry's Luna, of course, but he had been slightly perplexed when she had called his Luna, well, his Luna.

"Uncle Henry," Ivy had said seriously, "you have your Luna, I have mine."

Harry's brain had blanked out for a moment as he worried who had told Ivy something or what she had figured out. He was *not* ready for that particular situation yet. There were so many things he needed to do first. Like teach her occlumency. Or fine someone else to teach it to her. Make sure there was no way for her to make an interdimensional adventure attempt. Or time travel. Would it be rude to go destroy all the time-turners? Probably. He... oh. She probably just meant because there were two Lunas now, huh. And one was her friend while the other was Harry's... friend. Right. Yes. No need to panic. Still time to work on occlumency.

Harry then gave a small shudder.

“Yes, you’ll be fine. Okay, here’s your lunch,” he said, handing a small sack to Ivy. “Try to eat that *before* you empty the trolley.”

Ivy rolled her eyes but took the the sack with a poorly hidden grin.

There was some kind of aww-ing sound from somewhere behind him, but he wasn’t really paying close attention. Someone’s child probably just did something cute. Kids did do that sort of thing sometimes.

---

“Hey, Fred, good news.” The compartment’s occupants all looked up at the grinning Slytherin.

“Yeah? What is it?” Fred asked.

“Turns out I can have minions after I’m an adult.”

Fred grinned. Ivy grinned. The others groaned. It was a beautiful moment.

---

Thomas collapsed on his bed and started laughing into the pillow.

“Uh, everything alright there?”

“We made it,” Thomas said, perhaps a little hysterically, but really, who could blame him. “We made it.”

“You did what?”

“The entire train ride. Nothing happened. We made it through the entire train ride.”

“Right... So, I’m going to go out on a limb here and say that this has something to do with Potter?”

The twin snorts from Marcus and Kenneth were insufficient to wreck the moment of triumphant joy that Thomas was experiencing.

“Corvin,” he said, leaning up off the bed, “we made it through the *entire train ride* and *nothing happened*.” He gave his roommate a pointed look.

It only took another second or so for the other wizard to catch on, and when he did, a look of slight awe flashed over his face. “How did you manage that?”

Thomas grinned. “Did you hear about all the new pets students brought back with them this term?”

Corvin’s eye widened. “That was *you*?”

Thomas shook his head. “Nope. I had nothing to do with that. Just used it to my, well, *our* advantage.”

Corvin shuddered. "Anyone in Slytherin?"

"Nope. Ivy's the only one," Thomas said with a grin. "Heard there's quite a few in Ravenclaw though."

"Twelve," Kenneth interjected. "Four in Hufflepuff, one in Gryffindor."

"Seven... There's *seventeen* new snakes here?" Corvin looked horrified. Thomas couldn't exactly blame him.

Kenneth sighed and they all turned his way, only to see a wistful look on his face that didn't quite match his... well, existence might be a bit of an exaggeration, but it was a close thing.

"What I wouldn't give to be in that staff meeting," he said to the somewhat puzzled looks on his classmates' faces.

Thomas felt a momentary pang of sympathy for the other heads of house. He wasn't sure they were prepared for this sort of thing.

---

*January 8, 1993*

Severus groaned on the inside. Loudly, and with vigor. It was January. In Scotland. Did they all have to be so... cheerful?

And leave it to Albus to sound optimistic about the number of students that had brought back snakes as pets for the new term. Sure, the headmaster was technically *opposing* the snakes, but he was doing it in the most horrifically cheerful way imaginable, twinkle and all.

Staff meetings were terrible. Also, his third year class this morning had ended in four trips to the hospital wing and eighteen destroyed cauldrons. *Eighteen*. Severus was fairly certain it took a special kind of skill to destroy *that many* in one go. And the Weasley twins weren't even in that class, so he had no idea who might be capable of such a thing. It was mildly irritating.

"Sorry, how many students did you say showed up with snakes?"

Really, it had already been stated once nearly fifteen minutes ago. Had no one been paying attention?

"Seventeen," Minerva replied.

"That you know of," Severus couldn't help but add. Sue him, he was bored. Also the twitch in Albus's eye was worth it, as was the slight upturn in the corner of Filius's mouth.

"Well, that's one response to Ivy being a parselmouth," Lupin muttered.

Severus dearly wanted to deliver some scathing remark about how dare he assume this had anything to do with Potter, but he was almost certain it did, in fact, have to do with her.

“Oh yes, my Ravensclaws are all excited to learn more about the proper care of snakes,” Filius said. That explained the twelve snakes in Ravenclaw then.

“It’s so good to see them taking such good care of the little things,” Pomona added.

“How about you, Minerva?” Severus asked, waiting for the eye twitch... ah, there it was.

“One, Severus. Lysander Westbrook, if you must know.”

Severus was mildly impressed. He hadn’t thought the little first year had it in him.

“And what about you, Severus? How many snakes in Slytherin?”

Oh the possibilities with that question. He could see Lupin trying to hold back a smirk, and was momentarily torn between scowling at Albus for assuming his perfect little snakes had possibly done anything wrong, and Potter didn’t count at this point, and scolding at Lupin for finding the same things amusing as he did.

He settled on a general scowl and acerbic answer. “Just the one, headmaster. Same as always.”

Albus frowned, Lupin moved a hand to cover his mouth, and likely a laugh, and Severus resisted the urge to roll his eyes.

“Yes, well, snakes are not allowed at Hogwarts, so I am afraid we will have to require all students to return their new pets home. I...”

“Albus,” Minerva interrupted with a tinge of exasperation in her voice, “Miss Potter has had a snake at Hogwarts for the last year and a half and no issue has been raised. *Furthermore*,” she continued, cutting off Albus’s attempt to interject with something or other, “she is certainly not the only student to possess a pet that is not, strictly speaking, *allowed*. Need I remind you of the other animals currently residing in Hogwarts?” She didn’t pause for a response. “We have a tarantula, a gerbil, two hamsters, three guinea pigs, one fox, one sugar glider, four ferrets, two hedgehogs, nine salamanders, six lizards, and one miniature pig.”

“Miniature pig?” Lupin asked with interest.

“Folant Holmwood, one of my seventh years,” Pomona explained, with a fond look on her face. Severus ignored most of the animals that found their way into the Slytherin dorms, but he knew he would draw the line at a pig, no matter how “cute” it was claimed to be. They had to have *some* standards, after all.

“So you see, *Albus*, despite the rather *recently acquired* interest in the certain breed of reptile, simply banning that animal is not feasible at this point,” Minerva continued, giving the headmaster a very pointed look. Severus could have sworn he saw the headmaster inch down in his seat every so slightly. Good.

“Remus, what about your students?” Albus practically pleaded.

“I’m not a head of house, why are you asking me this?” Lupin asked.

It only took twelve more minutes to get Albus to give in, and another twenty minutes for the meeting to come to a blessed end, at which point Severus was mentally listing off the requirements for changing his name and moving to Russia, but that wasn't really important.

As much as he would love to retreat to the dungeons as quickly as possible, there was still one more little thing he had to take care of.

"Albus, I need to request the Easter Holidays off."

The headmaster looked at him with surprise but recovered quickly. "I see. Nothing bad I hope?"

Severus wasn't sure if he was making up the hopeful sound in Albus's voice that sounded similar to his I-have-a-conspiracy-theory-that-I'm-really-excited-about voice, but he let it go.

"I have a rather... *pressing* engagement."

Thankfully the headmaster didn't ask for further details, and approval was given. Had Severus been a Gryffindor or a Hufflepuff he would have leapt in the air for joy, but he actually had some dignity to preserve, so he refrained.

"Pressing engagement?" Lupin asked him with a knowing smirk after Albus had left.

"Yes, it is unfortunate that I will not be here to witness the latest attempt by Potter and her little red headed demons to burn the castle down, but some things can't be avoided." And some things can if you're smart and possess sufficient levels of self-preservation, Severus added to himself.

"Of course," Lupin added.

Severus was too happy to give his scowl a full measure of fury so he settled on mildly irritated. Lupin was unfazed but Severus couldn't find it in himself to care at the moment.

---

"So how has the reaction in Hufflepuff been to all the new snakes?"

Justin shrugged. "A few people are still upset that nobody else has brought a pig. Holmwood is graduating this year and everyone is kind of upset that Furball will be gone."

"Furball?"

"The pig," Justin explained.

Theo decided not to ask. "And that's it? Everyone is okay with snakes in there?"

Justin shrugged again. "Well, yeah. We have a lot of animals in there, so it'll be fine. Totally fine. Who doesn't like snakes?" Justin laughed nervously and Theo was not fooled for a second. "What about Slytherin?"

Now it was Theo's turn to shrug. "A lot of people are upset that the other houses have more snakes than we do, and that they didn't think of it first, since it's our house and all. A few people tried conjuring them but so far no one has gotten one to last long enough."

Justin did not look nearly as excited at the prospect of *more* snakes as Theo was, which he couldn't quite understand. The snakes were so cool, and it was unfair that Hufflepuff had *four* when Slytherin, the literal house of snakes, only had *one*.

"You know, Hufflepuffs don't summon badgers..."

"Well of course not. Badgers are nasty little buggers, aren't they."

The pained on Justin's face was probably due to his wishing his house had a more conjurable animal. Because who in their right mind would try to conjure a badger?

---

*January 9, 1993*

"Hey Thomas, can we go tell the twins and Neville about the basilisk now?"

Percy choked on air and Thomas screamed on the inside.

"You know, I was really hoping you had forgotten about that," he muttered. Ivy just smiled at him and he sighed. "Percy," he said, turning towards his friend and the last thing keeping his sanity in check at the moment. "There's a basilisk under the school, it adopted Ivy, Malfoy knows, and Ivy wants to tell your brothers and Longbottom."

"A *basilisk*?"

"Yes."

"There's a *basilisk* in *Hogwarts*?"

"Yep!" This time Ivy answered. Thomas would not have answered so cheerfully. "It's in the Chamber of Secrets."

"The Chamber... Ivy... Please tell me your Uncle knows about this."

"He's the one who told me about it."

Thomas was having a mini crisis concerning his opinions of one Lord Peverell-Slytherin, and Percy looked like he was having an existential crisis of his own. Thomas tried to remember whether or not he had known that particular fact already, but was drawing a blank. There was just a lot to deal with at the moment.

"And you really want to tell Fred and George?" Percy looked desperately optimistic. The kind where you know the answer is not going to be what you want but you have nothing else to hope for.

“And Neville,” Ivy replied. How could the living embodiment of chaos be so *cheerful* and *cute* all the time? One more thing to add to Thomas’s ongoing crisis.

“Thomas?” Percy looked at him with a pleading look.

Thomas shrugged helplessly. This was all going terribly and he didn’t know what he was doing.

“But you’re not going to take them there, are you?”

“No, Thomas said I probably shouldn’t.”

For the first time in this conversation Percy looked like there was hope left in this world.

“Yes, listen to Thomas. That is a great plan. Let’s do that.”

“Okay, so can we tell them now?”

Ivy’s smile was heartwarming and reassuring yet terrifying all at the same time. Thomas decided right then and there that he was going to get the most boring, mundane, no-danger-whatsoever job after graduating. Some nice little paper-pusher job in the Ministry perhaps. His father knew people. Lord Peverell seemed to like him well enough. Lord Greengrass was a pleasant wizard. Yes, that sounded like a good plan. He should talk to Percy about that.

---

Percy sympathized with the look on Neville’s face, and tried not to think too hard about the looks on Fred and George’s faces. He gave Neville a reassuring pat on the back, and tried to offer him some words of comfort, though whether it was for the new knowledge of the deadly creature living in the school or the fact that the boy’s friends all seemed to attract far more trouble than he likely enjoyed Percy really couldn’t say.

Then a thought crossed his mind, and no matter how much he tried to dismiss it, he couldn’t let go of it.

“Thomas, can I talk to you for a second?”

Thomas nodded, and Percy abandoned Neville to the slightly more eager conversations of Ivy, Fred, and George, who were discussing the situation with far less horror than Percy felt was entirely appropriate given the circumstances.

When he and Thomas had each erected a sufficient number of privacy wards, Percy turned to his friend. “You said the basilisk, uh, *adopted* Ivy?”

Thomas nodded. “Yeah? So she says. The snake calls her her little hatchling or something like that.”

“Right, okay. And did it, sorry, *she* happen to have anything to do with Lockhart’s disappearance?”

“Er...”



Percy could put two and two together. Both boys focused on their own thoughts for a bit, but it was obvious after a few moments that they had come to the same conclusions.

“We should probably...”

“Not tell anyone about this?”

“Yeah. Right. Probably not.”

“Maybe ask Lord Peverell?”

“Good idea.”

“Anyone else?”

“Better not.”

“Yeah, okay.”

“Do you think Lockhart...”

They made a face at each other and shuddered slightly before dismantling the wards. This was Peverell’s business, and they would just do their job at looking out for Ivy. No need to get other people involved, really.

---

*January 10, 1993*

“Hey Ivy, where are you going?”

“Owlery. Have a few letters to send.” Ivy held up the stack as proof of her statement.

“Great, so can we take Tiger?”

Ivy looked at her snake for a minute, apparently listening to what *he* had to say on the matter.

“Yeah, he’s hungry so he wants to go the chicken room.”

To their credit, Tracey, Daphne, and Millie only looked slightly concerned about that statement. Draco, on the other hand, looked positively horrified. “He wants to eat an *owl*?”

Ivy gave him a funny look. “No, of course not. That’s the owl room. He wants to go the *chicken* room.”

Daphne gestured for her to explain.

“The Great Hall. He wants to go the Great Hall.”

Draco looked a little better after that, and Tracey scooped up the snake and began cooing about getting him all the chicken.

“What’s going on?” Pansy asked, coming up to their little group.

“Tiger isn’t going to eat an owl.”

Pansy didn’t even blink. “Oh that’s nice. Although there’s a really annoying one if he changes his mind.”

Draco made a token sound of protest and everyone went on their merry way. Millie, being slightly more thoughtful at times than some of the others, decided it would be a good idea to share that information with the other snake-owning students. Plus it was a chance to go see Cedric.

Hannah and Susan. She meant Hannah and Susan.

# Chapter 34

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*January 14, 1993*

“Last trunk,” Barty said, plopping it down in front of the others.

“Merlin, Harry, how much stuff do you *have*?” Sirius said with exaggerated pain in his voice.

“Hey, don’t look at me. Luna’s the one who brought it over,” Harry grunted as he undid the locks.

Sirius turned his pout towards Luna. “Did you *have* to?”

Luna just laughed. Once Harry was done opening up the trunk the others all peered inside.

“Oh, this is the one Hermione packed,” Luna said.

Harry nodded. It looked a lot more organized than the one Ron had packed for sure.

“What is *that*?” Sirius asked in a whisper, his eyes wide and full of awe.

“That’s a broom, Padfoot. Remember those?”

Sirius just stuck out his tongue at Harry. “Is that yours?”

“Yeah, best racing broom on the market.”

Sirius’s eyes went wider. “Do you mean... When did this come out?”

Harry shrugged. “Few years ago maybe?”

Finally Harry couldn’t keep his face straight at the sight of Sirius’s pained expression and he laughed. “Okay fine, it came out in 2002.”

Sirius made a whimpering sound.

“Your mutt is showing,” Harry teased.

“Can I?”

Harry couldn’t help but laugh at the pleading expression on Sirius’s face. “Yeah, go for it.”

Sirius looked like a kid let loose with a hundred galleons in Honeydukes.

From there on out sorting through the contents of the trunk was much less exciting. There were a few things that Harry was happy to see, but he had already replaced most everything by this point, and there was no way he was going to be seen in public in *those* robes, because yes, Draco, he did have *some* fashion sense. Or perhaps more accurately, Fleur, Hermione, Narcissa, Astoria, Katie, Hannah, Parvati, and Angelina had some fashion sense and had insisted on dragging him along on shopping trips. But somehow George had snuck a pair of robes past the you're-twenty-years-old-Harry-you-can't-keep-wearing-school-robes association. At least if he were ever trapped on a desert island he could use them as a target visible from space. Or he could apparate. Whatever. Back to the main point.

"Okay, last thing. Nice box," Barty said with a snicker.

Harry rolled his eyes. "Yeah, laugh if you must, but I'll have you know that Jobberknolls are fierce and, and majestic, and... Luna, it's not that funny."

Luna and Barty both let out a full blown laugh.

"Okay, so what's the story here?" Barty asked.

"No story," Harry tried to say, but Luna beat him to it.

"Draco got it for Harry because he said Harry reminded him of the bird."

Barty raised an eyebrow and Luna took it as an invitation to continue the story, much to Harry's chagrin.

"I believe that at some point after nearly dying again Harry shared his entire life story with Draco."

Barty looked at Harry who sighed and gave in the the inevitable explanation he would have to give.

"I was drunk, okay? I had almost died, *again*, though to be fair it wasn't actually that bad of an almost death. Anyway, I had almost died, I had *maybe* had a few too many drinks, and Malfoy comes in asking me why I am the way I am, so of course I had to explain, and I guess I shared way more than Draco actually wanted since apparently the question was 'rhetorical,' and about a week later I got this with a note saying that this must be my spirit animal or something because it was small and talked a lot right before it died."

"Who died?"

Harry groaned as Sirius made his way back into the room, the confused look on his face mingled with the leftover euphoria that had come as a result of his little flying adventure.

"Oh, it's the box with all the pictures. I was wondering where those had ended up," Luna said.

There were a lot of photographs.

After the war Harry had made it a point to take lots of photographs, a habit he had carried into his new world. There were many reasons for this, and most of them were honestly a bit depressing so he wasn't going to bother dwelling on them right now. The point was, he had a lot of pictures and his friends had apparently done a good job of gathering them all up and sending them with Luna. All of them. Yep. Oh dear, was that one the...

"What is this?" Or at least Harry was pretty sure that's what Sirius asked. It was a little hard to tell in between all the wheezing.

Harry snatched the offending photograph out of Sirius's hand and gasped, shooting a betrayed look at Luna. "I thought she promised never to speak of this again?"

Luna did not look at all bothered by Hermione's betrayal of Harry, nor by his suffering. "Technically she didn't say anything."

Harry's eye twitched. Leave it to those two to find the loophole. Hermione technically hadn't *said* anything. No, she had just included the apparently-not-burned-like-Harry-had-thought photo in a trunk being brought across dimensions where any random stranger could have found it. Any dimension-traveling stranger at least. And who was to say there weren't some of those so ha. His point was valid.

Finally Harry tore his eyes away from Luna, only to find Sirius and Barty staring at him. Smugly. Questioningly. Mischievously. Those two were no longer allowed to sit next to each other.

"So, you haven't really told us much about your post-Hogwarts adventures, it seems."

Harry's finger twitched as he considered the merits of sending a small wandless stinging hex Sirius's way.

"Oh, I know this one," Luna said, smile as present as ever.

Traitor.

---

"You..." Sirius couldn't even get out another word, he was laughing so hard.

Barty was just sitting there smugly. "So, what other stories have you got?"

Luna's face lit up and Harry groaned.

---

Harry had to hand it to Luna, she really did know how to tell a story. Sure, there were little tangents here and there, and a few creatures that he had never heard of and a conspiracy theory he was pretty sure was somehow related to iPods, but even with the seemingly unrelated bits thrown in there, Sirius and Barty had both listened in fascinated silence, their attention firmly fixed on Luna Lovegood and the many tales of Harry Potter and the I-didn't-plan-on-that-happening-honest.

Finally as Luna finished up her latest tale, Harry felt himself reminiscing on some of the other past adventures. When you spend your formative teenage years being hunted by a madman and ostracized then heralded then ostracized and condemned *again* by an entire society, the bar for interesting days is set fairly high.

“Any other stories Harry?”

Sirius seemed very into this whole okay-maybe-I-was-not-always-an-entirely-responsible-adult story time thing Harry had going on right now.

“Well there was that time with Charlie in Romania. Or the time I went with Bill and Fleur to see her parents. Or the time George and I got a tiny bit too drunk, and...”

“Wait, was that the time you apparated drunk?”

“What? No. That was a different time.”

“How many drunk stories do you have, Harry?”

“Shut up, Sirius. Anyway, that one time with George, and hey, did you know that unicorns can headbutt you really hard?”

“With their horns?” Barty asked suspiciously.

“Surprisingly, no. That’s only if they’re trying to impale you.”

“Unicorns are quite lovely, aren’t they,” Luna interjected.

Barty looked between Harry and Luna. “Okay, I think I want to hear this one.”

“Well, what happened was this...”

---

*January 17, 1993*

“How’s the list coming Harry?”

A jumbled mess of words and several variations on a grunt was what Sirius got in reply.

“Okay... Well, what have you got so far?”

More grunting, a few more unintelligible words, and a parchment shoved in his face.

“Alright, let’s have a look. Save the house elves, underlined four times, yes, I seem to recall you telling me that was a particular passion of Miss Granger’s... Fix laws... A little vague but I suppose there’s more in the book somewhere?”

Grunt. Alright then.

“Right. Fix laws, Keep Cedric alive... Who is Cedric again?”

“Diggory. Cedric Diggory.”

An actual word. Improvement!

“Don’t break into Gringotts... Did you really need to put that on the list?”

Grunt. Well, two steps forward, one step back and all that.

“Oh, I see. Free the Gringotts dragon. Yes, I see how not breaking into Gringotts is on there... Although don’t the goblins love you? Maybe they’d give you the dragon?”

Glare. Ooh. Another step back. Not even a grunt.

“Or... Maybe they’d give Ivy the dragon?”

Panicked whine. Abort, abort.

“Or you don’t need to have a dragon at your house and we can find some other way of dealing with it?”

Back to a grunt. Sirius was getting the hang of this.

“Save... Oh hey, look at that. Save me. Well you already did that, so thanks, and how about I just cross that one off now...”

Mumbled words. Getting better...

“Where’s a quill...”

“Save Sirius from the veil.”

“Wow. An entire five words. I’m flattered.”

Glare. But eye twitch, so still a win.

“Well that’s not too bad of a list. Is it finished then?”

Harry gave him a uninterpretable stare for a minute before pointing first to the book and then to the list.

Sirius winced. “Okay, fair point. But still, it’s not like the *entire* book applies, right? For example...” Sirius walked over to the book and began flipping through the many pages. “You don’t have to worry about...” he squinted at the tiny print. “Marriage customs in ninth and tenth century Britain.”

Harry made some kind of strangled sound at that.

“Okay, bad example. Well, you don’t need to know the major political figures of the Roman Republic or...” Sirius flipped through a few more pages. “How to establish a fake identity using entirely muggle methods. Wow. She really was thorough, wasn’t she. And... wait, do

muggles really wash their money? Is that because they use those little paper bits instead? Why bother with that?"

Harry was giving him the strangest look. "Let me see that."

Sirius pointed to the page in question.

"Money laundering... That's not what that means, Sirius."

"Uh-huh, sure. Anyway, not something you need to know apparently. Oh, and how about this one. Ranking of martial arts across the world from easiest to learn to hardest. Ooh, or improvised muggle weapons. There's an entire section on explosives. You know what, that could actually come in handy. How about..."

"Mark it," Harry ordered, handing him a set of blue sticky things. Sirius grabbed one and put it on the page.

"Right. Make sure Ivy doesn't find it, got it."

Harry rubbed a hand over his face. "How are we going to get through this all?"

"Well, how about the house elves? What do you want to do about that?"

Harry groaned. "I don't know. I can't exactly go free all the house elves. No one is going to go for that, first of all, and if for some reason I managed to convince them to, the elves would all die and I'm pretty sure Hermione would haunt me forever."

"So save the house elves means..."

"Honestly I'm still not entirely sure. Make sure they have a good life, I guess?"

"And a good life is?"

"Not abused, given options, some kind of redress or acknowledgement of rights or something. I don't know. There's all those sections in the book so there has to be one that would work."

Sirius turned to the appropriate section. Yes, there were *many* subsections on saving the house elves.

"Oh how about this one. This seems easy enough. Kind of like what you did with the whole mudblood thing. And didn't you already do this sort of with Lucius?"

"Let me see."

"Here. See? This one could work."

Harry read over the section Sirius was pointing to. "So like a Slytherin?"

"Well, you are Lord Slytherin, so..."



Pillow to the face.

---

*February 14, 1993*

This day was absolutely agonizing. Normal, really, since Valentine's Day seemed to have been designed solely to torment those who had to deal with hormonal teenagers on a regular basis, but even still this one seemed somehow worse. Perhaps it was because it was a weekend so there were no classes to distract the lovesick adolescents from their juvenile declarations of never-ending love to people they would most likely break up with by the end of the term. Severus knew it was all ridiculous, but no one else seemed to be able to grasp that concept. Instead most of the other teachers had been going on about "young love" and "isn't it so sweet." He wondered how many of them would still be saying that when they had to make extra round through the astronomy tower tonight.

In an unwelcome turn of events, Lupin was proving to be the one voice of reason in the midst of all this madness. Sure, he too smiled indulgently at the smiles and blushes that were surrounding them, but at least he had the decency to make little quips here and there about how remarkable it was that true love could be found in the last four days, or how he was fairly certain he had heard those two professing their love for other people altogether just a few weeks ago. Severus had even laughed at one of Lupin's little side comments. It was terrible.

Okay fine, maybe Lupin's ongoing commentary on the disaster to reasonable minds everywhere that was Valentine's Day with teenagers was mildly entertaining. Although, Severus still didn't understand the one comment Lupin had made about how at least there weren't any dwarves. Lupin hadn't explained further and honestly Severus was a little scared to ask. No, not scared. He just didn't care. Right. Didn't care at all. No curiosity whatsoever. Curiosity got you acting like a Gryffindor and he remembered all too well how *that* had worked out for him last time.

---

*February 18, 1993*

"Are you sure we can't just go next month?"

Sirius rolled his eyes. "Don't look at me. You're the one who insisted we go."

Harry's pout was frankly adorable and made him look younger than he was. "That's because Narcissa was giving me the *look*."

"Please, I'm a Black," Sirius scoffed. "I am *immune* to those looks."

"Yeah well, apparently I'm not. And you caved when Anthea gave you one."

"She was making me feel guilty about leaving you on your own."

"Well you should feel guilty. You were planning on letting me face the Wizengamot by myself!"

“You would have had Lucius...”

Harry’s glare put a quick end to that line of reasoning. “I told you before. If I’m going down, you’re going down with me.”

“I don’t think showing up at the Wizengamot is comparable to suffering an ignominious death, but alright.”

“For the record, it would be a glorious death, and yes, it absolutely is.”

“Come on, where’s the Gryffindor,” Sirius prodded.

Harry gave Sirius a dry look. “He died and got made Lord Slytherin.”

Sirius just grinned. “And Lord Slytherin is due to make his debut appearance at the Wizengamot, so fake a smile and let’s go ruin some bastard’s afternoon.”

Harry did as directed and Sirius shuddered.

“Okay, maybe not that one. Actually, please never make that face again. Ever.”

Harry’s laugh was only cut off by his silent apparation.

---

Harry had long grown accustomed to stares. His entire experience with the wizarding world (both of them for that matter), had involved great amounts of staring. Except for those perfect couple years of traveling with Ivy. Sure there were some stares here and there, but those were mostly for reasons unrelated to him being “famous” or anything. Still, for what made up a rather large percentage of his life at this point, he had been the subject of stares, whispers, speculations, and other such annoyances. He was used to it. So used to it, in fact, that he may have slightly misjudged the particular reasons for the stares he received as he made his way into the Wizengamot chambers.

Sure, his entrance alongside Sirius had been a bit on the dramatic side (unintentionally on his part, probably very intentionally on Sirius’s), and he was showing up to the Wizengamot after claiming a double lordship, which he assumed was the reason for the stares. The particular lordships he had claimed were of special interest to people, which was annoying in and of itself, but the fact that he was only just now showing up to the Wizengamot after claiming both lordships, well...

Although had he really “claimed” either of them? One of them got handed to him when he showed up along with some hand wavy explanation, and the other had been thrust upon him after Voldemort’s ultimate demise. No good deed goes unpunished, as they say.

And who was this “they” that was always spoken of? Who was it that actually said any of those things? *Was* there anyone who actually said things like that? Probably some of these older wizards and witches, many of whom looked like they could easily surpass Dumbledore in age.

But he was getting off track.

Stares. He was getting stares.

But as he settled into his seat and scanned the other members of the Wizengamot for familiar faces, he began to get the feeling that these stares weren't just because of his name. Too many people looked nervous.

Harry scowled. This was going to be just as terrible as he had envisioned.

---

"Well that was fun."

Harry shot a look at Sirius. *Fun?* Sirius had thought that was *fun*?

"What are you doing?" Sirius asked.

"Checking for a fever."

Sirius shoved Harry's hand off. "Ha bloody ha."

"Well you're the one that said it was *fun*."

"It *was*. Didn't you see everyone's faces as you came in looking all terrifying. The scowl really added to the aesthetic, by the way. Great job on that one."

Harry gave Sirius his very best version of said scowl.

Sirius mock shivered. "See? Brilliant. Perfectly terrifying."

"I'm not terrifying," Harry muttered.

Sirius raised an eyebrow. "So you wore dragon hide in an effort to be not intimidating?"

"It was comfortable," Harry argued petulantly.

"Uh-huh. Practically screams warm and friendly."

Harry muttered something very unflattering about Sirius and his parentage under his breath.

"Well I can't argue with that," Sirius said, since Harry had apparently not spoken *quite* softly enough.

---

"Well done, dear, that was perfect and you did a marvelous job of presenting yourself as a strong potential leader," Carita gushed.

Harry smiled and nodded politely as he screamed on the inside.

---

"This will be good for them, I think," Narcissa commented, "to start being more involved in politics."

“Not good for me though,” Lucius muttered. He wasn’t sure he could deal with Sirius in one more aspect of his life.

“I’m sure you’ll manage, darling,” his wife said, placing a kiss on his cheek. Oh the things he did for family.

---

“Ah, Miss Lovegood. How are you enjoying the evening?”

Luna smiled at Lord Burke. “Very well, thank you.”

“Did you enjoy this afternoon’s session?”

“Yes. It gave Barty and I quite the list. There are so many bills that will need to be presented, after all.”

“Indeed?”

Having caught Lord Burke’s interest, Luna proceeded to tell him all about the numerous list of bills and laws that needed to be dealt with. It was a rather extensive list.

---

“So Henry, about those bills you need presenting. I think you ought to approach Deverill about introducing some of them. He is quite the fan of yours, after all.”

Harry just barely managed to not choke on his food. “I’m sorry?”

“The bills. Miss Lovegood was telling us about a few of them.”

Harry looked between Burke, Harrington, and Parkinson and wondered if he had died again.

---

Ah. Finally home. Harry had had enough of politics to last him for the day. For forever, really, but he honestly wasn’t that optimistic about it.

“So…” Sirius began. “That happened.”

“That” was Malfoy, Burke, Harrington, Parkinson, and Greengrass all agreeing to introduce various bills and amendments over the next several months. It certainly made Harry’s job easier, but he still wasn’t sure how he felt about the fact that all five (six if you included both Nate and Anthea Greengrass) of them had agreed so readily to sponsor the bills from Hermione’s list.

All of them seemed confident that Deverill would agree as well, which would give them four dark and four neutral. They had all agreed that most of the bills would be better received coming from the neutral faction, even if Nate had grumbled about having to do more. Anthea, on the other hand, had almost gleefully accepted the task and had promised that next month when it was her turn to show up she would introduce one of the tougher bills.

Harry wondered if he could convince Luna to do a trade off like the Greengrasses did. Only having to go every other month sounded quite nice, especially after today.

“You know, this will mean the two of you can relax a bit more,” Luna said.

Harry wasn’t sure “relaxing” was going to be involved at any stage of his political involvement, but he did appreciate the sentiment. “Is that why you told Burke and Parkinson about the list?”

“Yes. It is nice having friends, isn’t it.”

Harry wasn’t sure he would have ever expected to be friends with any of them, but he could admit (mostly) that they were his friends to some extent. It was weird.

“And this way the Bumblebee won’t target you quite as much,” Luna continued.

Oh, Luna was absolutely brilliant. Harry hadn’t even thought of that. “Luna, I could kiss you right now.”

“Alright.”

Sirius made a strangled sound and quickly excused himself from the room.

---

*April 3, 1993*

Nothing had happened. It was April, and nothing of note had happened.

Not that Severus minded the relative mundanity of the past few months, but when compared with the previous three terms the lack of disaster seemed rather... suspicious.

Potter hadn’t done anything to bring about his premature death, the Weasley twins’ pranks had mellowed out, and they were getting along very well with his Slytherins which was, to be honest, rather anxiety inducing, yet still nothing had *happened*. No major fights breaking out between houses, no illegal animals, no murder attempts, no... well, anything.

Yet tomorrow signaled the beginning of the Easter break, and Severus couldn’t help but feel that all the shenanigans missing from the previous few months were going to occur over the next two weeks. Potter and the twins had managed to get their “olympics” going for a second year.

And Severus would be happily absent at an obscure potions conference in Munich.

Take that, every professor who somehow thought this olympic idea wasn’t an idea straight out of hell. Have fun dealing with the demons on your own.

---

*April 18, 1993*

Severus took in the tired look on Lupin's face and smirked. He would have fun getting all the details from the last two weeks out of the man.

---

"And they built a dragon. I mean, Filius was thrilled and gave them extra points for creativity, but a *dragon*, Severus."

Severus just sipped his tea calmly as he listened to Lupin's rant. This had been such a delightful evening.

---

*April 21, 1993*

"Are you sure you don't want to go tomorrow, Luna?"

Harry was not pleading. No, he was merely... enquiring. With vigor.

"I'm sure. Thank you though. Are we having dinner again tomorrow evening?"

"Yeah, Parkinsons' this time."

"Sounds lovely."

Of course Luna would think dinner at the Parkinsons' house was lovely. Harry had plenty of other words to attach to it but that isn't important at the moment.

"Luna, will you marry me?"

Okay so he hadn't actually planned to just blurt that out, but no going back now. Onward and forward.

"Summer weddings are nice, aren't they?"

"So is that a yes?"

---

"And so she said yes."

"Harry..." Sirius had a hand over his face and Barty had somehow acquired popcorn in the last thirty seconds.

"Uh, yeah?"

"Please tell me you didn't just blurt out the question?"

"Umm..."

"Merlin," Sirius muttered. "Alright, so was it at least somewhat romantic?"

"Uh..."

“Flowers? Romantic setting? Poetry? Candlelight?”

“Er...”

“Okay, how bad was it?”

Harry cleared his throat. “Well, we were talking about the Wizengamot session tomorrow, and dinner at the Parkinsons’, and then I, well, sort of just, asked?”

A glance at Barty showed he was enjoying Harry’s discomfort as much as possible. He gave a thumbs up to Harry that Harry chose to ignore. Sirius, on the other hand...

“And she actually said yes?”

“Umm, yeah?”

Sirius began muttering in French, and apparently it was amusing (and probably not flattering to Harry), because Barty was mostly failing at his attempts to contain his laughter.

“It’s not that bad, is it?”

Sirius switched to Italian.

Okay, so maybe it was.

“Congratulations, Harry. Have you let Ivy know yet?”

Harry shot Barty a gratitude filled look and made his exit just in time. Sirius had just switched to Russian.

---

*April 22, 1993*

At precisely 8:23 in the morning a sound was heard across Hogwarts. It took until 9:15 for the castle’s occupants to all be fully assured that no one had died. It took until 10:47 for everyone to know what (or, more precisely, *who*) had caused the scream. It took until 11:52 for the first congratulatory letter to be sent out. It took until 2:38 for the owlery to be completely emptied.

---

By the time they all got home from the Parkinsons’ Harry was fully aware that the entire wizarding world was aware of his and Luna’s engagement. He honestly didn’t care at this point, or hadn’t, at least, until he came home to see the number of letters awaiting him.

---

“Okay.” Harry took a calming breath. “*Who taught Ivy how to send a howler?*”

Barty shuffled away slightly. That’s right, Harry thought. Be ashamed.

---

“I have never heard a happy howler.”

“Effective though.”

“How much do you think Remus would hate me if I sent one back?” Sirius asked.

Barty grinned.

Sirius grinned.

Harry walked in, saw the two, and promptly turned around.

---

*April 24, 1993*

“Okay, I just need to put the finishing touches on this before I send it off. Any last suggestions?”

“Unicorns,” Pansy suggested.

“Is that at all realistic?” Daphne asked.

“Yes,” came the triple voices of Ivy, Pansy, and, perhaps a little surprisingly, Padma.

---

“Hey, what are you doing?” Blaise asked.

“Planning a wedding,” came the reply from somewhere down the table.

“Oh, do I need to get Draco?”

“What for?” Ivy asked.

“Uh, never mind.” Blaise chose that moment to make a hasty retreat.

---

“Finished. Anyone else have anything left to add?”

Twenty two other heads shook no.

“Perfect. Let’s send this off then,” Ivy said, grinning widely.

---

“Hey Luna, what’s that?”

“Ivy sent us her wedding planner.”

Harry panicked, but recovered with practiced ease.

After a few minutes of looking through it with his fiancé (and no he hadn’t used that word as much as possible over the past couple days, why do you ask?), he had to admit that it wasn’t



actually that bad.

“Umm, so what do you think?”

“Well, this one looks nice.”

Harry glanced at the page Luna was pointing to. That actually did look rather perfect.

---

*April 25, 1993*

Harry felt rather than saw the glare coming from Remus.

“Uh, hey Moony.”

“Hello, Lord Slytherin, welcome to Hogsmeade.” Remus’s voice was cheerful even as he continued to glare at Harry. “How kind of you to join us. I’m sure you’re just *dying* to know how Ivy is doing, aren’t you. Well, it seems I must congratulate you on such *exciting* news. News that Miss Potter so willingly shared with us all.”

Harry resisted the urge to flinch. He didn’t like where this was heading.

“Oh, yes, she shared the news straightaway. Well, it was more of a scream than an actual announcement, but it was still rather effective. On a completely related note, did you know that she successfully mastered the *sonorus* charm?”

Now Harry did cringe.

“Mmhmm. Yes. Put a little extra power into it, it seems. She’s quite proficient with charms, as you know.”

Harry groaned. “I’m so sorry.”

“Next time just give me a heads up, will you?” Finally the glare broke from Remus’s face. Harry was positive he had missed the transfiguration class where they learned how to go from terrifying to teddy bear in a matter of seconds.

“Yes. Next time I get engaged I’ll let you know before Ivy can announce it to the world.”

Remus remained undisturbed by Harry’s sarcasm. “Great. Congratulations by the way. Now, what are you having? Oh and by the way, Severus will be joining us shortly.”

At Harry’s eye twitch Remus just gave him a smirk.

---

Well, this had been an enlightening afternoon. Not only had Lord Peverell managed to essentially gain control of the Wizengamot in only two months, but he seemed to be genuinely oblivious to that fact. Severus had no idea how that was possible, since clearly the man wasn’t an idiot, even if he was surrounded by them, namely Black, but over the course of the lunch meeting that Lupin had dragged him to he had seen absolutely no indication that

Peverell-Slytherin was aware of the fact that he was now the de facto leader of the darker half of the wizarding world.

Unless, of course, it was all merely an act. Come across as cheerful, charming, and not at all one of the most powerful wizards in Britain, magically and politically. Well, he was Lord Slytherin...

---

*April 29, 1993*

Albus trudged up the stairs and into his office. At least it felt like he was trudging. He was too old for this, but it wasn't like there was anyone competent enough to take over, so he'd just have to put one foot in front of the other for the time being.

Today's Wizengamot session had been a disaster. Didn't people realize how bad it would be to ease the restrictions on dark creatures? Obviously not, as they had voted to do just that.

And how was it that anyone was fooled into believing this was not the work of Lord Peverell-Slytherin? Obviously he was working with the dark faction, even if he himself claimed to be neutral. It was little wonder though that he had stayed out of politics this long. He must have been hard at work recruiting to his side before making his grand debut, firm alliances already in place, and pawns ready to introduce a slew of bills without drawing attention to himself.

If it wasn't so irritating Albus would actually have found himself quite impressed. It had taken *him* two months to put it all together, after all. Now why couldn't everyone else see it too?

The wizarding world was a mess, and Albus feared what might become of it when he was no longer around to lead the way.

## Chapter End Notes

Hey! So going quickly time wise here. Two things real quick just in case anyone was wondering. First of all, Harry and Luna. I didn't go into details on their "love story," and there are reasons for that, but sorry to anyone who was hoping to get more romance out of this. Any and all romantic relationships in this story are not the focus and will not be the focus even later, though as the kids get older they will start to crop up more. Second, olympics. Yes, they are going to be an annual thing, and I will do it more in depth at some point again, but I didn't want to do a detailed account of it every year. Anyway, thanks to everyone who reads this, and thanks for the comments and kudos. Always appreciated.

## Chapter 35

*May 9, 1993*

Albus was *this close* to whistling as he flooded back to Hogwarts. His meeting with Augusta had gone well, he thought, and she would make a formidable opponent against Peverell-Slytherin in the Wizengamot. She would also help sway other members of the Light and hopefully some neutrals as well, and with a bit of persuasion on both their parts they could put an end to the machinations of Peverell-Slytherin.

---

Meddlesome old coot.

Augusta was not impressed with Albus Dumbledore. Not impressed at all.

Who did he think he was, coming to her home and telling her what she ought to do. Oh, she knew exactly who he thought he was. He was Albus Dumbledore, with too many titles and not enough good sense. He was the one who always got his way, who convinced children barely out of school to fight a war that had been partially of his own making. He was the one who had convinced her only child and his darling wife to go into hiding without disclosing the reason, then had told them it was safe, only for them to be tortured to the point of insanity in their home a week later.

Oh yes, Augusta Longbottom knew *exactly* who he thought he was.

So he views the new Lord Peverell-Slytherin as a threat, does he.

Augusta had been wary of the man herself, but she had never been one to rely on the assessment of others and she was not about to start with the vague warnings of listen-to-me-because-I-know-everything Dumbledore.

She possessed a brain, thank you very much. She was perfectly capable of forming her own opinions. She had decades of experience doing just that, after all.

---

*May 11, 1993*

“Harry, it’s not that bad, it’s just an invitation to tea.”

“‘Just an invitation to tea,’ he says. Just an invitation to tea. No, Siri, this is an invitation to an *interrogation* and visceral execution should things not go well. I am well within my rights to be appropriately terrified right now. And shut up Barty, you’re not helping.”

Sirius glanced at Barty, who was watching the scene with amusement, and not at all helping Sirius convince Harry that meeting Augusta Longbottom was not, in fact, a good enough reason to emigrate. “Barty, could you at least pretend to help?” he asked, not at all desperately.

Barty leveled him an unimpressed look. “Longbottoms, Black. Longbottoms.”

Ah yes, maybe keeping Barty far, far away from any and all Longbottoms was a better idea.

“Harry,” said Sirius, turning back to the man in question, “she’s not going to eat you. Just go, be polite, enquire after the health of her grandson, be charming, tell her how wonderful it is that Neville is such a good friend of Ivy’s, and bask in the genius that is my advice for dealing with grandmothers.”

Harry looked mildly horrified. “Sirius, do you actually *know* Augusta Longbottom?”

“Can’t say that I do. I suppose I probably met her at some point or other, but if I have it’s been while. Knew Frank and Alice a lot better. Alice was one of your mum’s friends, you know. The two of them could have taken over the world together if they wanted, and we would have all followed happily behind. But Frank’s mum? Yeah, can’t say I really remember her.”

Harry let out a strangled sigh. “This is it. This is how I meet my end,” he muttered.

“Come on,” Sirius scoffed. “How bad could it possibly be? She’s a *grandmother*.”

“Sirius, this is the woman that threatened me over a first date with her grandson’s girlfriend’s best friend. A date that *they* set us up on in the first place, and only because they needed two more people for their trivia team.”

By now Sirius was laughing. He couldn’t help himself.

“This is serious, Padfoot.”

“No I’m...” Sirius didn’t finish the sentence before some unidentifiable object was thrown at his face. After a moment of throwing things back and forth in a very mature, adult-like fashion, Sirius finally said, “So you can defeat dark lords but you can’t face down your friend’s grandmother?”

Harry got an evil glint in his eye that suddenly did not bode well for Sirius’s continued health. “You know what? You’re right. There is no reason at all to worry. Let’s just be off then, and you can be your ever charming self. I’m sure she’ll just *love* you,” Harry drawled.

---

Sirius had never expected to meet someone sterner looking than McGonagall, yet here he was. He still didn’t understand Harry’s frankly irrational terror, but he could admit that Augusta Longbottom was an imposing, impressive sort of woman. Also he would need to apologize to Harry for disputing his claim that this would be an interrogation, because it absolutely was. It was a nice sort of interrogation, if such a thing could be called that, but she had only raised an eyebrow once so Sirius thought they were doing rather well.

She had gotten straight to the point when they arrived, making them suffer through only the barest of formalities and pointless small talk, which was definitely something in her favor from Sirius’s standpoint. But then the interrogation had begun. Again, it was nice enough in

its own way, but Sirius decided then and there that Augusta Longbottom was not a woman to be crossed. Or at least crossed at your own suicidal peril.

After muddling their way through an explanation of their political views, aims, designs, and current plans (and Merlin she was an effective interrogator), she had stared them down for a minute before declaring them to be satisfactory and announcing that she would be assisting them from here on out, to which they both replied with a quick “yes ma’am.”

In a moment of pure Gryffindor rashness that filled Sirius’s heart to overflowing, Harry blurted out, “Why are you helping us?”

The resulting explanation made Sirius want to cry happy tears and give her a hug. So he did. The hug, not the tears. He had to maintain his dignity after all. So he gave her a hug, much to Harry’s horror, and the Dowager Lady Longbottom’s long-suffering amusement. He didn’t understand why Harry looked so taken aback. Her son had been a Gryffindor, surely she was accustomed to this sort of thing. A quick glance and the roll of her eyes showed that he was correct. Also Harry’s face was hilarious and he was definitely sharing this with Barty and Remus later.

By the end of their teatime interview Sirius had gathered that Augusta Longbottom was not one of Dumbledore’s sycophants, nor was she entirely impressed with the man at the moment. Sirius wasn’t entirely sure whether that was because she didn’t trust the man or because she just really didn’t like people telling her what to do, but whatever the reason, she was apparently on their side now (or they were on hers?), and Sirius knew better than to look a gift hippogriff in the mouth. They were easily offended like that.

---

*May 14, 1993*

Remus was having a very good day. Why? Because nearly everyone in the school was plotting against Ivy and she had absolutely no idea. It was hilarious, and it was for academic greatness which made it even better. When the Weasley twins had approached him at the beginning of the month with their proposition he had been skeptical that it would work like they hoped, but today was the day and Ivy still seemed to have no idea about what they were trying to accomplish. Or that they had enlisted the help of everyone in the school to do so.

They had even gotten ~~the quidditch fanatics~~ Wood and Flint on board, which was a level of achievement that Remus couldn’t help but respect.

So today Ivy would choose her electives for next year, along with all the other second years. But Remus sincerely doubted whether the other second years had the majority of the rest of the students plotting their academic futures.

Remus cast a quick *tempus*. They should be arriving any minute now, straight from Ivy’s meeting with Severus...

Ah. The sounds of future academic achievement. Go time.

---

“I can’t believe you two.”

Twin grins were her only response.

“You went to Professor Snape behind my back.”

The grins grew wider.

“And what made you think I wouldn’t have chosen those anyway?”

“Would you’ve?” George asked.

“No, but that’s not the point. Why do I have to take these anyway?”

“If we had to suffer through Arithmancy and Runes for three years, then you can too.”

“Only two and a half,” Ivy muttered. Ah. Remus’s office. Perfect. She needed allies. Opening the door she got straight to the point. “Fred and George plotted against me and signed me up for electives.”

“Oh,” said her honorary godfather, “which ones?”

“Arithmancy, Runes, and Care.”

Remus looked pleased by this. “Good, good. Those are all good choices, and I’m sure you’ll do well.”

Wait, he was supposed to be on her side. “But I didn’t want to take those.”

“I see. Well which ones did you want to take?”

“Well Care, and... well I hadn’t decided yet, but I’m sure I would have figured it out.”

“Well then it sounds like you don’t need to worry about it,” came the traitorous response. “I’m so proud of you for taking on three electives. I’m sure you’ll do well at all of them, and if you need help I’m certain these two would be more than happy to assist.”

Mild vindication.

“I believe Draco is taking the same ones. Have you spoken with him yet?”

Ivy had not. But now it was on.

“In fact, I believe quite a few of your friends are taking those same classes, or at least one or two of them. I’m sure they will appreciate having you in there as well, for study sessions and the like.”

Well Remus had a point...

---

“So that went well,” said Remus, taking in the satisfied looks on the twins’ faces.

“Told you. Mutual suffering and potential competition are necessary for any Ivy-centered plot,” the one who Remus thought might be Fred said. Despite Ivy’s assurances that it was easy to tell them apart, he still had trouble sometimes.

“Besides, I promised Draco I’d get Ivy to take Runes with him so failure wasn’t an option.” Never mind. That one was Fred.

“Hermione is thrilled, of course.” George. Context was key. Mentions of Draco, Blaise, Pansy, Parvati, Luna, and Dean were more likely to be Fred. Mentions of Theo, Tracey, Neville, Hermione, Seamus, Terry, and Justin were more likely to be George. Everyone else was a toss up. Don’t ask how Remus knew this, because it would take far too long for him to explain. It was just one of those things, he supposed.

“She’s taking all of the electives, of course she’s thrilled,” Fred replied.

“Wait, all of them?” asked Remus. That... couldn’t be healthy. Or at least that’s what Remus and Lily had both been told when they tried to do the same. Of course it was James who said it, so who knows how much that was actually worth.

---

*May 16, 1993*

“Well, it’s been a good year,” Oliver mused.

Marcus just grunted his response. Oliver patted his back in sympathy. The year would be significantly better when exams were finished.

“Now I’m not saying that Ivy didn’t do well, because obviously she did,” Oliver continued with only the *slightest* amount of bitterness in his voice. Ivy was good, yes, but she unfortunately played for Slytherin. And Slytherin had won. Really the whole thing was a lose-lose situation for him, but he was choosing to focus on the positive, which meant that he currently had fourteen different plans of how to get Ivy to come play professionally with him once she graduated, and only two of them involved kidnapping. “But there is always room for improvement.”

“Oliver, you know, as invested as I am in this, can’t this wait until exams are over?”

“But...”

“Three weeks. That’s all I’m asking.”

“...Fine.”

“But in terms of improvement I really think we ought to work on the sharp turns. You know what I mean. Once she gets going the turns just aren’t as sharp as they could be.”

“True,” Oliver agreed. “So how do we fix it?”

Well, everyone needed a break from studying now and again.

---

May 20, 1993

Severus looked more pained than normal. The I'm-surrounded-by-idiot sort of pained, not an actual, physical sort of pain, although Remus supposed that for Severus the two might not be altogether separate at this point.

The reason for Severus's greater than average levels of irritation was soon apparent. Four aurors were gathered at one end of the staff table, deep in conversation with Trelawney. Or at least, one of them was conversing with the divination professor. One of them that Remus recognized as Alastor Moody looked rather pained by the situation, and the other two looked amused, though whether at the professor or at their fellow auror Remus could not be certain.

As he took a seat by Severus he gave him a look indicating his own ignorance of the situation.

"Investigating Lockhart's disappearance," the unhappy man gave by way of explanation.

Remus raised an eyebrow at that. "The aurors are here *now*?"

"I believe that's what I said," Severus said in his deep, grumbly, don't-be-stupid voice. Under his breath he added, "And I thought wolves had excellent hearing."

Remus snorted softly at that. He did, and Severus knew it.

"Professor Lupin?" one of the aurors asked a few minutes later.

"That's me," Remus replied. "What can I do for you?"

"We just have a few questions we would like to ask you. Perhaps once you're finished?"

Remus nodded his assent and once the auror was out of earshot leaned over to Severus once more. "Which one are we going with?" he whispered softly.

"Well you know those adventurous types. Always rushing off to face the largest monster, confront the greatest danger, find new ways to get themselves killed... All quite Gryffindorish if you ask me."

"Lockhart was a Ravenclaw," Remus said, only just managing to not roll his eyes.

Severus didn't reply, but Remus caught a small smirk in the corner of the other teacher's mouth. It was gone as soon as it had come, but it had most certainly been there.

Well, Slytherin's monster. An unfortunate end, and not actually a lie if you were vague enough about it, even if there wasn't proof and the who was chasing who was not quite what they were happy to let everyone assume. Minor details, really.

---

"So tell us about Lockhart."

"Well I never actually met the man," Remus began carefully.



“Wait really? But you’re a professor and...” The auror was cut off by a smack to the back of the head courtesy of Moody.

“He’s Lockhart’s replacement, lad. Keep up, would you.”

“Right, sorry. So, um, let’s see. Was there any, er, indication when you arrived of... Bollocks, I’m not sure what I’m supposed to be getting at here,” the auror said, shooting a pleading look to an unsympathetic Moody.

Remus stifled a grin.

“Right, well, just tell us what you know then.”

“Tell us about Slytherin,” Moody interrupted, much to the other auror’s apparent relief.

“Sorry?”

“Lord Slytherin. You know him, don’t you?” Moody asked, a challenging look on his face.

---

Well, Remus had been able to stick to the story at least.

And by that he meant he hadn’t corrected any assumptions about Lockhart’s rumored desire to hunt down Slytherin’s famed monster, though Moody clearly had his own opinions about the matter and was not so easily swayed, for all that he kept his mouth shut. Remus gave some hints as to the *real* reason that Lockhart might have, erm, gone “missing,” and Moody seemed to take the thing with a nod and acceptance, not even prodding further.

Then one of the aurors had a “brilliant idea” and cast some sort of magical creature detecting spell that Remus had never heard of, since “hey, maybe *we* can find Slytherin’s monster.” Remus wondered how much of Moody’s “mad” reputation came from him having to put up with all the auror recruits.

To exactly no one except the caster of the spell’s surprise, no Slytherin monster came up. Unfortunately for Remus, he did, though to his surprise, the reactions were not ones of fear like he rather expected. Instead, there was an exasperated sigh from Moody, who looked like a parent witnessing the destruction of a toddler, twin looks of mild curiosity from two of the aurors, and a look that bordered on awe from the sole female auror of the group, which was something Remus frankly had no idea what to do with.

“You’re a... *werewolf*?”

Remus cringed, despite the lack of fear or disgust in the question. “Yes?”

“Could have told you that at the start, Mulligan,” Moody grumbled. “Just like I could have told you that Slytherin’s monster isn’t likely to be found by a spell learned by every first year auror. You think you’re the first one to try that here?”

“That’s so cool,” the female auror muttered, her hair changing color suddenly, startling Remus.

“Alright, let’s get a move on,” Moody barked out.

As they began filing out Remus recovered from his shock and asked the old auror, “So why come now?”

“We need to investigate mysterious disappearances, boy.”

“Yes but it’s *May*.”

“So it is. Glad they still teach the calendar.”

“Sorry, but what took you so long?”

“Paperwork,” Moody deadpanned, a sharp twinkle in his eye making Remus decide that this could possibly be one of his new favorite people in the world.

---

*May 21, 1993*

“But *Harry*,” Sirius whined, “I’m being *replaced*.”

“You are not. Moony simply said Moody *might* possibly become *one* of his favorite people. Not that he is, or that you’re not.”

“Like you were even the first to begin with,” Barty muttered, only yelping slightly when Harry shot him with a small stinging hex without even turning around.

Sirius glared at Barty, Barty mouthed “seventh” to Sirius, Sirius drew his wand, Barty did the same, and Harry disarmed them both before shooting a pleading glance at Luna who looked quite content to just observe the entire scene.

“You are no help whatsoever,” Harry accused, without any heat in his tone.

“Do you need any?” Luna asked, smiling.

“No,” Harry grumbled. Didn’t mean it wouldn’t be nice though. They were both older than him. He was not supposed to be the parent in this situation. He turned to Barty suddenly. “And no kidnapping Moody,” he said threateningly. Barty just raised his hands in mock surrender.

---

*May 30, 1993*

“Well on the bright side, Remus is coming home.”

“And on the bad side everyone knows he’s a werewolf.”

“At least we got those laws taken care of already?”

“True. Still, what about next year?”

“We’ll figure something out.”

“Maybe get rid of the curse?”

“Yeah, maybe we should look into that.”

“You mean, *you* should look into that.”

“Why me?” Harry groaned.

“Because you’re you.” Sirius’s entirely unhelpful response earned him a breadstick to the face.

“Popcorn?” Barty asked Luna, holding out a container that Harry was positive had not been there a moment before.

“Where did that even come from?” Harry asked. “And how come you always have popcorn when I’m talking?”

“I enjoy watching your disaster of a life unfold.”

Harry chucked two breadsticks at Barty. “Bad minion,” he said.

“Hey, I’m the perfect minion.”

“You’re a terrible minion,” Harry countered.

“Does that mean I can go commit undiscoverable crimes now?”

The third breadstick had a bit of sauce on it and Harry didn’t even feel bad.

# Chapter 36

## Chapter Notes

\*remembers when it took two days to write a chapter instead of two weeks\*

\*sighs fondly\*

\*glances around\*

\*laughs nervously\*

\*ducks behind computer while throwing out a bunch of words\*

*June 2, 1993*

“Sirius!”

The owner of said name perked his ears up, stretched, and transformed back into his normal wizard state of being. So it was more comfortable napping in dog form. Sue him.

His favorite godson-from-another-universe appeared distressed, but Sirius could neither see nor smell any signs of fires or explosions so it probably wasn't too big of an emergency.

“I'm getting married in four weeks,” Harry blurted out.

Sirius blinked a few times, rubbing a hand over his face. It had been such a nice nap. “Uh-huh. And?”

“*Padfoot*,” Harry groaned, “I'm getting *married*. I can't get married. I don't know how to be married! What if I completely mess it up? What if Luna never speaks to me again? What if...”

Sirius cut him off right there with a silencing charm. He loved magic. And the offended look on Harry's face. Both. Both were good. “Look. Of course you don't know how to be married. You haven't done it before.” Sirius paused. “You haven't done it before, right?”

Harry, who hadn't bothered to cancel Sirius's charm yet, expressed his annoyance another way. Fingers could be very communicative.

“Right, so you haven't been married before, so of course you don't know how. And that's okay. Perfectly normal, even.”

Harry flicked his hand canceling the charm. “Not helping, Sirius.”

Sirius would have rolled his eyes if it wouldn't have taken too much energy. As it was he couldn't quite be bothered. "Hey, I'm giving you clear and meaningful advice here. Appreciate it."

Harry opened his mouth, no doubt to thank Sirius for the generous use of his time and thoughtful life coaching, but Sirius cut him off before he could start.

"I have just the thing. Did you know your dad said almost the exact same thing?"

"Wait, really?"

"Mmhmm. Here." Sirius pulled out a memory and dumped it into Harry's hastily conjured vial. "Go. Watch. Be amazed at my wisdom."

As Harry retreated towards his study Sirius wiped a fake tear.

"Universe hopping makes them grow up so fast, Prongs," he whispered to no one in particular. And if the air itself seemed to bounce a little in laughter, well, he did just wake up, and you can never be too sure of things when your dreams first meet reality.

---

"So, what did you think?" Sirius asked, as Harry made his way into the kitchen.

"I thought you said you gave my dad the same 'advice,'" Harry said.

"Hey, why were there air quotes on that? That did not warrant air quotes," Sirius grumbled.

"And no, I never said I gave him the same advice, which was brilliant, by the way, I said that he said the same thing you did."

Harry lifted an eyebrow. "And Remus was the one who gave him advice."

"Of course it was him. Where do you think I got it from?"

Harry snorted at that and moved to take over Sirius's job.

"Hey, I was making that."

"Do you even know what that is?"

"Chicken? With... cheese? And... other things?"

"Hilarious, Padfoot."

"Okay fine, you can play chef. But just know that I *can* cook some things. Molly taught me. And also I have never burned down the kitchen, so ha."

"And that is why you are not banned," Harry said. "Now pass that salt over."

Sirius did as requested, mumbling "I knew I was forgetting something" as he did so.

---

“So how did the shopping go?” Harry was going to preserve the slightly frazzled look on Barty’s face in his memory forever. No one suspected Luna until it was too late, hence why Harry had enthusiastically encouraged Barty’s offer to go shopping alongside Luna that morning. If Luna had wanted him to go he would have, because he loved her and liked when she was happy, but he also knew that she didn’t actually care if he went along or not and so was more than happy to let Barty ~~suffer~~ participate in his place.

“It was fine,” Barty managed to get out.

“What did you two do while we were gone?” Luna asked.

“Finalized my travel plans with Sabrina. We’ll leave same time as you for Italy,” Sirius said.

“Oh I’m sure it will be lovely to meet all of them,” Luna said.

Harry wasn’t sure how nice it could be to meet your girlfriend’s first husband’s extended family, but Sirius didn’t seem particularly concerned at the moment, so it was probably fine. Then what Sirius had said caught up to him. “Wait, you’re leaving?”

“Yeah, don’t you remember me telling you about it?”

“*No*, I don’t remember you telling me about it. I thought you were staying here with Ivy?”

“I thought she was staying here with Remus and Barty.”

“Remus is going to the States for that interview thing.”

Sirius frowned. “I forgot about that. But Barty’s still going to be here, right?”

It wasn’t that Harry didn’t trust Barty, because really he did, mostly, but the thought of leaving him and Ivy alone for three weeks while he and Luna were on another continent was...

“...thought I’d take her to Romania to see Charlie and the dragons,” Barty was saying.

Nope. So much nope. “I’ll be back,” Harry said, tossing his napkin on the chair and dashing towards the floo and hoping he could salvage this before it was too late.

---

“Molly, dear, this is absolutely delicious. Is this something new?”

“Well I was trying to teach Sirius how to make a few simple things, you know, and there were a few mishaps, but then it gave me an idea, so I thought I’d see if I could turn it into a little something.”

“Well I love you, and I’m fairly certain I love whatever this is,” Arthur said, gazing rather fondly at his plate.

Molly laughed a little and was about to say something, but was distracted by an unexpected chiming of the floo.

“Hello? It’s Harry. Is anybody home?”

Molly looked at her husband and they both rose swiftly and headed towards the floo, a hundred things running through her head. She really hoped nothing had happened.

“Can I come through?” Harry asked.

“Yes of course, dear, come on over,” Molly replied.

Harry came through, and after dusting the leftover powder off of himself, turned towards the two Weasleys and said, “I need your help.”

---

“So let me get this straight. You want us,” Arthur said, gesturing to himself and his wife, “to watch Ivy while you are on your honeymoon.”

“Yes.”

“But to do that we need to leave.”

“Mmhmm.”

“And we need to leave the country because...”

“Because I don’t trust her to not somehow still end up in Romania with Charlie. Not that Charlie’s not great, of course, and not that I have any real problem with her visiting him or anything, it’s just that I’m concerned with what she might bring back with her should she go.”

“...right. Well I suppose we could all go visit him. The other boys didn’t get to go before and...”

“No,” Harry said a little too loudly. “That’s alright.” This was not going how he wanted it to. “How about Egypt? You could go see Bill? Egypt is lovely this time of year.” Probably not, since it would be the middle of summer in an arid desert, but who knows, maybe the Weasleys liked the extreme heat unlike ninety five percent of their fellow Britons. “I’ll pay for everything, of course.”

Arthur made to protest, as Harry expected he would, but Harry wasn’t about to lose. He had too much riding on this to lose, and he *really* didn’t want to adopt a dragon.

“Arthur, please. My peace of mind regarding Ivy is worth more than all the galleons in the world, and I *really* don’t want a dragon.” Arthur looked a little confused at this but perhaps surprisingly (or not, if you considered the fact that someone had *raised* Charlie Weasley, not to mention the twins, and dealt with whatever they had managed to bring home as children), Molly nodded in understanding. “There are very few people I feel I could entrust with this sort of thing, so please, if you are willing, take your family, go see your son, and enjoy a bit of a holiday.”

To Harry's complete and triumphant joy, the Weasleys eventually relented. Molly made some comment about how he was so sweet to be so concerned with Ivy's care during his honeymoon, and of course they would make sure she was well taken care of. Harry couldn't help but feeling that they were somehow missing the fact that he was *entirely serious* in his pleas, and that the mild desperation that had crept into his voice a few times was not at all exaggerated, but it was all working out, so he let the feeling be.

---

*June 30, 1993*

Everything was perfect, and if Ivy had anything to say about it (which she did), it would remain that way. After the birthday incident last year Henry was a little more restrictive in his invitation allowances, but Ivy was rather pleased to see so many of her friends gathered to celebrate what was quite possibly the happiest day of her life. No, she was positive this was the happiest day of her life, and she doubted whether it would ever be matched. Henry was getting married, and not only was he getting married, he was marrying possibly the most perfect person on the entire planet. His Luna was like her Luna, except taller, even prettier, seemed to know all the things, and was marrying Henry, which meant that she was therefore perfect.

Henry's Luna was also responsible for the magnificence that was Ivy and her Luna's current state of dress. Ivy was perhaps *slightly* biased, seeing as it was one of *her* suggestions that had been chosen, but Ivy thought that the pale green dresses she and Luna were wearing made them look like princesses. She certainly *felt* like a princess. And if she and Luna were princesses, Henry's Luna was an absolute goddess. Luna's wedding gown was dark blue with light gold and silver accents that gave it a rather ethereal quality. Ivy was glad Pansy had taught her that word. It fit the occasion rather well in her opinion.

---

Harry glanced out at the assembled guests in hopes of finding a distraction of some kind. The ceremony was only a few minutes from starting, and he *really* needed a distraction. Fortunately for him, some of the guests looked slightly uncomfortable and so were able to provide enough amusement for him to not dwell on his completely rational fear that Luna would somehow get sucked back into their old universe before they could get married.

Perhaps the most entertaining of the guests were Lucius and Arthur, who were seated near each other in what had to have either been Ivy or Sirius's idea. Everyone was on their best behavior, perhaps in some small part due to the rather effective glares Ivy, Pansy, and Narcissa were managing to throw out to anyone who so much as muttered under their breath, but that didn't stop the clear irritation visible on both wizards' faces. Even more amusing to Harry was the fact that Draco and Fred were currently engaged in some kind of poking war, out of sight from their fathers. Though not out of sight of their mothers, as evidenced by a fond roll of the eyes on Molly's part and an amused raise of an eyebrow on Narcissa's. The two women shared a glance, at which point their husbands caught sight of their sons' antics. The boys, noticing their audience, settled down (if going from outright pokes to elbow jabs could be called that), and Lucius let out a long-suffering, why me sort of sigh. Very amusing. Arthur followed up with a stifled chuckle, and just like that the tension between the two wizards dissipated. Of course it only lasted a moment, because when his two friends realized



that they were having something that could possibly be construed as some type of “moment,” they immediately went back to their tense, I-don’t-like-you faces.

Harry would need to thank whoever it was that had seated the Weasleys near the Malfoys.

Just then something brushed up against his leg. To his credit, he only jumped slightly, rather than screaming out or yelping, but he did also reflexively kick at whatever brushed up against him.

He then had the extreme pleasure of trying to shoo away a hissing peacock, white feathers fully spread out. This was proving to be the one downside of having his wedding at the Malfoy’s manor. Surely having his wedding in his own backyard wouldn’t have been that bad. He wasn’t sure what Narcissa and Padma Patil of all people had against Quidditch pitches, but *apparently* it wasn’t a good enough place to have a wedding, as Padma had detailed *quite* extensively in a four page letter.

But Luna had wanted an outdoor wedding, Harry wanted it somewhere where no uninvited people could show up, and Narcissa had offered so here he was, battling an albino peacock that was probably the future father of the little white demons Astoria had once tried to pass off to him. Just one little blasting charm would be all it would take...

“There you are,” a voice said, interrupting his thoughts of pavocide.

“Lady Longbottom, what are you doing here?” Harry blurted out.

Lady Longbottom clucked at him. *Clucked*. “Just ensuring you have not worn a hole into the stone, dear. And call me Augusta.”

“I’m fine,” he said, at least eighty-five percent convinced of that fact.

Lad... *Augusta* tutted. “I told my Frank the same thing I am going to tell you now. You have a perfectly lovely young lady that is ready to marry you. You will undoubtedly screw this entire thing up at some point, but she is nice enough that she will forgive you anyway. Just do your best and it will all work out.”

Harry was having a difficult time reconciling this Augusta Longbottom with all his previous experiences, but it did appear to actually be her, and a subtle little prod with his magic revealed no one was polyjuiced, so that at least was off the table. “Er, thanks.”

She patted his cheek fondly, saying “good luck” before whisking away, passing a surprised looking Sirius on her way.

“What was that about?” Sirius asked.

“Wedding advice, I think?”

“Did you get adopted by Lady Longbottom or something?”

“Maybe?”

“Huh.”

Harry looked over at his godfather, who was staring off into the distance.

“Think she’d adopt me too?”

“You could ask?”

Sirius just hummed for a moment. “Well, it’s time,” he said, clapping his hands and giving Harry a little shove in the right direction.

---

Harry couldn’t take his eyes off of Luna the entire time. Nothing else seemed to matter, he was only semi-conscious of the words being spoken, and he was *maybe* sixty percent sure he said the right thing, but at the end they were married (he double checked), and he was now the proud husband of one Luna Lovegood Peverell-Slytherin. He was also fairly confident that he had a new patronus memory. Now to just get everyone to leave so they could be on their way.

---

Finally the very last of their friends came and wished them well. It was a little startling for Harry to realize that he *had* that many friends. He could also quite honestly say that some of them were people he *never* would have expected to become friends with before. Also, there was a veritable army of children wearing the faces of his former friends running around. And he was friends with their parents. So many things about that were disturbing.

He had also managed to confirm that yes, he had been unofficially adopted by Augusta Longbottom. Sirius was delighted to learn that he too was now an unofficial Longbottom, and at one point Harry thought he saw a mischievous glint in Augusta’s eye that he chose to ignore. She was a respectable, responsible woman, and if she decided to cause mayhem he was sure she was capable of doing so responsibly while he watched cheerfully and uninvolved from the sidelines.

---

Sirius was having an excellent day. Harry and Luna were married, Ivy was the cutest little princess to ever set off miniature dragon fireworks, he had unofficially been adopted by Augusta Longbottom, Lucius had looked somewhat put out for at least half the evening, and he had managed to have Sabrina all to himself while dancing, minus her one dance with Blaise where he danced with Ivy. All in all it was an excellent day.

And then Alden bloody Burke had to go and ruin it.

“So when are you getting married?”

A simple question really. A relatively innocent one as well. But the thing was, he and Sabrina had once planned their wedding, their lives, their future. And then her father had married her off to Zabini, not wanting her to associate with the disowned and disgraced Black heir. And *then* the war had happened and he had gone to Azkaban. Now they weren’t teenagers planning their lives out anymore. They had lived, and suffered, and dealt with everything that

had been thrown their way, and sure, they were in a good place now, but he was no longer certain if marriage was something she was willing to do. She had murdered her last four husbands, after all (though no, Mr. Auror, I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about). True, they had all been terrible people, but Sirius was fairly certain it had at least somewhat tainted the whole marriage idea for her.

And yet, maybe there was still a chance for them to have their happily ever after that they used to talk about. And maybe it would just look a different. And maybe that would be alright.

But that didn't mean he wanted to be thinking about it right now, thank you not at all Lord Burke.

---

This was his house, so he should have been able to escape the red headed demon that seemed intent on inflicting his presence on Draco. At least he could tell the twins apart, whatever amount of comfort that was in this time of suffering. George wasn't nearly so bad, though there was no way he was going to let the other demon know that. Who knows what sorts of ideas that would give him. If Draco had learned anything about the two demon twins Ivy insisted on remaining friends with, it was that they were cheerfully competitive over anything they could feasibly turn into a competition, and Draco's ire was sure to make the list somehow.

Thus he was making a strategic retreat. Or trying, anyways.

It wasn't going very well. Again, he *ought* to have been able to escape easily, seeing as this was *his house* and he knew every hiding spot and secret doorway there was. And yet, somehow, in a way that defied his understanding, Fred Weasley kept managing to find him, bringing with him such horrid attempts at bribery and deceit as "biscuits" and "sorbet." Psh. Like Draco was going to fall for that. He had witnessed what had happened to the last poor, ignorant soul that had consumed something offered them by Fred Weasley, and Draco was *much* smarter than that.

He needed a new tactic.

A new tactic came. Or, more accurately, he ran into a new tactic. Person. Whatever. On the bright side, said person did not protest too much when Draco used him as a shield and cloaking device. On the much less fortunate side, it was another Weasley (and how many of them *were* there), so Draco was unsure of how long this new tactic would last.

Seeing the unmistakable hair of his worst frenemy (and Merlin, he was using Tracey's made up words now), he pulled his new tactic off to the side.

"I need to speak with you. Now."

Thankfully the wizard just followed, again not giving much of anything in the way of protest.

---

Bill was not entirely sure what was happening, but the Malfoy kid was pulling him off to the side, and was apparently using him as a shield to hide from one or both of the twins. Only one was in sight, but Bill knew better than to assume anything.

“I need to speak with you. Now,” Malfoy junior said.

Once they reached somewhere that was apparently acceptable, Bill gazed down at mini Malfoy, the look on his face probably question enough.

The little blond twig sighed. “I need someone to act as a strategic buffer between me and your brother. Wait, Fred is your brother, right?”

Bill nodded. “Bill Weasley,” he said, sticking out his hand.

“Draco Malfoy,” he got along with a handshake. “Your time is appreciated.”

“So... You’re friends with the twins?”

Malfoy, or Draco, as Bill supposed he could think of the boy as now, made a little scrunched up face at that but didn’t correct him. “Have they always been like this?” He asked instead.

“Yes.”

Draco pouted, although Bill was fairly certain no thirteen(?) year old boy would admit to such an action.

“I tried to get Ivy to run interference but Pansy told me I couldn’t get Ivy’s dress dirty.” Draco made a face at that as if it were the most ludicrous thing he had ever heard. “It’s not like I was going to ask her to run through the mud or something. I’m not a savage.”

“Of course not,” Bill responded, not sure of how else to reply.

“Thank you,” said Draco forcefully. “At least *someone* understands.”

Bill wasn’t entirely sure what it was he supposedly understood, but he could take a guess. He also knew when rants were about to start. He had six younger siblings. He had heard *plenty* of rants. Best course of action? Distract and engage in unrelated topics. Works a good ninety percent of the time if done correctly and in enough time. “So what are your favorite subjects?”

Draco’s face lit up. He was apparently quite willing to follow this topic change. “Well potions, of course,” he began, though Bill was uncertain why that ought to have been obvious. “And transfiguration is good. Charms is alright, even if the theory is a little dull. Next year we begin electives, you know, so that ought to be interesting.”

“Oh? What electives are you taking?”

Draco grimaced. “Runes, Arithmancy, and Care.”

“You don’t look particularly thrilled with that.”

“Well Fred promised he would make Ivy take Runes with me, but then I ended up having to take Care also, because Pansy said I should and because Blaise said he wasn’t going to go to Care with Pansy and Ivy by himself.”

“Care is an interesting class. I’m sure you’ll find something enjoyable about it.”

“It’s not the class I’m concerned about,” Draco said with a face indicating that this should be obvious. “Have you met Ivy?”

“Yes...”

“And have you seen her around any creatures? Any? At all?”

“Well she does enjoy talking to Charlie it seems...”

“Yes, and do you know why she is accompanying your family to Egypt?”

Bill just waited for the answer that would most likely be different from the one he would have offered.

“Because Lord Peverell wants to ensure that she does not adopt a dragon while he is gone. A *dragon*. Since with her it is unfortunately a valid concern. I already know enough about every creature that could potentially kill me that there is, and at this point the other ones seem too boring to bother with. And yet now I’m stuck in Care for the next three years with one girl who wants a unicorn as her personal war horse and another who thinks the more X’s a creature is ranked the better pet it would make. I enjoy my body parts right where they are, thanks.”

With that Draco gave a little huff and Bill had a flashback to a similar huff given by a ten year old Percy who was tired of explaining the logical reasoning behind the ban on dragon breeding in Britain to his dragon-enthusiastic older brother. Charlie, not Bill, just to be absolutely clear. “Well, at least you’ll know to be on guard if either of them gets too excited about a particular creature,” Bill offered.

Draco gave him an assessing look that was probably supposed to be subtle yet was anything but. “Thank Merlin there’s at least one reasonable Weasley,” he said, relief more than heat evident in his tone.

Bill chuckled. “Well, if you decide you want to join what is likely a rousing discussion on dragons and their potential as house pets,” he said, gesturing to where Charlie and Ivy were discussing something excitedly and with big arm movements, “I’m sure they would be happy to oblige.

“I take it all back,” came Draco’s expressionless reply.

Bill laughed out loud. “Come on,” he said, ruffling Draco’s hair to the younger boy’s horror. “I’ll help you avoid my brothers and all talk of lethal creatures.”

Draco adopted a serious, formal expression, but not before Bill caught a small smile. He smiled to himself and led the younger Malfoy to the dessert table. You couldn’t very easily

talk about dragons with cake in your mouth.

---

“Percy, there you are. Are you busy? No? Perfect. Come on.”

Percy didn't actually get to respond to Thomas before he found himself being pulled along towards a group of wizards that he couldn't quite put names to, though he thought he might recognize one or two of them from some of the ministry reports he had seen.

“This is Percy Weasley,” Thomas began, introducing him to the group. “He's in my year, and he is interested in working at the ministry after graduation. Isn't that great. Here, I'm sure there are plenty of things you can ask him. He's very smart. Oh, would you look at that. Someone is calling me. I will just talk to you all later.”

And with that Thomas abandoned him. Percy drew in a breath and prepared himself for a brief, yet awkward conversation. Instead it appeared all five wizards were rather amused at Thomas's poorly disguised escape.

“Poor Roderick. He was so hoping Thomas would work at the ministry instead of heading off to France.”

It took Percy all of half a second to remember that that was where Thomas's “girlfriend” lived. Oh, this was not something he wanted to be made to comment on.

“Sorry. Sebastian Bromford,” the wizard said, extending his hand.

“Percy Weasley,” Percy replied, even though Thomas had already informed them of that.

“And here we have Simon Parkinson, Alden Burke, Dunstan Thorburn, and Ignatius Greengrass,” Bromford said, gesturing to each wizard in turn.

“Nate. Just Nate,” Greengrass said, shooting a glare at Bromford who did not appear at all perturbed.

Alright then. Three Lords. That Thomas had abandoned him to.

“So, what are you interested in doing at the ministry?” Burke asked.

“I've been considering law,” Percy said. It was true. He had considered it. Along with seventeen other options, but that didn't seem like the right thing to say at the moment.

“Political or practice?” Greengrass asked.

“Political,” Percy replied.

To his surprise, Greengrass, Bromford, and Parkinson all perked up at that statement.

“Really. How wonderful,” Parkinson said.

“Henry has mentioned you,” Greengrass said, and Percy felt his ears burning just a tad. “Seems to be very impressed with you. So politics, eh? Every think about running for something or other? Minister one day, perhaps?”

And so Percy spent the next forty-five minutes talking with three wizards who were very eager to hear all about his plans for the future. It was strange, but he went with it. Thomas’s keen departure and abandonment could probably be forgiven.

---

“Uh, Pansy, you okay?” Blaise asked, concerned for his friend who was sitting there with a small frown on her face.

“I still think it would have been better with unicorns,” she said.

“Well, maybe you can have unicorns at your wedding?”

Pansy nodded, eyes not moving from wherever they were fixed. Blaise couldn’t quite tell what she was looking at. “That is feasible, right?”

“Um, sure?”

“Good. Because if I can’t ride off into the sunset on the back of a unicorn with the fields of my enemies burning behind me, then what even is the point?”

Blaise backed away slowly and went to find one of his friends who wouldn’t bring disturbing imagery to mind through their conversation. It took him a while to find someone he considered safe enough to meet that criteria. He needed more friends.

---

Harry sat there, mentally calculating how long it would take before he could leave. Yes, yes, it was their wedding and it was nice, but they were married now. Why was the rest of it taking so long?

“Harry,” came Barty’s frantic but low voice.

“Yeah?” Harry asked perhaps a bit too enthusiastically. It wasn’t like he *wanted* something to have happened, but he was eager for any excuse to leave at this point. Even Luna looked like she was done at this point, so Harry felt entirely justified in his feeling.

“What do I do?” Barty looked more upset and worried than Harry had ever seen him, so he turned his full attention to the man.

“What happened?”

“Lady Longbottom is here, and I don’t know what to do,” Barty said. “I can’t talk to her, but I’m running out of ways to avoid her.”

Harry winced. Yes, that was indeed a problem. Augusta Longbottom had for some as of yet unknown reason taken a liking to both Harry and Sirius, but Barty was, at this point, easily identified with them, and yet Harry had no good way to either keep them apart or introduce

them, because just how exactly are you supposed to introduce someone like Barty to someone like Augusta Longbottom. “Oh hey, by the way, here’s one of the wizards you think is responsible for torturing your son and daughter-in-law, but he didn’t actually do it, and everyone thinks he’s dead but he’s not, and isn’t this just dandy.”

No.

Thankfully Luna offered a solution.

“You could tell her,” she said.

Okay Harry was maybe not entirely thankful, since that sounded horrible, but he knew that you ignored Luna’s advice at your own peril, and perhaps in the end that would be the best course of action. Maybe.

“Not now, of course, since it will take quite a while to tell her everything.”

“Wait, like *everything*?”

“Yes, of course.”

“And you think that would be a good idea?”

“I think it helps to have someone to talk to.”

“But this can wait, right?”

By this point Barty looked horrified. “You’re going to tell her *everything*?”

Harry shrugged. “Might be good to have someone else that knows.”

Luna reached out a hand to comfort Barty. “It will be alright,” she reassured him.

Barty didn’t look entirely convinced, but he did relax marginally.

“Any chance you want to be the one to do the explaining?” Harry asked Luna.

She simply kissed him on the cheek as she stood up.

“That wasn’t a no,” Harry pointed out as she walked away.

Barty’s unimpressed stare did nothing to curb his optimism.

---

Today had been perfect. Absolutely perfect. And now, as she lay on the extra bed in Ginny’s room, Ivy decided that going to Egypt instead of Romania was worth the absolute perfection that had been today. Besides, Charlie was going too so she would still have plenty of time to talk to him about dragons. And there was always next year. Maybe Luna would say yes to a pet...



## Chapter 37

*July 14, 1993*

Egypt was amazing. Ivy had been quite a few places, courtesy of Henry's general avoidance of Britain for their first couple years, but they hadn't made it to Egypt yet. They would obviously need to make a family holiday here sometime in the future though, because, as previously stated, Egypt was amazing.

Also, hanging out with the Weasleys was brilliant. The five she went to school with were always fun to be around, and being in Egypt only added to that enjoyment, but then there was Mr. Weasley, who asked her questions about different muggle things that made her laugh, Mrs. Weasley who had enough snacks with her at any given time to feed an army (or nine Weasleys and Ivy as it happened to be), Bill, who Ivy decided was quite an acceptable individual and who she was able to practice both her Arabic *and* the Goblin language with, and then of course Charlie, who still hadn't signed adoption papers but who did have enough dragon stories to entertain all of them for days. Well, everyone except his mother, who had a little twitch in her eye that made her look somewhat similar to Henry. Charlie was the best.

---

Egypt was fine. Not bad, not great, just fine. Honestly though, as fascinating as some of the things they had seen were, Percy couldn't quite understand Bill's seemingly undying enthusiasm with the place. No, that wasn't quite true. He did understand it, he just didn't share it. At all. Because why on earth would you spend your days charging through cursed tombs when you could have a perfectly nice ministry job. Indoors. Without undead cats chasing you around. Honestly, there really was no contest.

As Percy made the final few downward slashes with his wand he decided that being locked in a tomb by his two menaces of brothers was enough to cross "adventure" off his bucket list. Possibly forever, but certainly until graduation.

When he stepped out of the tomb it was to the sight of his mother berating his two younger brothers, his father and older brothers looking concerned, and his three other younger siblings looking... bored? Ah, that's right. It was lunchtime.

"Sorry that took so long," he said by way of apology to the three. "Started off using a long set and really, it's not like you can just stop a simulacrum tenebris chain halfway through."

Bill coughed and started making choking sounds.

"Are you alright?" Percy asked with a small frown. Inhaling too much dust from cursed sites was never a good idea, and even if they had been told this particular tomb wasn't cursed, you could never be too careful.

"I'm fine," Bill wheezed out.

Percy just shook his head. "Alright then. So, lunch?"

Half his family nodded in agreement and the other half looked at him with varied measures of disbelief.

“What?”

---

“So are you sure you aren’t interested in becoming a curse-breaker? You would be brilliant at it.”

Honestly. What had Percy ever done to make Bill think that was something he would be interested in? He had been going on about a ministry job since he was *seven*. Well, technically four, when he had declared that he would be minister when he got older (which was six at that point because six is really old when you’re four), and make all the bad people go to prison. And then the war had ended and he decided being a crup breeder was a noble life goal. His mother hadn’t been all too happy that he had gone and researched some of the details of that, but what can you do. Oh, and then he was six and Charlie had broken his arm trying to sneak out on a broom, so he had decided being a broom tester would be a good idea, because obviously there was something wrong with the broom. It wasn’t until later that he realized that Charlie’s injuries usually had more to do with *Charlie* than with defaulting magical objects. And then finally had come the realization at age seven that the ministry was the way to go. Incidentally it was around that time that Charlie began researching dragons and telling Percy all about what awaited them in the great outdoors. The ministry stayed his goal from that point on.

So no, he was not interested in becoming a curse-breaker. He had *plans*.

However...

“Have I introduced you to Thomas? I really ought to. I think the two of you would get along spectacularly.”

There. That would do.

---

“I can’t believe we peaked at age fourteen.”

“It was good while it lasted.”

“Well it should have lasted longer.”

“Maybe we need to talk to Padfoot.”

“What about Moony?”

“Him too.”

“Hey, what do you think the chances are we could get Percy to teach us some of those?”

Fred gave his twin a look.

“Yeah, you’re right,” George sighed. “What about Harrington then?”

Fred thought about that for a moment. “We’d have to phrase it right.”

“Well, those two are always trying to keep Ivy from finding the good curses, right? But they’re graduating. So who is going to look out for her when they’re gone?”

“Well us, obviously. We’ve been doing it for two years already... Oh no, I see what you mean. Yes, that could work.” Then Fred frowned. “We won’t have to spend that much time in the library though will we? Those two practically live there.”

George scrunched up his face a little. “Yeah, that would probably ruin the last remaining shreds of our reputation.”

“So we just need to find some other way to get Harrington to teach us the good stuff while still keeping it away from Ivy?”

“Keeping what away from me?”

Fred and George instinctively winced.

---

“You know, her Arabic is quite good,” Bill pointed out. Percy and Charlie each just gave him a look. “Well it is,” he defended.

“What’d the twins do this time?” Charlie asked, watching as Ivy chased them around shouting in what was apparently decent Arabic.

“Not sure. Something about Percy’s friend and keeping something from her.”

Percy’s mind came to an abrupt stop. When he was done muttering he glanced around, suddenly very thankful that his mother was not within earshot. His brothers, however, were. Charlie grinned, and Bill looked pained. Percy wasn’t sure what Bill had to feel pained about. It wasn’t like he was the one who was going to have to come up with an explanation for Ivy Potter.

---

Ivy narrowed her eyes, but Percy didn’t even flinch. She needed to work on that apparently. Maybe she could ask Professor Snape for tips.

“Ivy, you can’t just go around throwing out obscure curses you find in manuscripts. It’s *dangerous*.”

“It’s not like I *used* them.”

“Thomas and I were just a little... *concerned*. After Hyslop, the basilisk, the hurricane, the... well, everything.”

Ivy huffed. “You didn’t have to worry about me. I promised Henry I would keep all my plans theoretical.”

“Plans?”

Ivy wondered at what point that could be called a squeak. “Yes, plans. Everyone has plans. And Henry even said no minions until after I graduate, and that’s *ages* away, so nothing is going to happen.”

“Until you graduate, you mean.”

Ivy smiled. He was finally getting it. “I’m so glad you understand.”

“You know, that does absolutely nothing to fill me with confidence,” she heard Percy mutter. Well, excuse her for not having all the details worked out. It wasn’t that big of a deal. She still had five years to figure it out after all.

---

Arthur collapsed on the bed. Today had been exhausting. Much like the past few days had been, in fact. “Next time we decide it’s a good idea to take the entire family on holiday, let’s just go to Salcombe, hmm?”

Molly, the love and light of his life, laughed.

---

Harry loved South America. It was a wonderful, beautiful, exquisite place. And Luna was here with him, which made it all the better. But alas, it would soon come to an end. Three weeks was far too short of a time, but there was always next year. At least they still had one week left, and this week was to be the highlight of their honeymoon. They had spent the first two weeks touring, seeing famous sights, both magical and muggle, and enjoying the best beaches South America had to offer. But now, for their final week, they were headed into the jungle for a week of exploring. Harry had read through some of Ivy’s herbology books in preparation, so he felt relatively confident in his ability to avoid the more particularly poisonous and venomous varieties of plants, and Luna knew every creature to be on the lookout for. The best part of all? Luna, obviously. The second best part of all? Not a single British witch or wizard in sight, except for them.

---

It had taken two weeks, but Sirius was now somewhat confident that he was not going to die on this trip. Why would he die on this trip, you might ask? Well let him explain all the reasons.

1. Cesare Zabini was the head of the Zabini family, and held more power in Italy than the Blacks ever had in Britain.
2. Sabrina Zabini née Volant had married his grandson, Anthony Zabini.
3. Cesare didn’t particularly care for his deceased grandson, but was exceptionally fond of Sabrina and Blaise.
4. Sirius was dating Sabrina.
5. Cesare could make him disappear without a trace if he decided Sirius wasn’t good enough for his favorite grandchild.
6. Cesare Zabini had a very effective, very terrifying glare. A glare that had been directed towards Sirius for the first four days of their trip here.

The glare, thankfully, had all but disappeared by day five, but the remaining days between then and now had been spent recovering from that ordeal. And no, he was not a wimp. Cesare Zabini just happened to be a ninety seven year old wizard who knew a thousand different ways of killing someone without even using magic. And that, if anything, was an understatement. So yes, the glare was bloody terrifying, especially when it dissolved into fond smiles any time his gaze was directed at either Sabrina or Blaise.

But now Sirius was sufficiently recovered, and more or less convinced that he was not going to meet his death on this particular trip.

“Black, a word if you please.”

Probably.

---

“Now, *cucciolo*, you are not a complete bastard.”

Sirius groaned on the inside but kept his face passive.

“So I have decided you are an acceptable suitor for my *teserino*.”

“Gee, thanks,” Sirius mumbled under his breath.

“And may you fare better than the last four.”

“*Sei uno stronzo*,” Sirius muttered darkly.

Cesare chuckled before reaching under his desk and grabbing out a bottle of something that was sure to be amazing. “Welcome to the family,” he said, before raising his glass to Sirius.

The next forty minutes did much to appease Sirius. Welcome to the family indeed.

---

*July 21, 1993*

“Hurry now, or we’ll miss the portkey.”

“I can’t find my hat, has anyone seen it?”

“It doesn’t leave for another hour, we’re fine.”

“Look on top of the mantle, dear.”

“Has anyone seen Charlie?”

“Wait, where’s Ivy?”

“I think they went out.”

“What are they doing out, it’s time to *leave*.”

“There they are, I see them.”

“Oh thank goodness. For the last time Ginny *you cannot take the cat.*”

“We’re back!”

“What were you thinking heading off this late? Oh, never mind. Help your brother with the trunks, would you?”

Charlie grinned, gave his mother a quick peck on the cheek and headed off to help Percy with the luggage.

“Here you go, Ron.” Ivy shoved a cage into Ron’s hand.

“Um, thanks. What is it?”

“It’s a hyrax.”

“A what?”

“A hyrax.”

“Yeah, but what is it?”

“It’s for you.”

“Er, thanks.”

“I felt bad that you didn’t have a pet anymore since your last one turned out to be a murderous traitor.”

“Thanks, Ivy.”

“No problem,” Ivy said with a grin and a mischievous wink.

“Oh my goodness, what is *that*?” Molly stated in what was, relatively speaking, an entirely calm and collected manner.

Ivy went to explain, but Ron beat her to it. “Don’t bother, mum,” he said. “This is to replace Scabbers,” he added, obviously sensing that *some* sort of explanation was expected.

Molly closed her eyes, and sighed briefly.

“Alright, well that’s very nice of you, Ivy. And Charlie, where is Charlie...”

“Here, mum.”

“You wouldn’t happen to know anything about this, would you?”

“Well I heard they like asparagus...”

“Does this mean I can keep the cat?” piped Ginny.

---

“Oh, sweet English freedom,” Sirius sighed happily as they made their way past customs.

Blaise snickered.

“Your talents are truly wasted,” Sabrina said fondly, rolling her eyes. “The stage has been denied their brightest star.”

“But you love me for it,” quipped Sirius.

Blaise interrupted their fourteenth lovey-dovey moment of the day about twenty seconds later. Enough was enough.

---

“So, how was the honeymoon?” Barry asked, roughly forty seconds after Harry and Luna walked in.

“Splendid,” came Luna’s response.

Harry just had a huge grin plastered on his face that rather spoke for itself, in Barty’s opinion.

“Anything interesting happen?” Barty regretted that question almost as soon as he asked it. It took about three seconds but he got there. There were just some things he didn’t actually need to know.

“Well we discovered three new species.”

“No, no, there was no *we*,” Harry objected. “*Luna* discovered three new species. I took pictures,” he said proudly.

“That’s nice,” Barty replied.

“It was still a joint effort,” Luna argued, though she was not even trying to hide a wide smile.

“A rather lopsided joint effort, if you ask me. Besides, *you’re* the one who is being asked to publish your findings.”

“Well you can at least get credit for the pictures then,” Luna said, grinning.

Barty didn’t know Harry could possibly look more lovesick than he had over the past few months, but apparently he could. It was adorable and disgustingly horrifying at the same time. “Well, good to have you back.”

---

*July 22, 1993*

“Harry, I think you need to see this.”

Barty's uncharacteristic seriousness caught Harry's immediate attention. He looked at the headline of the paper Barty handed him.

***BELLATRIX LESTRANGE ESCAPES AZKABAN PRISON***

His fingers tightened around the newspaper as he tried to keep his rage from manifesting and his magic under control.

"I really, *really* hate parallels."



# Chapter 38

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“So, what now?” Sirius asked, not entirely expecting a response.

“How likely is it, you think, that we’d be able to track her down?” Remus asked in response.

Sirius and Barty both shook their heads. “Not very,” Barty said. “If anyone can stay hidden it’s her.”

“And we’re sure it’s just her?” Remus enquired. “Neither LeStrange brother got out as well?”

Sirius snorted. “Not if she was the one planning, which I guarantee you she was.”

Barty cleared his throat. “She didn’t exactly care that much for either of them, so...”

“Got it,” Remus said. “Alright, so anyone know if she’s an animagus? That’s how Sirius escaped in the other world, right? So could that be how she did it?”

“If she is she would have had to have managed it after getting to Azkaban, so I’m going to go with no,” Barty answered.

“Harry?” Sirius said, turning towards the rather rage-filled wizard. “Thoughts?”

Harry tapped his foot and scowled at the floor for a moment before replying. “She’s smart. And insane, and that’s as dangerous a combination as you can get. Animagus is probably not likely, but we can’t discount it entirely yet. Do we know if she has a wand?”

Luna shook her head. “If she got one off the guards the ministry isn’t saying anything.”

Harry muttered something disparaging about the minister and his bloodline.

Luna continued. “If she picked one up somewhere else they might know, but probably best to assume she has one at this point anyway.”

They all nodded their agreement.

“Anything else the ministry isn’t deigning to tell us?” Harry asked sarcastically.

“We could ask Lucius,” Sirius offered. Harry raised an eyebrow at that. “I’m just saying, he’s more likely to have heard something than we are.”

“And what if she’s not found?” All eyes turned towards Remus. “I’m not saying she won’t be, or that we shouldn’t try too, but like Harry said, this is too close a parallel to what happened in his world, except Bellatrix really is out to kill Ivy. So what if we don’t find her?”

Is the ministry going to send dementors to Hogwarts? How are we going to protect Ivy, Neville, and the other children? What are we going to do about the ministry, or Fudge?"

"We need to bring in the others," Luna said, giving Harry a pointed look.

Harry sighed. "I know. I just... Yeah no, you're right. Alright, here's what we'll do. Barty, I'm going to tell Augusta everything." At the paling of Barty's face Harry held up a hand. "I don't have to tell her about you, but I think I need to tell her about me. About all of this. We need people on our side, and she hates Bellatrix as much as anyone."

Barty nodded and inhaled deeply. "You can tell her about me," he said softly.

"Are you sure?" Harry asked, staring down Barty for any sign of hesitancy, but Barty just nodded his head.

"I'm sure."

"Okay. We'll do that then. Sirius, you reach out to Lucius, ask him to keep an ear out at the ministry. Remus, you reach out to Snape, ask him to do the same at Hogwarts. Maybe we can prevent the whole ministry response disaster that happened before."

---

"You know, just because it resembles what happened before doesn't mean it has to end the same."

Harry glanced behind his shoulder at Luna and sighed. "I know. It's just... It's *Bellatrix*, you know? And why now? There wasn't a picture in the paper of someone she wanted to kill. There wasn't a visit by Fudge to her cell. She's had almost twelve years to escape, and she's just doing it now? And how did she even manage it? Has she been secretly planning it this entire time? And how many people has she already killed? How many more will she kill before they find her. Before *we* find her, because how much do you want to bet that the ministry doesn't stand a chance in hell if Fudge's grand plan is to send dementors to Hogwarts again."

"Sirius is safe," Luna said, placing her chin on his shoulder. "So is Tonks, so is Ivy, so am I."

"But what if you're not? What if I can't..."

"You will," she said. "You have. And don't forget that I survived a war, as did Sirius. We know how to handle ourselves. Tonks is an auror. Ivy will be at Hogwarts, and if anything happens you will be there in an instant."

Harry sighed and leaned back into her embrace. "I thought taking care of Voldemort would be enough."

"But it was never only about him, was it?"

---

*July 23, 1993*

“She’s after me, isn’t she.” There was no question in Ivy’s statement.

“It is likely,” Luna replied. “Possibly Neville as well.”

“But why? I mean, I do know why, it’s just that...”

“Both of you were babies and couldn’t possibly have actually done anything to her?” Harry said darkly.

Ivy nodded.

Harry rubbed a hand over his face. “I don’t know, Ives. I don’t know why the world seems determined to think Voldemort died because of something you did. I don’t know why his followers hold you responsible for his disappearance.”

“But you know why he came after us. After me.”

Harry nodded. “There was a prophecy...”

---

“I think I’m going to apply for the defense position.”

Ivy’s face lit up. Harry and Remus both choked on their food. Luna and Barty both just nodded as if it were the most natural, logical statement in the world.

“I’m sorry, you what?”

“I’d like to apply for the defense position. I talked to Sabrina last night, and I don’t actually have to live at the castle, but I’d be close enough should anything happen, and I would be able to keep an eye on the kids, and...”

“I think it’s a great idea,” Harry said. Sure, it had taken him by surprise, but it was a good idea.

Sirius breathed what appeared to be a sigh of relief. “Yes, well, good. I... good.”

Ivy’s face meanwhile had reached a grin of epic proportions. “This will be almost as good as having Remus there last year!”

Remus snorted and everyone laughed at Sirius’s offended expression.

“Excuse you,” he said, “it will be *better*.”

Ivy made a thoughtful expression. “Well, I suppose if you try really hard to be a cool teacher, then maybe...”

“Done!” Sirius interjected.

“Still have to get the job, Black,” Barty chimed in. Sirius very maturely stuck out his tongue.

“Now Barty just needs to become a professor and then I’ll have had all of you,” Ivy said, beaming.

“And what am I then?” Harry said, taking over for Sirius in the realm of mock offended.

---

“Oh, how did your interview go? The one in the States?”

“Hmm? Oh, good, good. Decided against it, though.”

“Really? How come?”

“Harry, why would I leave when my family is all here?”

“We could all move?”

Remus just laughed. Harry had been entirely serious in his offer to move, but he was apparently the only one that was actually interested in doing so. Well, maybe he could convince them next year.

---

*July 26, 1993*

“Hello, Nymphadora,” Sirius called out loudly as he strolled up to his cousin’s desk.

“Don’t. Call. Me. That.”

Sirius grinned. “Now, is that any way to speak to your favorite cousin.”

“What makes you think you’re my favorite?”

“I’m everyone’s favorite, Dora” he replied cheekily.

“The Prophet seems to disagree,” his cousin retorted.

Sirius’s eye twitched. “Will no one let that go?”

“Nope,” she said, popping the “p.”

“Fine, I won’t call you Nymphadora if you don’t mention that. Ever.”

“Deal.”

Hands were shaken, and the deal was struck.

“So what brings you all the way to the auror office? You haven’t happened to have caught a glimpse of our least favorite deranged family member, have you?”

Sirius’s face grew serious, and yes there was a pun in there, but sometimes it couldn’t be helped and really it didn’t need to be pointed out ever single time. But anyway, back to his point.

“No, but that’s what I’m here about,” he said, the graveness of his tone causing Dora to immediately straighten up and go into auror mode.

“What is it?”

Sirius kept eye contact with her for a moment. “I think she may come after you. You specifically,” he said. “Possibly Andy and Ted as well, but I think you’re likely to be higher on the list.”

“What? Why?”

“Because you’re her previously disowned sister’s child? Because you’re a half-blood who inherited the most coveted Black gift? Because you’re an auror? Take your pick.”

“So? None of those seem like a good enough reason to break out of Azkaban.”

Sirius grimaced. “It’s not, no, but you might still be a target. Just, perhaps more of a side target.”

“Gee, thanks,” she said sarcastically.

“I’m serious, Dora,” he said with a bit of heat. “Do not underestimate her.”

“Alright, I won’t,” she said with mild confusion. “Sirius, what is this really about? What do you know?”

“I can’t tell you everything. Just know that I have good reason to suspect that if she gets a chance, or a chance to *make* a chance, she will come after you.”

“This is about Lord Peverell, isn’t it.”

“Dora...”

“No. This has something to do with him, I know it does.”

“I cannot reveal another man’s secrets,” Sirius said firmly. “But I will do what I need to to keep my family safe.”

“I want to speak with him.”

“Dora...”

“I want to speak with him,” she said again.

Sirius sighed but nodded. “Alright. Just know that he may not answer.”

“Or he just might.”

---

*July 27, 1993*

“Lord Peverell, I apologize for the intrusion, but might I come through and have a brief word?”

“Of course, Lucius. Come on over.”

As the wizard stepped through the floo Harry’s eyebrows shot up at the very familiar set of eyes following closely behind.

“Er, hello, Dobby.”

It took roughly three full minutes for Harry to calm Dobby down sufficiently. Apparently the Dobby of this world was as big a fan of Henry Peverell as the Dobby of his old world had been a fan of Harry Potter.

“So, to what do I owe the pleasure?” Harry asked Lucius, once the adulations were over.

Lucius’s eye wasn’t twitching, but Harry thought it was a close thing. “Please, just take him,” he pleaded.

“Sorry, what?”

“Oh, Dobby would be very pleased to serve Master Deathy, oh yes. Very pleased indeed.”

“Alright. Well then...”

“Wonderful,” Lucius interrupted. “I’ll just be off then.”

Without another word Lucius returned the way he had come, and Harry was left staring at an eager, wide-eyed Dobby.

“Right. So, would you like to be freed?”

Dobby’s face immediately fell. “Master Deathy not bes wanting Dobby?”

Harry raced to reassure Dobby that no, he would love for Dobby to stay with them, it was just that he was *offering* to free Dobby, if that’s what the elf wanted.

And then Dobby said no. Harry wasn’t quite sure what to do at that point.

---

The reactions to Dobby were mixed. Ivy and Dobby began chatting like old friends, and Harry realized that she probably did know him already, with the amount of time she spent at the Malfoy’s house. Luna just patted him on the head and said it was a pleasure to make his acquaintance, and the other wizards just looked on in mild confusion that mirrored Harry’s earlier state. Winky told Dobby in no uncertain terms that he was to help her make sure the wizards all stayed healthy, elaborating different ways that he could do so. Harry’s groans and Luna’s laughs were not enough to drown out the sounds of Winky’s explanations. Kreacher just told Dobby to stay out of the kitchen because there were “too many elves and wizards there already.” Winky hardly ever went in the kitchen now, so Harry wasn’t entirely sure what was up with that, but he let it slide. It probably wasn’t important.

---

*July 30, 1993*

“Thank you for inviting us, Augusta. The party was great.” Small. Only a few select friends. Exactly Harry’s idea of a good party.

“Of course, dear. Now, what was it you wanted to talk to me about?”

“Could we go somewhere private? I have some things to tell you.”

Augusta stared Harry down for a moment, before nodding. “Right this way,” she said.

Harry caught Barty’s eye and nodded. Sirius followed too a moment later.

If Augusta was surprised by the extra company she didn’t show it. Instead, she offered them a seat and tea. “Now,” she said, once everyone was situated, “I believe you had something to say to me, young man?”

---

To Barty’s credit, he kept the shaking of his hands and body to a minimum. He was nervous, sure, but he was doing a decently good job of not showing it. Harry had reached the “I’m Ivy’s doppelgänger from another universe” part when Augusta called one of her house elves for something stronger than tea, but that had been the only visible reaction she had given thus far.

“So your wife is from the same... universe as you? Anyone else?”

Harry shook his head and glanced at Barty. Alright. Moment of truth. Hopefully Harry liked him well enough to not let him die on Augusta Longbottom’s sofa.

---

Well, Barty wasn’t dead. He had performed no less than four wand oaths in an attempt to reassure the Dowager Lady Longbottom that they were telling the truth. That Barty was telling the truth, mostly. She seemed to believe Harry, for all the absurdity the truth carried with it at first hearing.

“And you truly played no part in the torture of my son and daughter-in-law?” She had asked this question six times already, phrased ever so slightly differently each time, but he wasn’t about to point that out.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Very well,” she said eventually, making Barty breathe out a breath he didn’t realize he had been holding. “I trust then that you will be of assistance in making sure that murderous hag does not get anywhere near my grandson or Miss Potter.”

Barty nodded fervently at her politely phrased demand and raised eyebrow. “Yes, ma’am,” he said again.

“Good,” she said sharply. “Now then,” she continued, her tone softening. “What is this I hear about Sirius applying to Hogwarts? I must say I am quite fond of the idea myself.”

Barty willed his heart beat to go down and his breathing to even. That had gone far better than he had been anticipating.

## Chapter End Notes

Hey! Look at that. Got another one done and it didn't even take me all week. As always, thanks for reading and for the comments and kudos.



## Chapter 39

*August 1, 1993*

Harry glared at the little bit of sunlight shining through the window as if it had personally offended him. True, there were a dozen different charms he could cast to darken the room once more, but he ignored those options in favor of staring down the offending light that had woken him up in the first place.

Last night had been exhausting. Thankfully Ivy's birthday had not involved hundreds of guests, but Harry had almost forgotten how well teenagers managed to stay up until unholy hours of the evening. Morning, really, at that point. It was also a fair possibility that someone (and who was really anyone's guess at this point, what with the twins, and Sirius, and Barty, and Remus, and half a dozen others from Ivy's group of friends), had added something or other to the food or the drinks or the air (again, anyone's guess at this point), to make them stay awake longer. That had to be it.

"Good morning, Harry. It's a beautiful morning."

Harry groaned and shoved his face back into his pillow as his wife (and no, he didn't look for any excuse to call her that) laughed at his pain. "How can you possibly be voluntarily awake at such a horrific hour of the morning?"

"It's nine in the morning."

Harry charged on. It was horrific when you didn't go to bed until five. "How are you so happy right now? It's too early for happiness."

"Happiness is a choice," Luna said.

"It's too early for choices."

"Would you like to go back to sleep?"

"Merlin, yes."

Luna laughed before darkening the room and heading out. Harry fell back into a blissful sleep, his thoughts lingering on his absolutely perfect wife.

---

"This is going to get me banned, isn't it," Sirius said, looking at the disaster that was the kitchen and a very unhappy Kreacher, who was one breath away from reminding Sirius exactly what he thought of his favorite peoples' unfortunate relation.

"It's not that bad..." Ivy said.

"You are a terrible liar, Ivy."

“Well it could be worse.”

“How could this be worse?”

“It could be on fire?”

“Excuse you, I am not Remus.”

Ivy giggled. “Well, no one else is down yet, so maybe we can get this cleaned up before anyone notices?”

“Excellent plan. Kreacher...” Sirius started, but said elf leveled him a glare that made whatever request he was about to make die an instantaneous death.

“Kreacher is not be helping Master Fleabag hide this. Kreacher not be helping Master Fleabag keep kitchen privileges.” With that Kreacher left with an unnecessarily loud pop.

“Yeah, that’s fair,” Sirius said, before clapping his hands. “Alright, so, where do we start?”

Ivy pointed to the unidentifiable sludge on the ceiling.

Sirius sighed. “I was afraid you were going to say that.”

A few minutes later and they had made a bit of progress. The kitchen was still a mess, but it no longer resembled the culinary war zone that it had prior. Magic and an ability to turn chores into a game had something to do with that.

Then Luna walked in and the song Sirius was belting out much to Ivy’s amusement came to a sudden halt, which was also very much to Ivy’s amusement.

“Er, hi Luna. Beautiful morning, isn’t it. Don’t mind us.”

“Good morning. And it is.”

“You want to play whack-a-sludge with us?” Ivy asked.

Sirius cringed. Ivy wasn’t supposed to *tell*. But Luna just agreed, and proved to be a rather good hit with the spatula.

A few minutes later Barty joined in.

Remus abstained, citing his ongoing kitchen ban.

Neville, who Sirius hadn’t realized had actually stayed the night, took to watching. Sirius was certain he saw the boy throw a few minor jinxes their way a time or two, but he had no proof and the kid looked far too innocent. No way he would be able to convince anyone else.

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Harry took one step into the kitchen, and turned around. Winky would make sure the house was left standing. Probably.

---

Whack-a-sludge had, at some point in the last forty minutes, turned into spell target practice, which was educational, and therefore entirely justifiable, in Sirius's opinion.

---

Harry returned home eventually, a large sack of French pastries in hand. He was under no illusions that the disaster in the kitchen would have somehow rectified itself so far as to turn into a respectable breakfast. Besides, it was an excuse to go to his favorite bakery, which thankfully existed in this universe as well. It was the only acceptable one in London according to Fleur and she had gotten him hooked, and now that his loving family was destroying his kitchen he had an excellent excuse to pay the place a visit.

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*August 2, 1993*

"Guess who is the new defense professor," Sirius called out as he sauntered into the dining room.

"Aetius Deverill," Sabrina guessed.

"What? No."

"Elric Burke," Blaise called out enthusiastically.

"No, it's..."

"Oh wait, I know. Diana Arkwright," Blaise said, entirely confident in his choice apparently.

"Who?"

"Oh she would be wonderful," Sabrina gushed.

"It's me," Sirius practically shouted. "I'm the new defense professor."

"Good for you, darling," Sabrina said, as if she hadn't just supported the idea of someone else being well suited for the position.

"You know, you're really supposed to get married *before* you go dying on us," Blaise quipped.

Sirius's eye twitched. He loved Sabrina and Blaise. He loved Sabrina and Blaise. He really loved Sabrina. And Blaise.

"It's just a single year contract, dear. Sirius will be alive and well next year for our wedding."

Sirius's brain came to a halt. "Huh?"

Simplicity over elegance.

"Well, you were going to propose before you left, right?"

“Yes, but how did you...”

Sabrina’s smirk stopped him mid sentence. Sirius sighed. “And I just confirmed it, didn’t I.”

“I’m sure the proposal will be lovely.”

“Damn straight.”

Sirius bent down to give Sabrina a kiss. Unfortunately they were not alone at the moment, as they were clearly reminded a few seconds in by Blaise loudly asking about the defense position. And about something or other that Sirius just nodded along to. He was a little distracted at the moment, but whatever it was he was sure it was fine.

---

“Sirius is going to be the best. No offense, professor,” Blaise said, turning guiltily towards Remus, who just waved him off.

“Maybe,” Ivy replied, not ready to assume that anyone could make a better defense professor than Remus.

“No no no, you don’t get it. He said he would help us get more Hogsmeade days.”

Remus snorted. “And how exactly did you get him to agree to that?”

“I asked him while he was kissing mum.”

Ivy laughed. “Do you think he’ll actually remember then?”

Blaise shrugged. “Don’t care. Either way I’m holding him to it.”

Remus shook his head, laughing silently. Sirius had no idea what he was in for.

“Oh, and did I mention that he and mum are getting married?”

Silent laughter turned into distinctly not silent coughing.

---

Harry watched Ivy and Blaise fondly as they discussed loudly and in great detail what their soon-to-be “official” sibling status would entail. Watching them also meant he wasn’t thinking about how Sirius was telling Sabrina *everything* right now. Because that would stress him out and who needs stress in their life. So nope, he was instead watching the kids argue over the finer points of their siblinghood. Much better use of his time.

Then the floo chimed, as it did with increasing frequency nowadays, and through it came the two people he had just been not thinking about. Before he could process any sort of reaction to the arrival of his friends, Sabrina was across the room with her arms thrown around him in a great big hug.

It took Harry a few seconds too long to reciprocate, but Sabrina didn’t seem to be bothered by it.

“Oh, you poor man,” she said softly, hugging him a little closer.

“You’re not mad?” he whispered back.

“Of course not,” she said strongly. “How could I possibly be.”

Harry relaxed a little. No matter how many times he told someone (or in this case, had Sirius tell someone) about his little dimension hopping experience, he was always nervous for the reaction. Perhaps even more so with each person, because each new person meant one more person that knew, and that could possibly use that knowledge to hurt Ivy or Luna or any of the other people he cared about. But this was two for two down this week, and only a few more to go in the weeks to come, so Harry felt he could relax for the moment, especially since Sabrina wasn’t upset that they hadn’t told her before now.

---

Across the room Luna leaned over to Sirius. “You know, Harry always wanted a big family,” she said.

Sirius just smiled at her and pulled her in for a side hug. Out of all of them, only Luna came from what could truly be considered a happy, loving family environment, but somehow they had managed to create one of their own.

---

“Sirius, can I talk to you for a minute?”

“Yes of course. What is it, Harry?”

“How’s your occlumency?”

“Not bad. Getting better since I got out. Why?”

“I’d like you to teach Ivy.”

“Yeah, alright. You planning on telling her or something?”

Harry grimaced but nodded. “I told her about the prophecy already, but she’s getting older. At some point I’m going to have to tell her everything, it’s just...”

“Don’t want a certain headmaster digging around?”

“Exactly. And I’d really prefer that he not find out she already knows about the prophecy even, if we can help it.”

“And by extension the fact that you know about it.”

“Pretty much.”

“That’s fair. Are you still planning on starting her on the patronus?”

“Yeah.”

“You mind adding a few others to the lesson?”

Harry tilted his head a bit as he considered the question. “Who did you have in mind?”

“Blaise, Draco, and Neville to start.”

Harry nodded though he was frowning slightly. “Why those three?”

Sirius shrugged. “Family,” he said simply.

Harry nodded again. “I can’t guarantee that anyone will actually get it, but it wouldn’t hurt to at least start.”

“Which means they’ll probably all have it down by the time school starts,” Sirius said, grinning.

Harry just rolled his eyes.

Sirius chuckled. “Well, if that’s it, I’m off,” he said, clapping his hands together. Full moon tonight and all that.”

“Yeah that’s it. Go on, go turn into a puppy and howl at the moon.”

Sirius stuck out his tongue in a way that did nothing to convince Harry that he was not, in fact, a puppy, and headed out to find Remus. Harry watched Sirius leave and then went off to find Luna. He had had a sudden stroke of inspiration that he needed to share with her.

Unfortunately Barty was there as well, but inspiration waits for no man to take a hint and leave, so Harry resigned himself to having this conversation with his accidentally acquired minion.

“I think we should become animagi,” he said, getting straight to the point.

“We as in you and Luna or we as in me as well?” Barty asked with a frown.

“Luna and I, although you could do it as well if you wanted to...”

Barty shook his head. “How about I watch, and if it doesn’t go horribly wrong I’ll consider it, hmm?”

“Well I think it sounds fun. I’ve always wanted to be able to fly without a broom,” Luna said.

“You have?” Harry was honestly surprised. Mostly at her apparent wish to fly, not so much at the assumption that she would have wings.

“There are all sorts of things you can see from the air, you know.”

“And you can’t see them from a broom?” Barty asked, not wholly sarcastically.

“Well, it’s harder to pay attention when you have to focus on where you’re going,” Luna said, as if having wings meant you didn’t have to worry about such mundane things as watching where you were going. Of course, Harry couldn’t say for sure that it didn’t mean that, although memories of scooping dead birds that had crashed into the Dursley’s windows put a damper on that theory. Though again, Luna was smarter than those birds, so maybe it still held. But that was not the point he was trying to make at the moment. There would be plenty of time to figure that all out later when Luna ended up becoming some kind of bird. Or dragon. Who knew at this point, really.

“...thestrals over.”

“You know, I could do without riding thestrals again,” Harry said, his mind coming back to the conversation taking place.

“You said that about dragons too, you know.”

“Technically I didn’t actually ride that first one,” Harry pointed out, because despite what many of his friends had assumed about him at some point or another, he did actually possess *some* self-preservation skills.

“And now we can all fly on brooms like normal, happy wizards, and witches,” Barty said, nodding towards Luna, “and possibly become birds that fly around in the air, and not ride dangerous magical creatures that can kill us, hmm? Yes, let’s do that. Great plan, Barty. Ten points to Hufflepuff.”

“You were a Slytherin,” Harry pointed out helpfully.

Barty shrugged. “Ivy got me hooked. Now, who is ready to stick some leaves in their mouth for the next month?”

“What? No, I can’t start tonight,” Harry protested.

“Why not? It’s the full moon,” Barty said, somewhat confused.

“Meeting Thursday,” Luna said. Barty nodded. The little get together Thursday wasn’t what Harry had meant when he said he couldn’t start tonight, but it was still valid. It’d probably take a few days to get used to having a leaf stuck in your mouth after all, and it’d be nice to not have to talk to a lot of people during that time.

---

*August 4, 1993*

Harry looked at the four eager faces with a small amount of trepidation. He wasn’t entirely convinced that they understood that mastering the patronus charm would take a *lot* of time and practice.

“So that’s all there is to it then?” Draco asked.

Yeah, not convinced at all.

“Yes, but you have to have a *very* happy memory to work with, and you have to be concentrating on it very hard.” Mostly. Sometimes. It was a good place to start at least.

“Great. So will you show us then?” asked Blaise.

Harry had been sad to see Prongs go, of course, but the panther that had emerged ever since arriving in this world was decent, especially when it got those wings. Much more intimidating than a stag, to be honest. Of course, Harry was trying to teach the kids, not scare them, so he made sure to underpowered the spell and presented them with an entirely wingless panther. Ivy, despite having seen the panther (with and without wings) many times, still cooed over how adorable it was. Honestly, it wasn’t a dragon she was cooing at so he was fine. Neville and Draco each looked appropriately awed, and Harry puffed up slightly in spite of himself. At least someone thought he was cool, *Padfoot*.

Sirius had been awed the first time he saw Harry’s patronus, but since then he had decided that it was somehow traitorous of Harry to have a *feline* patronus. Harry personally didn’t see how Sirius had a leg to stand on, given that *his* patronus was a freaking frog, and he didn’t buy into Sirius’s whole argument that it was a symbol of “ancient wisdom” and all that rot. He did find it ironic that Sirius, who came from a family long associated with fire, had a patronus of an animal closely associated with water. It was fitting, somehow.

But Neville and Draco seemed to think it was cool, so there.

Blaise, however, was staring at Harry with a very peculiar look on his face. They made eye contact and stared each other down for what had to be at least a minute, before Blaise finally spoke.

“Um, so, where’s your wand?”

Ivy looked smug for some reason, Neville and Draco both had jaws yielding to gravity, and Blaise was somehow maintaining a look that said both “innocent child” and “I know where you live.”

“I, er...” Harry could not immediately find his wand. Which meant that he had cast the patronus without one. Completely on accident, to be sure, but still. There were *people* here. Small people, but all the same...

“Told you,” Ivy said, holding out her hand.

Blaise lost a little bit of the innocent look and begrudgingly pulled something that looked suspiciously like a chocolate frog out of his pocket before handing it to Ivy.

---

“They bet on me,” Harry said indignantly.

“And this surprises you how?” Remus asked.

“Oh come on, don’t tell me they do this often?”

Remus gave Harry an unimpressed look.



“Please don’t tell me they do this often.”

“Bet on you? Probably not. Place bets on everyone else around them? Of course they do. They’re teenagers. At Hogwarts. It’s probably somewhere in the charter for all we know. Don’t tell me you never made wagers about people when you went.”

“But that’s different. We made wagers about who would date who, but that was it, mostly. Besides that it was really only ever about the professors...”

Remus waited for the realization to sink in.

“I’m the adult in this situation, aren’t I,” Harry said with a bit of terror in his voice.

“Welcome to the party. Did you know that for the last two months of the year there was a wager going on in Ravenclaw about whether Snape and I were dating?”

The pure, unadulterated look of horror on Harry’s face at that statement was definitely worth being saved for further viewing. Barty would probably get a kick out of it as well. Or Remus could save it for potential blackmail usage in the future. It’s not like he had ever claimed to be a saint.

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*August 5, 1993*

For what had to be at least the eleventh time in the past four days, Severus wondered how exactly he had gotten roped into this. It started somewhere along the lines of the sorting hat calling out “Slytherin” while on top of Ivy Potter’s head and ended with Lucius, Narcissa, and Lupin all inviting him to this little “get together.” The Dark Lord had meetings of his inner circle, Dumbledore had his staff meetings now that he no longer had the Order of the Phoenix, and Peverell-Slytherin apparently had afternoon tea. Well, to each their own, he supposed.

He had some veritaserum antidote on hand just in case his occlumency shields proved insufficient.

Walking up to Peverell-Slytherin’s home, Severus contemplated turning around and simply walking away. What was he doing here, really? He had made a mistake with the Dark Lord once, tried to correct that mistake by going to Dumbledore, which had proved to be a mistake in the end as well, and now here he was, doing the same thing again. Merlin, it was like he never learned.

And neither did anyone else, it seemed. That or they all knew something he didn’t, which was a possibility he did not like one bit. But how else could you explain such a varied, yet undoubtedly powerful, group of people? The assembled group contained everyone from former death eaters Lucius Malfoy and Alden Burke, to such Light supporters (and until now, presumed Dumbledore supporters) as Augusta Longbottom and Xenophilius Lovegood. Those were far from the only faces he recognized, however. The Greengrasses, the Harringtons, the Parkinsons, Westbrook, the Bromfords, the two eldest Deverill boys, Thorburn, Zabini, and, of course, Lupin and Black.

There were others too, but they were not familiar to Severus. That would need to be corrected.

Oh, and he had most definitely spoken too soon. Of all the... What was *Minerva* doing here? And *Filius*? And Merlin, was that *Andromeda Black*? And both of her spawn. Lovely. And since when did Narcissa talk to her sister? That was something she had definitely failed to mention to him before now.

Severus was going to have to reassess his entire worldview after this. Again. He really hated doing that.

---

“Lucius, why are there so many people in my house?” Harry kept his tone polite, but he was about two seconds away from bursting and Lucius did not fail to catch on to that little fact.

“Well I believe Augusta and Roderick both took your words rather literally when you said to, and I quote, ‘invite everyone.’”

Harry suppressed his groan. Shoved it way down deep where it could fester until this whole debacle was over and done with.

---

“Minerva, what are you doing here?” Severus whispered harshly.

“I was invited,” she replied, looking not at all impressed by the question.

“Yes I gathered that, but by *whom*?”

“By Augusta.”

Well wasn’t that a surprise. Albus was going to be terribly disappointed. How wonderful.

“It seems Lord Peverell-Slytherin is making quite the impact here, isn’t he.”

“You have no idea,” Severus muttered under his breath. Well now he had to stay, just to satisfy his curiosity over whether or not Peverell-Slytherin would be able to maintain the current peace until the end of the meeting or not. Maybe he would, or maybe it would end in spell-fire and fiendfyre and disaster, in which case Severus would go through with his carefully constructed plan to leave England forever.

---

“You’re looking... not entirely insane.”

“Good to see you too, Sev,” Barty said with a wink. Severus scowled back at him, making Barty grin. He hadn’t lost his touch one bit; Severus was as easy to rile up as ever.

“Perhaps I spoke too quickly.”

“Nope. I’m here and perfectly sane.”

“Have you thought to ask for a second opinion?”

Barty went to deliver a no doubt scathing and absolutely perfect retort, but the clearing of a throat made him pause, and a glance at the owner of said throat made him give up his plans entirely. At least Severus looked every bit as cowed as Barty felt, he thought, or maybe cackled, to himself.

Once Lady Longbottom was sufficiently far enough away, Barty watched Severus closely for any sign of a reaction. The potion master’s tells were few and difficult to spot unless you knew what to look for, but Barty knew *exactly* what to look for.

Ah, and there it was. An almost imperceptible shudder. Most likely it would have gone unnoticed by nearly anyone else, but Barty *knew*, and he smirked at Severus accordingly.

“I lied to the Dark Lord’s face,” Severus whispered. Barty wasn’t entirely sure if he had meant to speak at all. Probably not, if the sudden glare was anything to go by. “Not a single...”

Barty waved him off. “Not a word, I know. Pain of death and all that.”

“It would be untraceable.”

“Of course.”

“No one would ever know.”

“I would expect nothing less.”

---

Harry was busy repeating “don’t glare at your guests, don’t glare at your guests,” over and over, and was thus too preoccupied to notice the way everyone was making their way into the temporarily enlarged parlor and taking their seats in such a way that he was left standing in front of them all. When he did realize, it was awkward, and he looked around for someone to turn the attention on instead of himself. What he got was Sirius and Luna both giving him a thumbs up, which was not particularly helpful, yet was still encouraging. Correction. Luna’s was encouraging. Sirius got a small, wandless stinging hex for his part.

Harry cleared his throat before turning and facing his audience face on.

“Well then, shall we begin?”

---

“You know, he doesn’t actually realize it yet.”

“What?”

Barty chuckled. “Harry. He doesn’t realize what he’s done. Not this part of it at least.”

Severus resisted the urge to smack Barty and instead settled for pinching the bridge of his nose. “Dare I ask...” he muttered. “What part of this,” he said, gesturing vaguely around

them, “has he not realized precisely?”

“Oh, mostly the fact that he’s taken over Britain. The magical portion, at least, although if he tried he could probably do the muggle part too. I’m pretty sure that was in the book somewhere.”

“What book?”

Barty winced at that. Interesting. Something he wasn’t supposed to reveal, perhaps? Although Barty wasn’t the type of person to make mistakes like that, which meant that he most likely wanted Severus to know, but wanted either Severus or Peverell-Slytherin, or perhaps both, to *think* it was an accident, perhaps because he feared their reactions, or wanted to claim innocence, or maybe he wanted to pique Severus’s curiosity (done and done) so that he would investigate this, though for what reason he could not yet say, and no he was not overthinking this too much.

It was a perfectly reasonable train of thought.

It was also easier to pay attention to than the part where Barty had said that not only had “call-me-Harry” Peverell-Slytherin taken over wizarding Britain, but he had done so on *accident*. Because *what*? Even Ivy Potter, who was looking well on her way to a world takeover of her own, had to have had *some* idea of what she was doing. Severus had heard mention of her “theoretical plans,” even if she didn’t seem to realize how much she had already done in her first two years at Hogwarts and... Oh Merlin, it came from somewhere. Did that mean they were actually related?

Too many mysteries for one day. He should have stayed home.

---

Simon Parkinson was going on about something to do with Fudge and some change he had made to some department or other, and honestly Harry hadn’t been listening to half of it, though admittedly he probably should have, but it seemed that *everyone* had something to add. It was like they were all doing a report for the class and...

Oh, Harry suppressed that thought with impressive speed.

“Sorry to interrupt, but what’s this have to do with the dementors?”

Parkinson seemed flustered, and Harry immediately felt bad. It wasn’t Simon’s fault that Harry hadn’t been paying close enough attention.

“Sorry,” Harry said quickly. “I think I’m just not as quick on the uptake, apparently.”

Harry was met with several blank stares. Right. Muggle idioms. Oops.

“Er, I mean that I’m just not following as well, sorry. Could we um,” Harry cleared his throat awkwardly, internally willing this moment to be over, “could we maybe just back up a little?”

Simon regained his composure and a couple curious stares that were still lingering on Harry finally moved.

“Of course. I apologize.”

Harry waved him off. “My fault. Please, continue.”

---

Amar Patil leaned over to his older friend. “He is not what I was expecting.”

“No?”

Amar shook his head. “I would have thought he would be more...” He trailed off, gesturing vaguely to convey his meaning.

“Forceful?”

Amar let out an amused huff. “Something of that sort, I suppose.”

“Well, he is Canadian,” came Tristram Brown’s reply.

“Ah, well I suppose that explains it.”

“Indeed,” Tristram said with a wry smile, which Amar matched before turning serious again.

“And you support him?”

The Brown patriarch’s answer was not immediate, but when it came it was spoken with conviction. “Yes, I do.”

Amar nodded, knowing Tristram would not given such a declaration of support without good cause.

“Besides,” his friend continued, mirth returning once more, “you have to admit he’s a bit better than the last few.”

Amar couldn’t help but chuckle at that. Peverell-Slytherin was certainly that.

---

Severus felt his eye about to twitch and he let it. “Please tell me you were joking earlier,” he asked Barty softly.

“Nope,” Barty said with a smug grin.

Severus was going to have to have a very serious talk with Lucius after this. Surely at least he and Narcissa were aware of what was going on, right? He needed someone less irritating than Barry Crouch whatever-his-name-was-now to discuss this with.

---

Harry had successfully managed to suppress and ignore any and all hints about what this meeting was turning out to be, or perhaps what some people had actually intended it to be, but he could do so no longer. Not when several of his guest’s farewells had been so... deferential. Harry poked his head around the corner to see who was still left, and, deciding

that the people left were acceptable enough for the occasion, stalked back into the parlor, letting the glare he had been keeping at bay all afternoon finally shine through like a small, angry ray of sunshine. Okay, bad analogy. He was a little preoccupied at the moment.

“Anyone care to explain to me what in Merlin’s name just happened?”

Harry spoke softly but his tone left no room for question. Someone was going to explain this, preferably now, because based on the mixed guilty, gleeful, and knowing looks, at least some of these people knew something.

Well, might as well go for the easiest target first.

“Sirius,” Harry said sweetly. “Have anything you want to share?”

Sirius’s slightly guilty expression worsened. *Gotcha*, Harry thought.

“Er, congratulations?”

And here came the eye twitch. “And what would these congratulations be for, Padfoot?”

“For, um, for getting some more followers?”

Was it possible for your eye to spasm all the way out of your eye socket? Well, Harry had never been one to lead a normal existence... “And what makes you think I have ‘followers?’” Harry asked, providing the air quotes to show exactly what he thought of that term.

Except now Sirius, Remus, and Lucius all looked confused. Great. When this was done he would be asking Luna and Ivy about moving to Brazil. Again. Fifty third time’s the charm and all that.

“Because you took over magical Britain?” Sirius said, as if it were obvious.

Harry had purposefully been ignoring all hints that lay even moderately in that direction so no, that was not obvious. “I did what now?”

“You took over? I mean, you’re not really a dark lord, and you’re not exactly a light lord, so maybe a nice shade of grey? Or maybe green, with the whole Slytherin thing going on, but you know what? It doesn’t matter. You could have any color you wanted, I suppose. I...”

Harry held up a hand. “So you mean to tell me...” Harry paused for effect even as Sirius began nodding along, “that we...”

“You.”

“Sorry?”

Remus cleared his throat. “Uh, just you, Harry.”

If this kept up they might just beat Ivy’s record for most eye twitches that he knew she kept somewhere.

“Alright, that *I* took over Britain.”

Nods all around.

“Without realizing it.”

More nods.

“And no one thought to tell me?”

“I thought you *knew*,” came Sirius’s protest.

One twitch closer to that record. He wondered if anyone had been keeping score.

“Well you are doing a lovely job of it,” said Luna. At least someone was on his side.

“You’ll be fine, dear,” said Augusta. He needed all the encouragement he could get.

“I can’t believe this,” muttered Severus. Oh this could potentially be awkward.

Barty grinned, and Harry was unable to glare him down.

---

“So are you going to tell them?”

Harry groaned and threw himself facedown on the bed. “Do you want to do it for me?”

“If you’d like.”

The fact that Luna was even willing made Harry look up at her with a smile. “I love you and you are the best.”

“Yes.”

“So tomorrow?”

“It’s a date.”

Not his ideal date per se, but Luna made everything better, so spilling his life story to the Malfoys and Snape would be better with her too. And Sirius, Remus, and Barty because frankly they owed him.

## Chapter 40

*August 6, 1993*

Severus was not the best person in the world. He knew this, and did not find that it bothered him all that often. But what had he done to deserve this? Not only was he having to deal with Black two days in a row, but he was going to have to deal with him every day for the *entire school year*. He must have offended some minor deity in a past life. He could not think of any other reasonable explanation at this point.

---

Lucius was not panicking. Not at all.

So maybe his heart was beating a little fast, if the slightly pitying look Lupin was giving him was any indication, but really, it was fine. Lord Peverell-Slytherin was just the Master of Death from another universe. Not that big of a deal, really. Oh, and he was also an older male version of Ivy Potter, which threw that entire relationship into even more ambiguous waters than it had already been, and he was using his knowledge of his own world to prevent things from happening in this world, and no, what possible reason was there for him to be panicking right now. None. Absolutely none.

---

Narcissa had always liked Henry, but she could honestly say that she had not been expecting this. If he had announced himself as the next dark lord, sure. If he had said he was taking over the world, fine. He was a nice young man and he would do the job splendidly. He was Canadian after... Except no, he wasn't Canadian. He was just from another universe entirely. It was a lot of information to take in at once, but the more he spoke the more thankful Narcissa was that he had landed here at all. Because by doing so, it seemed he had prevented a war. A war that in his world had been placed on the shoulders of their children to a great extent, and that, more than anything, filled Narcissa with enough rage that should Albus Dumbledore even *think* about *suggesting* that any of their children even *train* for a war there would be no place in heaven or in hell that he could hide. Frankly, the Dark Lord should be thankful that Henry dealt with him already. Fiendfyre was the least of the curses Narcissa would be willing to unleash on anyone who so much as dared injure her children. She was a Black by birth, and had been a favorite of both Grandfather Pollux and Uncle Arcturus. She knew the good curses.

Though, admittedly, a dark lord might be a bit much for her to take on, a point that was corroborated by Henry's retelling of the events of his world. So instead of marching into Hogwarts and cursing the manipulative idiot, or marching into Hades to curse the other one, she settled for sipping her tea and pointedly thanking Henry Peverell-Slytherin, formerly known as Harry Potter (she approved the name change), for his great contribution to the societies of two universes. He would be getting the very best Christmas presents for the next century.

---



Barty watched his friends' reactions with hidden glee. He would refrain from openly his expressing his glee until later, since he didn't want to interrupt Harry's story, but he reveled in the fact that he could see Narcissa's calculating rage simmering just beneath the surface, Lucius's well-hidden panic, and Severus's absolute dread that grew with nearly every passing sentence. Barty knew very well what the relationship between Harry and the Severus Snape of his world had been like, except this Severus did not know Harry like Barty did, and was thus most assuredly waiting for something dreadful to happen to him. Knowing that Severus didn't actually need to fear for his life right now, Barty felt no guilt in enjoying the moment.

---

He was going to die. That's it. This was how he was going to go. He had lived through one dark lord, managed to make it through by the skin of his teeth by pledging his loyalty to Dumbledore (in a roundabout way that he was incredibly thankful for now), and now he was sitting in front of the most powerful man in Britain, who just so happened to be James Potter's son from another universe. Lily's too, he supposed, but at the moment the fact that Lord Peverell-Slytherin was in fact James Potter's spawn seemed more relevant at the moment. And apparently *his* doppelgänger had tormented this "Harry Potter" throughout his school-aged years. Lord Peverell was obviously skimming over many of the details, and whenever Severus's name came up he glanced up nervously and skimmed even more, but Severus could read people well enough even without legilimency to read between the lines of his statements. And it did not bode well for him at all. At least Peverell (*don't think about him being a Potter, don't think about him being a Potter*), didn't appear to be as curse happy as the Dark Lord or as patronizing as Dumbledore. Severus figured he could deal with that for however long he had left in this world.

And since he was going to die anyway...

"So what is this about a book?"

Barty's grin did not promise anything good. At least Lady Peverell, the doppelgänger of the little first year his Slytherins had adopted (which honestly was not nearly as much a surprise as literally anything else revealed so far today), didn't seem at all bothered by the question or by the implied foreknowledge. The others did not share her serene look.

---

"You meant to tell me that we have been passing laws based on the suggestions of a *twelve-year-old girl*?"

Severus sighed at Lucius's tone. He knew it was the overall stress of the day's revelations getting to his friend, and that he was latching on the easiest thing to confront at the moment, but sometimes Lucius voiced his questions and opinions a little too spontaneously for Severus's taste, and no, he wasn't being hypocritical at all. Severus had most certainly been cursed for his sins from a previous life, which explained his recent and thankfully not oft-repeated tendency to act far too Gryffindorish, but what excuse did Lucius have? None, is what.

"She's thirteen, actually," came Barty's oh so helpful remark.

“Hermione Granger in *this world* is thirteen, the Hermione Granger that put together the book is from the *other* universe and is, or was, twenty-four at the time, or thereabouts,” Lupin said.

“Yeah, the time difference is still a little unclear,” Black muttered.

Peverell pinched between his eyes. At least Severus wasn’t the only one to get annoyed with this lot. Somehow the entire situation felt a little better now. “That doesn’t change how old she was at that moment, just how much time has passed there since then.”

“Sorry, Mr. ‘Science,’” Black said sarcastically, waving his hands.

Peverell glared, and Black backed down. Severus really, *really* needed to get on Peverell’s good side, preferably before he faced the daily torture that would be Black’s presence at Hogwarts. Spawn of James Potter or not, that man was *impressive*. Obviously Lily’s genes had done something after all.

---

Harry sighed. Today’s rendition of his life story had gone rather as expected, meaning that no one was particularly happy at the moment, but no one had died. Lucius was handling it the worst, if you went by the outward expressions, but Harry was familiar enough with Narcissa to know that she was rather shaken by the revelations as well. He was also fairly certain that Dumbledore would meet a quick but painful demise should he ever find himself facing down Lady Malfoy.

And then there was Snape. Harry had so many mixed feeling about the man. He was doing a fairly good job of reminding himself that this was not the same wizard that had been horrible to him for years and then died while simultaneously revealing that he had been looking out for Harry in such a convoluted way. And this Snape had been much better to Ivy than his Snape (no, that came out exceptionally wrong) had been to him. Perhaps it was her being sorted into his house, and perhaps it was also her being a girl and not resembling James quite as much as Harry had at that age...

Regardless, Harry’s feelings were mixed, and though he trusted the man to a rather great extent, he still wasn’t sure he *liked* him. But he didn’t actively *dislike* him, and really it was just all confusing and he’d rather not think about it anymore, thank you very much.

But Snape’s reaction was making that wish difficult. Because he had reacted. Merlin, had he reacted. Not in a way that would be immediately obvious to most people, mind you, but to someone who understood Snape’s background... Snape was equally awed, horrified, annoyed, impressed, exasperated, furious, terrified... Well, you get the idea.

Harry had never seen Severus Snape express so many emotions at once, and he frankly had no idea what to do with that information. He would have gladly ignored it entirely, except the man he was unsuccessfully trying not to think about chose that particular moment to come up to him and start talking.

---

“Give him time. He hates being caught so unawares.”

Peverell glanced his way and nodded. "Draco was always the same way."

"Well, their relation has never come into question," Severus said, glad to see the small little upturn of the other wizard's mouth.

"What can I do for you, Professor?" Peverell asked after a moment. The man might be Lord Slytherin but Severus could see where the Gryffindor side shone through.

"What do you wish for me to do?" Severus could be direct as well, and he would only maybe regret it later. His question did seem to catch Peverell a little off guard though, which, to be honest, surprised Severus himself.

"Why would you think I want you to do anything?" Peverell asked with seeming sincerity.

Severus could think of a good half dozen examples off the top of his head, but he took a risk and leveled a look at the wizard instead. His calculations paid off when not only did Peverell understand exactly what Severus was getting at, but laughed as well.

"Yes, I see what you mean. Believe me, it wasn't originally my intention—"

*Or preference*, Severus thought.

"—but I couldn't always take care of things inside Hogwarts, and there was no one else I felt comfortable sharing some of those details with."

"And going forward?"

Peverell held eye contact for a long moment, though Severus did not recognize any mental probe. Still, the man seemed to have found some sort of answer, because he finally turned away again, sighing as he did so.

"All I ever wanted was to keep people safe. I had barely landed in this world when I found Ivy, and somehow trying to keep her safe and make her happy kept me from focusing on all the things I lost. There were so many people in this world... People still *alive*. Half the people here were dead in my world, along with so many others. But here I could still save them. Protect them. And for a little bit I thought that by killing Voldemort, destroying the horcruxes, that I could do that. But it wasn't enough. I don't know if it will ever be enough." Peverell's voice was barely above a whisper at that point, but his words were piercing all the same.

"Perhaps it is simply fate," he continued, breaking Severus out of whatever reflective moment he was about to have.

"Fate?"

Peverell chuckled, but it was dry and not without a hint of anger. "Fate," he said again. "Everything that keeps happening here. How else would you explain it, all the parallels between worlds. Is it truly possible to change fate? Or do we just spend our lives bringing it about one way or another."

“Perhaps fate cannot be truly changed,” Severus said carefully, continuing a bit more quickly when he saw the flash in Peverell’s eye. “But perhaps it can be altered just enough.”

“What do you mean?” There was bitter anger buried underneath there, but Severus felt it was not truly directed at him.

“I mean, that perhaps some events will always bear resemblance to what you have known, but perhaps they can be adjusted to your advantage.”

“I am not the Master of Fate,” Peverell said wryly.

“No, but you are the Master of Death,” Severus retorted.

“I don’t even know what that means, really,” Peverell said with another sigh.

“Perhaps it means that if anyone has a chance of going against fate, it would be you.”

Peverell’s responding grin simply confirmed that idea in Severus’s mind.

“And where would you suggest we begin?”

Severus tried not to show his surprise at being asked for his opinion (or inclusion even) on such a matter, but felt he was most likely failing. What was it about this wizard that made it so difficult to control his expressions? Of course it would be Lily’s child that would get him acting like a bloody Gryffindor though. It all made sense, really.

---

“We’re thirteen, for Merlin’s sake. Surely we can be left unsupervised for an afternoon,” Draco complained to the nearest set of ears, which happened to belong to Neville Longbottom.

Said set of ears fixed him a hard stare instead of nodding along and agreeing politely like he was supposed to do. Then a finger was pointed in the direction of Ivy and Blaise, who were currently attempting to build a set of catapults out of enlarged spoons and candy floss.

“Hey, it’s not like anything is actually going to happen.”

The finger was now pointed at the remaining evidence of their previous activity, which included a few scorch marks on the ceiling.

“It’ll come off,” Draco said, defending his brilliant idea.

Now Neville was pointing at the one thing Draco didn’t have a great argument for.

---

“What are those?”

“Wolves.”

“Yes, I can see that. But what are they doing here?”

“Grandfather sent them.”

Harry blinked a few times. “I’m sorry, I’m lost. *Who* sent them?” Because last he checked, Ivy did not have anyone that she called “grandfather.”

“Grandfather Zabini,” she replied matter of factly.

And suddenly he didn’t feel responsible for this situation anymore. It was a very fine feeling indeed.

“SIRIUS,” he called out instead. Nope, not his problem.

---

“This is Dante, and this is Otso.”

“Sorry, did you say *Otso*?”

“Yes.”

“You named your wolf *bear*?”

“Mhmm. Really fits him, don’t you think? He has such a fierce feeling to him.”

“That’s because he’s a...” Sirius gave up. At least Blaise had named his something respectable.

---

“And I don’t think Ivy should be allowed to name the kids.”

Draco literally had no idea why Sirius was telling him this. What was Draco going to do about it? Tell Ivy’s future husband to ensure their children had proper names? Of course not. He would be devoting his energy to ensuring his rightful place as their godfather, obviously.

---

“Sirius,” Harry began with false sweetness.

“Hey, Harry. What’s going on?” Sirius was not fooled by the false pleasantness.

“Why do I have two wolves in my backyard?”

Sirius knew this was coming, but he only had to hold his ground for the next twenty-six days and then he would be fine. “Oh, that’s just Dante and Otso,” he said, trying to make it seem like he was merely stating the obvious.

“Yes, but why are they in my backyard?”

“Well, it’s a funny story, really,” Sirius began.

“I’m sure it is,” Harry said, still not giving up on the sickeningly sweet tone that promised eternal pain.

“Well Cesare, you remember me telling you about him, right? Well he decided that Blaise needed a gift, to celebrate the moving forward of Sabrina’s and my relationship, and since Ivy is basically going to be his sister now, she gets one too, and I’m fairly certain he is mocking me somehow, but I’m choosing not to dwell on that part of it, and instead focus on what a thoughtful family we’ll be marrying into.”

“We?”

Sirius frowned. “That didn’t come out right. Well the point still stands. We all have a new grandfather, and this is just a little welcome into the family.”

“Right. Though you still have not managed to answer the question of why there are two wolves *in my backyard*.”

“Well I’ll be at Hogwarts, and the kids will be at Hogwarts, and they both have pets there already, and Sabrina can’t be made to watch them all the time, and she’ll be in Hogsmeade with me much of the time anyway, so...”

“Please stop,” Harry said, holding up a hand.

Sirius promptly stopped.

“Fine. Somehow I feel that fighting this is a moot point anyway, so I think I’ll just cut my losses now—”

Sirius sighed in relief.

“—*If* you tell me why you think this is Zabini mocking you somehow.”

Relief gone. “Must I?” Sirius muttered.

“Consider this my compensation for housing two wolves for the next year.”

“*Fine... Hecallsmeapuppy.*”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t quite catch that.”

Sirius breathed in deeply. “I said, he calls me a puppy. So I’m fairly certain getting the kids wolf pups is his way of saying that now they all have one.”

“All who?”

“Well, Blaise, Ivy, and Sabrina...”

Harry burst out laughing. “Oh, that was so worth it.”

Sirius gave him a shove. “Shut up.”

“Sorry Padfoot, not going to happen.”

Twenty-six days. He needed to last twenty-six days. Then the wolves would be stuck at Harry's house and he would be safe.

---

"Father, can we get Italian wolves?"

Lucius did not want to know where this question was coming from, but also did not see a way around it. "I was not aware you had an interest in animals. Perhaps you would like to spend some time caring for the peacocks. They are different from wolves, obviously, but all animals require a certain amount of care and work."

Draco's face said more than words ever could just what he thought of that idea. Lucius counted that as a win.

"Alternatively, you could always visit whoever it is that has one."

"Ivy and Blaise."

"The best pet is the one you leave at your friend's house."

Draco did not appear convinced.

---

*August 9, 1993*

"Why is this not working? It should be working by now," Ivy sighed, falling dramatically into a nearby chair.

"I just started teaching the patronus charm to you all last week. It is going to take a bit more time than that," Harry said. He really didn't know how many times he was going to have to explain to these four that this was going to take *time*.

"But *why*?"

"Because it's hard. Many adult wizards never master it."

Ivy huffed, still not satisfied. "I don't see how that makes a difference. Magic is magic. Why should some of it be harder than the rest?"

"Well it's about intent, and shaping your magic in the right way to achieve the results you want."

"And why should my age matter? I can read, and I can pronounce the words just fine. My wand is moving the right way even."

"Well magical maturity is..."

"Yes?"

“You know what, I’m just going to go find Remus,” Harry said. He and magical theory had never been great friends.

---

“Ivy,” Blaise said after Henry left, “you’re still getting it faster than probably anyone else would. You can actually see something coming out of your wand.”

“Yours too,” Ivy retorted.

“Sort of,” Blaise shrugged. “But it’s barely a wisp. Yours you can actually tell something is happening.”

Neville chose this moment to slump forward and proclaim, “I am never going to get this.”

“Sure you will,” Draco said. “Eventually,” he added a second later.

“I’m not sure why you even included me on the bet,” Neville groaned.

“What bet?” Ivy had not heard this yet.

“Who will get it first. Corporeal and not,” Blaise explained.

“You’re not on the list, because obviously you will get it first,” Draco continued.

Ivy rolled her eyes.

“And I shouldn’t be on there at all, because I’m not going to get it,” Neville finished.

“Of course you will. I had you last for incorporeal anyway,” Blaise said.

“Thanks,” Neville said dryly.

“But first for corporeal,” Blaise added.

“Oh.” Neville didn’t seem to have much more a response than that.

---

“How was the lesson?” Barty asked as Ivy came into the room and plopped down across from him.

“I can’t get it,” she said.

“You do realize it’s only been, what, five days since you even started learning it in the first place, right?”

“Doesn’t matter,” Ivy huffed. “I’m failing and it’s not going to work.”

“The patronus requires focusing on a happy memory or feeling most of the time,” Luna said from behind her book. “It won’t work if you’re preoccupied with your frustration or anger.”



Barty looked between the two for a moment before coming to a decision. “Well, it looks like it’s time for feelings, so I’m out. Have fun.”

Ivy rolled her eyes. “You’re not actually allergic to emotions, you know that, right?”

“You have no proof of that,” he called out as he left.

---

“Would you like to talk about it?” Luna asked. Ivy liked the fact that she knew Luna was genuinely asking, without expectation of an answer one way or the other.

“Yes,” she decided out loud. “I think I would.”

“Alright.” Luna put her book down and moved over closer to Ivy. “What is it about then?”

“The prophecy,” Ivy said. “I just... I can’t stop thinking about it, you know? I mean, I know you both said it was all done with, but why did it have to be about me in the first place? And why did everyone assume it meant that? It’s not like it said, ‘Ivy Potter is going to be born and then blow up Voldemort.’ It could have meant all sorts of things.”

“It could have, yes.”

“You think so?”

Luna nodded. “I do. Divination is about seeing possibilities. Time has never been written in stone, and the future is not written at all, so why should a glimpse of the future be anything other than that?”

That did make Ivy feel a little better. “So why did Dumbledore treat it like it was? Written in stone, I mean.”

“I don’t think anyone could say for sure aside from him. Maybe he saw it as a solution, and stopped looking for another one. People often do, when they find one. Is that what you’re really upset about?”

Ivy went to deny it but found she could not. “Yeah,” she said finally. “I guess so.”

Luna pulled her in for a hug. “I’m sorry they caused you so much pain,” she said softly.

“It’s alright,” Ivy shrugged, not wanting to spend time thinking about the Dursleys now or ever. “It’s over now anyway.”

“You know he’ll do anything to keep you safe,” Luna whispered, pulling Ivy closer.

“Yeah.” Ivy snuggled into Luna’s side. Henry did do a good job of that. “Thanks, Luna.”

---

“Hey Ives, you doing okay?”

“Did Luna tell you?”

Harry frowned. “No? Barty. He said he was allergic and that I could deal with it?” He still wasn’t entirely clear on what “it” was though.

Ivy burst out laughing. “He meant feelings. He keeps saying he’s allergic to emotions.”

Harry relaxed. “Who knows at this point,” he said, exaggerating the rolling of his eyes.

Ivy giggled a little more. “Yeah, I’m okay. I talked to Luna.”

Harry relaxed further. “Oh, good. That’s good. So...”

“So, I was upset about the whole prophecy thing, and I’m still mad at Dumbledore, but I guess it doesn’t really matter anymore, right?”

“Of course it matters,” Harry said. At Ivy’s frown he continued on. “It matters. That doesn’t mean you’re beholden to it somehow, or that it will dictate your future, but it is part of your life, and a part of everything that has happened. Even when the war is over we still have to pick up the pieces. Life moves on but it doesn’t change the past.”

Ivy looked at him as if she knew he wasn’t just talking about her anymore. To be fair, he wasn’t entirely.

He cleared his throat. “Look, I meant to tell you this the other day, but things got a little busy with...” he gestured vaguely to indicate everything, since he didn’t feel like bringing up the fact that everyone he knew thought he had taken over the world. “Anyway, I asked Sirius if he would be willing to teach you occlumency, and he agreed, so now I’m asking you if you would be willing to learn.” Because he would *not* force her to. Not going to happen.

“So Dumbledore can’t read my mind?”

Harry felt a small flare of anger that maybe wasn’t actually that small and shoved it back down. Now was not the time. Maybe he could make any effigy later. Remus had enjoyed the one of Pettigrew. “That’s part of it,” he began carefully. “Him or anyone else who would try. It’s a useful skill to have.”

“But there’s more?” Did being doppelgängers give Ivy some weird superpower to gauge his reactions and know what he was thinking? Probably.

“Yes. There are things I would like to tell you, someday. Things you should know, it’s just...”

“I need to protect my mind first so no one can find out,” Ivy finished for him.

He nodded.

“Like the prophecy?”

“That’s part of it, yeah. Dumbledore knows the prophecy, as do a few other people, but it would be best if he didn’t know that you know it.”

“Do you think he would try something?” Ivy asked. To her credit it was asked without even a hint of fear.

Harry shrugged. “Honestly? No idea. But we know what he’s done because of it already, and I have no doubt he has plans. Plans that involve you. Plans that are entirely pointless now, but that’s not the point. The point is he doesn’t *believe* they are pointless. He still thinks Voldemort is out there, and unless he can be convinced otherwise, he is going to continue to act as if there is a dark lord to defeat, and as if you are the one necessary to beat him.”

“Does this have something to do with the horcrux that was in my head?”

Harry’s brain shut off temporarily as he tried to place when he had told Ivy *that* bit of information. “Yes, but how...”

“Goldfist is very talkative,” she said, shrugging. “Says it helps his patients not be so nervous while he’s working.”

“So he told you about *horcruxes* so you wouldn’t be nervous about your *shots*?”

“Yeah. So, does Dumbledore’s plan have something to do with that then?”

Harry’s eye twitched and Ivy grinned. He groaned internally at the realization that she had timed that purposefully. Probably waited until the perfect moment to drop that on him. “Okay yes, it has something to do with that. Dumbledore knew Voldemort was working on, and claiming to have found, a way to be immortal. There aren’t really all that many ways to go about it, but I don’t know for sure whether or not Dumbledore knew about horcruxes or not. Even if he did, I doubt he knew how many there were. He knows something happened that night, but there were no eyewitnesses, aside from yourself, and memories from that age can’t be drawn out through regular magical means.”

Ivy looked slightly curious at that but didn’t comment, and Harry moved on for the moment. They could have the “oh and if you see a dementor you might remember seeing your mum get murdered” conversation for another time.

“But then you combine that with the prophecy, and now he sees an immortal Voldemort that he is convinced will come back and you, who he believes has some kind of power that will let you defeat Voldemort.”

Ivy frowned. “But I didn’t. You did.”

“I...” Harry closed his mouth. “I guess we both did? I mean when he tried to hit you it bounced back and destroyed him. And then I got all the other horcruxes.”

“And he’s gone for good now. No way to come back.”

“Right.”

“So the prophecy is done with? Should we check that?”

“I suppose we could.” Harry hadn’t actually thought about checking but it wouldn’t hurt. Maybe they could remove it while they were at it. He would just need to make sure Dumbledore wasn’t alerted to them doing so.

---

*August 10, 1993*

“And no magic here because we really will get in trouble,” Harry reminded her for the fourth time in the last twenty minutes. It was a point worth pressing.

“I’ll be an absolute paragon of childhood innocence,” Ivy quipped.

“Draco?” Harry said, rolling his eyes.

“Pansy,” she replied.

Harry had to settle for groaning internally because they had reached the lobby and there were actual people around. People who were suddenly *very* interested in their arrival. It was awful.

---

Lucius would have been able to identify the pained expression on Henry’s face from a mile away. The Minister, who was all of two feet away, did not seem to notice, though that was probably part of the reason for the expression in the first place.

“Ah, Henry, how lovely to see you here,” Lucius said once he was close enough. The relief was as obvious as the pain had been. “And Miss Potter, always a pleasure.”

Ivy rolled her eyes at the formal greeting when no one else was looking and Lucius allowed a small upwards twitch in the corner of his mouth.

“Ah, Lucius, how wonderful to see you here today,” Cornelius said, obviously not noticing that Lucius had not actually acknowledged his presence yet. “I was just discussing with Miss Potter here her career goals. It’s never too early to start thinking about, you know.”

“Indeed. And what brings you to the ministry today?” he asked, turning towards Henry.

A small, momentary flash of panic crossed Henry’s face, quickly concealed, but enough that Lucius knew it was something he didn’t want Fudge knowing about. Well he was always happy to lend a hand (or a few words) to a friend in need.

It turned out there was no need, as Ivy answered instead. “Well I’ve never been to the ministry, you see,” she said, directing her reply towards the Minister. “And it sounded like such a fascinating place. I would have asked Uncle Lucius to bring me, of course, but we decided on such short notice. It’s not all that often we have a free day, you know, and today’s schedule just opened right up.”

Merlin, the girl was good. Cornelius seemed to eat it right up.

“It is, it is. Such a fascinating place. So many interesting things going on, so many departments to choose from, er, to see. Would you perhaps be interested in a tour?”

“We would be delighted,” Ivy said, taking the Minister’s offered arm.

Lucius fell behind them alongside Henry. “Perhaps I should join you, seeing as it is her first visit to the ministry, and I’m sure you want to make sure you don’t miss anything.”

Henry nodded, and the silent plan was set in motion. They would go along with the Minister’s wish to give the famous Girl-Who-Lived a private tour of the ministry, while no doubt showing off to everyone present how close he was to her (which was not at all, but Lucius doubted Cornelius planned on actually telling anyone that). Then, once the tour/exhibition had reached a suitable end, Lucius would distract the Minister and Henry and Ivy would make their escape to do whatever it was they came here to do that they didn’t want anyone to know they were doing...

Ah. The prophecy. That had to be it. Well perhaps their tour could take a short little jaunt into the Department of Mysteries. Hopefully without anyone questioning their presence there.

---

“And here you see we have the busts of all the former Ministers. They all have portraits, of course, but it was difficult having them all together as they had a tendency to argue rather loudly. So instead it was decided that busts would be made of each former Minister so that their history could be admired in one place, with a bit less noise.”

Ivy giggled. Lucius wasn’t sure whether she was giggling at the Minister or at what he said. Maybe both.

“Perhaps, Cornelius, Miss Potter would be interested in seeing something in the Department of Mysteries. She has, of course, expressed an interest in that particular department.”

“Really? Well why didn’t you say so, my dear. Let’s head there right now. Such a fascinating place, the Department of Mysteries. So many things going on there. We can’t go everywhere, of course. Is there something in particular you would like to see?”

Ivy appeared to think for a moment, but Lucius could see the calculating glint in her eye.

“I would love to see the time room. Is that where all the time turners are kept? It is so incredible that you can make something like that.”

Cornelius preened slightly, even though he personally had absolutely *nothing* to do with time turners, and would likely not even be able to explain how they worked. Few people could, really, and Lucius was positive Fudge was not one of those people. Still, Ivy looked satisfied by something, so he suspected her word usage was entirely purposeful.

“And is there really a hall filled with prophecies? One of my friends was telling me about it. I never knew there were so many! She is very interested in divination, you see. I don’t think I would be any good at it, so I didn’t choose it as one of my electives this year. Better to focus on things that interest you, don’t you think?”

A few moments later they were standing in the Hall of Prophecies. Clever girl. And if Henry slipped off for a moment unnoticed, well, Lucius didn't feel it was really worth mentioning to anyone.

---

"You were absolutely brilliant," Harry gushed once they were safely inside. That ministry visit had nothing on some of his other trips, but that didn't mean he had been able to actually relax while they were there.

"I was, wasn't I," Ivy said with false arrogance. "But how did you get it? I thought only the people listed on it were able to pick it up."

Harry cleared his throat. "About that, er..."

"Let me guess. One of those things?"

"If by one of those things you mean something I will tell you all about once you know occlumency, then yes. It is."

Ivy sighed. "All the more motivation, I suppose."

"That's the spirit."

She stuck out her tongue. "And if I have it down by Christmas?"

"Then I'll tell you then."

"Deal. So can I see it?"

Harry pulled out the orb and handed it to her.

"Is it supposed to be this grey?"

"I have no idea."

Ivy shrugged her acceptance. "So do I..."

"Well we already know it, so you could smash it I suppose."

Ivy shrugged and then threw it on the ground. Except nothing happened. Harry looked at the pieces on the ground, looked up at Ivy, looked back at the ground, and frowned. "Well, that wasn't what I was expecting."

"Isn't it supposed to do something?" she asked.

"I think so. Maybe because it was grey. I'm not sure."

"So does that mean it's not valid anymore?"

"I'm going to go with yes. But I thought it would still do something."

“We should probably ask Luna.”

“Agreed.”

---

Luna very helpfully explained that yes, that meant the prophecy was done with, either because it had been fulfilled or invalidated in some way, and no, smashing an old prophecy like that wouldn't do anything. Apparently it was only the current ones that worked that way. But at least they had gotten it and confirmed that it was no longer in play. Harry made a quick mental note to go back sometime and check again, just to make sure there weren't any others. He didn't much care for prophecies, but if there were any he wanted to at least know about them.

# Chapter 41

*August 14, 1993*

Sirius whistled as he walked into the kitchen. Just a quick stop at the leftover cake and then he'd be on his way.

Except instead of finding cake in the kitchen he found three grinning wizards watching him with anticipation.

"Yes?" he asked carefully.

"What do you think, Moony," Harry said, his grin never faltering and his eyes not leaving Sirius.

"Oh, most definitely," Remus replied.

"Took him long enough," Barty said. All three snickered without breaking eye contact.

"What's this about then?" Sirius demanded.

"Oh, you know," Harry said casually. "Just wondering which speech you're going to use tonight."

Speech... Oh no they hadn't. Sirius glared at all three simultaneously, mildly impressed that he was able to effectively do so. Well, effectively might not be quite the right word, seeing as none of them were in any way cowed by his attempt.

"Silencing charms, Padfoot," Remus said with a smirk.

And okay, fair, but still, that didn't mean they had to *listen*.

"I'm sure Sabrina will be suitably impressed," Barty said, and if Sirius didn't know him he would have almost thought Barty was approaching sincerity. But he did know Barty, so he scowled.

"Very romantic," Harry added.

"Mmhmm. I particularly like the third one," Remus said. The other two nodded along.

"Oh yes, that one was very good," Harry agreed.

"Are you sure she's going to say yes?" Barty asked, probably just to annoy Sirius, and Merlin but it was working.

"Now listen here you little piece of..." Sirius glanced around, then mouthed the next word just in case Ivy was anywhere nearby.



“Come now, you know you love us, Black,” Barty said before Sirius could finish his point about what a terrible person Barty was.

“I love these two,” Sirius said, pointing to Remus and Harry. “A little less at the moment, but most of the time at least, and that does not in any way extend to you.”

Barty just smiled as if he found the whole thing incredibly amusing, which he probably did.

“Aw, we love you too, Siri,” Remus cooed. *Cooed.*

“You. All of you. *Disowned,*” Sirius said.

“My house,” Harry retorted.

“*Disowned,*” Sirius said once more for emphasis before turning on his heel. No cake was worth the grief his best friends and the other guy who unfortunately lived here were giving and could potentially continue to give him regarding his imminent proposal.

“Good luck,” Harry called out.

“Don’t mess up,” Barty yelled.

“Remember we’ll still love you no matter what happens,” Remus said.

Sirius flipped them off just before making it out the door. He was going to go deliver the most epic, romantic proposal in the history of romantic proposals. That would show them.

---

“And you’re sure that’ll work?” Harry asked.

Remus nodded solemnly with all the wisdom of the universe, or in this case, all the wisdom of having known Sirius the longest. “He will now propose flawlessly in the most perfect way possible out of sheer spite.”

“Cheers,” Barty said, lifting up his glass.

“Cheers,” said the other two.

---

*August 15, 1993*

“Oh, how about this one. *Quintaped Quarterread*. It says their looking for someone to write about newly discovered species.”

Luna nodded. “That one could work. Any others?”

Ivy shuffled through a few of the other letters. “Well, these are all the ones that just looked boring, but I guess maybe there’s something in there that could be good.” She gestured to another pile. “These didn’t even have anything to do with creatures at all. There was even one asking if you would come in for a photo shoot of some kind. But just you.”

Luna frowned. "Well no one is going to learn anything that way."

"Not about creatures anyway," Ivy said with a smirk. "They'd learn all about you though."

Luna shook her head.

"Reject pile," they called out together. Ivy laughed and tossed the offending papers up in the air, which Luna then obligingly lit on fire. Ivy sighed in contentment. What a great way to spend a Sunday morning.

---

*August 17, 1993*

"Harry, I am *begging* you. Make him stop."

Harry looked up at Remus with worry and confusion. "Make who? What happened? Who did it? Where'd they go?"

"Sirius."

Ah, so probably no one trying to kill Remus or anything. That was good at least. Harry relaxed a bit in his seat. "So, er, what did he do?"

"He's been engaged less than three full days," Remus said matter of factly.

"Um, yes?" Harry couldn't help but wonder at the non sequitur.

"Three days. That is all it took. And now he's determined to make all the rest of us married too."

"Well I'm already married," Harry's brain supplied to his mouth quite helpfully.

Remus did not appear impressed. "Yes, thank you for the reminder. Somehow I must have missed that with all the love eyes you two send each others way."

Harry grinned and shrugged unapologetically.

"But it's not you he's after, is it. It's the rest of us."

"The rest of us being?"

"Well, me, for starters. And... Well I don't know if he's actually spoken to his cousin yet or not. Merlin, I hope not," Remus muttered at the end.

"Tonks? He's trying to set you up with Tonks?"

"Yes," groaned Remus. "Make him stop."

"Okay... Anyone else?"

Remus opened his mouth and shut it promptly. So that would be a no. Harry suppressed a laugh, but Remus wasn't fooled if his glare was anything to go by.

"Just make him stop."

"How?" Harry really did want to know. Remus had known Sirius longer, so surely he had a better idea of how to get Sirius to stop.

"I don't know. Go all scary Lord Slytherin on him or something."

Now it was Harry's turn to look unimpressed. "Really?"

"Just make it stop," he practically whined. This was not the Remus Harry knew. He silently cast a small detection charm just in case.

"You are a grown wizard," Harry began, invoking the tone Ron had once used in a moment of wisdom when Harry himself had not been particularly eager to actually talk to a girl, much less ask her out. He felt it was appropriate for this conversation. "You are capable of handling this."

Remus was free to take "handling this" as a sign for dealing with Sirius or for talking to Tonks like Sirius was apparently trying to get him to do. Harry wasn't picky.

"I'm a werewolf who has made too many questionable life choices and is now trying to avoid being set up with a woman I have exchanged maybe a dozen words with who I am also apparently fated to marry."

"Well I wouldn't say fated per se," Harry said cautiously. On the one hand he really wouldn't mind Remus and Tonks getting together in this world, but on the other hand he realized that all relationships were unlikely to pan out exactly as they had in his world. Different life experiences and all that. "And also being a werewolf is not a bad thing," he added on, since Remus obviously needed the reminder.

"So you're not going to be any help."

Merlin, but Remus's look was making him feel guilty. No wonder Ivy had perfected her puppy dog eyes. He had thought Sirius was to blame but now he was having some serious doubts about his previous assumption.

"Fine, I'll talk to him," Harry muttered, to Remus's triumphant look.

---

"Hey Sirius, you said Tonks wants to meet, right?"

"Oh, Dora? Yeah. Why? You actually thinking about telling her everything?"

"Maybe? Well, at least some. See how that goes first, then maybe tell her the rest? Or later? I don't know. Haven't quite figured that out yet."

"Okay, so, you want me to invite her over."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, thanks. And hey, maybe lay off of Remus for a bit with the whole matchmaking thing?"

Sirius pouted and seriously, how was Harry supposed to deal with these people. "But they need to find true love, Harry. *True love*."

"Yes," Harry agreed, "but just maybe not right this second?"

Sirius sighed dramatically and wow had it really only been two years since Harry and Ivy came back to Britain? He could have sworn it had been longer.

---

*August 19, 1993*

"Thank you for meeting with me, Lord Peverell," Tonks began formally. It was weird and Harry wanted to bring it to a swift end.

"Just Harry is fine," he said, with perhaps a touch of pleading in his voice. "Really," he said for emphasis.

"Alright then, *Harry*, thank you for agreeing to speak with me."

"Of course. So I understand you have some questions?"

Tonks nodded. "Lestrage. What do you know?"

Harry sighed. "Not much, to be honest. I don't know how she got out, I don't know where she is, but I do have a good idea what she's after."

"And that would be?"

"Ivy."

"What makes you say that?" Tonks obviously wasn't disagreeing with his statement, but did seem curious as to why he thought that.

"Because Voldemort is gone," Harry said simply, willing to let the other questions come as they may.

"But he's been gone for a long time. Why now?"

Harry couldn't remember if she had been willing to say Voldemort's name at first or not in his world, but to her credit she at least hadn't flinched at it.

"Because now he's gone for good."

"And he wasn't before?"

"No."

Tonks furrowed her brow. "How was he not gone before?"

"Before his first demise he had taken measures to ensure his immortality. Those measures are no longer a concern."

"You took care of them then, you mean."

Harry nodded.

"Then why haven't you said anything? Why not tell everyone what you did?"

"Why should I? The majority of the wizarding world comfortably believes that Voldemort was defeated nearly twelve years ago. What good would it do to say otherwise when he isn't a concern anymore?"

Tonks shook her head. "Sorry, it's just, how do you know all this? No one had even heard of you until a few years ago, and now you're saying that not only did you know You-Know-Who wasn't actually dead, but that you knew how to get rid of him for real? He is dead, right? All the way?"

"All the way, yeah. No coming back this time."

Tonks looked at him curiously but did not press. "Okay, but you said he's gone and that's why Lestrage broke out now. How would she know when no one else did?"

"The dark mark disappeared when the last piece of him died."

"Wait, did you say the last *piece*? You know what, I'm not sure I want to know. There's nothing illegal here, right? I don't need to investigate this, right? Please tell me I'm right."

"Nothing you need to investigate," Harry said, leaving out the part where it was maybe slightly illegal, some of what he had done, and also the part where she wouldn't actually be able to investigate, given the magic covering all traces of his previous horcrux-hunting activities.

Tonks sighed in relief, clearly willing to believe it, at least for now. "Alright, so back up, you said the dark mark disappeared? Why haven't we heard anything about that?"

Harry let out a low chuckle at that. Oh if he but had the time to list all the reasons. "And who would have you expected to have told you, hmm? Anyone with a dark mark was either in Azkaban, unaccounted for, or acquitted. Most probably wouldn't have even thought much about it disappearing in the first place, probably assuming it had finally faded away with time. In the years between Voldemort's first demise and his final one the mark had faded already. Anyone not in Azkaban was probably relieved to see it gone for good, and I doubt anyone would be foolish enough to draw that kind of attention to themselves."

Tonks grimaced but nodded, not having an argument for that. "Lestrage then?"

Harry shrugged. "A fanatic. And loyal, even still. Possibly the most loyal of anyone left. I think it is likely that she held out hope that her lord would return, and when the dark mark

vanished for good she must have realized that it was over. And who else would she have had to blame?"

"Except Ivy Potter," Tonks said, nodding. "And that doesn't worry you?"

"Of course it does," Harry nearly hissed. "But I'm doing everything I can. Sirius will be at Hogwarts, and Remus and I will continue working from here. No offense, but I don't entirely trust the Ministry's response or ability to handle this."

To Harry's slight relief Tonks just shrugged. "No offense taken. I mean, this whole thing had everyone pretty worked up, you know? No one has ever escaped Azkaban before and none of our usual tracking methods have worked." She huffed. "We don't even know if she's still in the country, for Merlin's sake."

"Well, if I see anything I'll let you know."

"Before or after you take care of it?" Tonks asked dryly.

Harry just smiled.

---

"So what did you end up telling her?"

"Just about Voldemort. Didn't go into specifics, but gave the general idea."

"And the rest?"

"We'll see. I guess if she and Remus do end up together eventually then yeah."

"Fair enough."

"So..." Harry began. "How's operation get Remus and your cousin hitched coming along?"

Sirius smiled. "I'm not giving up."

"Didn't think so."

"Remus asked you to stop me, didn't he."

"Yep."

"And he thought that would work?"

"Well, desperation leads to all sorts of hope, I guess."

Sirius nodded. "I suppose I'll just have to change my approach then."

"How so?"

"Less persuasive talk, more inevitable interaction."

“You’re terrible.”

“They can thank me when they’re married. I’ll even give a perfect best man speech.”

“Keep this up and they might just have Barty do it,” Harry said, just to see Sirius’s reaction.

He was not disappointed.

---

“Harry, why is Sirius practicing a best man speech?” Remus asked with false cheer.

Harry groaned.

---

*August 24, 1993*

“You ready, Neville?”

Neville nodded. Harry could tell he was nervous, but he was doing an excellent job of hiding it.

“Nothing to worry about. You’ll find one.”

“But what if I don’t?” the boy blurted out. “I mean, what if none of them work?”

“Did Ivy ever tell you how long we were in Ollivander’s?”

Neville shook his head. “She said she blew up a wand though.” Suddenly a worried look crossed his face. “Am I going to blow up a wand?”

Harry patted the boy’s shoulder. “Probably not. I don’t think it happens all that often. And if it does, it will be fine.” Neville did not appear convinced. “But it took Ivy close to a hundred and fifty tries to find one that fit. So if the first few don’t work, don’t worry, and don’t give up. We’ll find one eventually.”

“A hundred and fifty…”

“Most people don’t take that long, I think.”

Neville nodded, even if there was a lack of reassurance present on his face.

“How did you convince Gran to get me a new wand anyway?”

Harry cleared his throat. “Ah, well, we were just talking about the patronus lessons, and I mentioned how maximum power will never be reached if you’re using a wand that’s not a right fit. And we talked for a bit, and eventually she agreed that you ought to get your own wand.”

Thankfully Neville didn’t press that particular question further. It wasn’t like Harry could say, “well, you see, in another world you got a new wand and became a total badass who killed

Voldemort's snake."

"So is that why you're taking me? Because you're the one that told her I needed a new wand?" Neville looked embarrassed at having asked the question, but Harry answered before the kid could apologize or take it back.

"Maybe. I'm not entirely sure. She did ask that I spend some more time today talking to you about a few things, so this works out well." Because multiple universes were out to make his life as terrible as possible apparently. "But yeah, that might have had something to do with it. I was pretty excited she asked, to be honest. It's not every day you get to see someone meet their wand."

Neville smiled shyly at Harry, who relaxed a bit. He really like Neville (both of them), and he was happy to see the boy gaining a bit of confidence a little earlier on, even if some of that confidence had come by necessity after being dragged around with Ivy and friends the last two years.

"Ah, here we are. Want me to come in or wait outside?"

"Inside, please."

"Alright then. After you."

---

"Thirteen inches, cherry with unicorn hair," Ollivander said fondly, as Neville picked up the fourth wand of the day.

And this was the one that Harry remembered, so he was fairly confident in the results.

Neville gave it a twirl, and out popped a silvery mist, not entirely unlike that of a patronus...

Neville, catching notice of both Harry and Ollivander's raised eyebrows, grinned sheepishly and ducked his head. "It feels nice?"

Ollivander chuckled. "I would expect nothing less from a wand so well matched."

Harry too laughed a little. "Thinking happy thoughts, then, are we?"

Neville just blushed.

---

"So, what was it you needed to talk to me about?"

Ah yes, the second reason Augusta had asked him to take Neville today. The part he had been mentally avoiding. The karmic retribution, even if it felt like he had the short end of the stick both times. Was it really too much to ask that he be allowed to forget that awful, awful day? Apparently not.

"Well, you see Neville... Actually, you know what, I'd better put up some privacy charms first." It was bad enough that Harry had to speak the words and that Neville had to hear them.



No one else needed to be subjected to this conversation.

Privacy charms overpowered and in place, Harry took a deep breath. “Alright. So, you may have started to notice girls. Maybe you noticed that they are pretty?”

This wasn’t a terrible start, was it?

Neville looked at him with mild disbelief mixed with dawning horror. “Is this... *the talk*?” he whispered.

“Ah, yes. That would be it.”

“Um, well I’ve already sort of had it, you see.”

“Wait, really?” Harry almost allowed himself a sigh of relief. “But, uh, who gave it to you?”

“Well Fred and George explained a lot of things.”

Feeling of relief gone, having died a horrible death. Was it too much to ask that he be swallowed up by the earth now?

“And then Percy explained a few more things.”

Potentially slightly better. Not great, but the potential was there.

“And then Thomas said some stuff too, so, er, yeah.”

“Okay, for now, let’s just forget about anything the twins said, yeah?”

Because two fifteen year old boys were probably not Augusta Longbottom’s idea of a suitable explanation.

“Actually, what *did* the twins say?”

“Well, they said some things about kissing, and how to not do it unless you ask first, and how you should only do it if you really like someone, and that you don’t have to if you don’t want to.”

That was not actually a bad start.

“And to be careful so you don’t make babies.”

And there it went.

“Okay...” Breathe. *You can do this, Harry*, he thought to himself. “Not completely terrible, but let’s not focus on the babies just yet, hmm? What did the others say?”

“Well, Percy explained how a lot of things worked. He had pictures.”

How illegal was it to oblivate a minor, really? And himself. Would that even work?

---

*August 25, 1993*

“Are you still ‘recovering’ from your talk yesterday?” Sirius enquired.

“It was *traumatizing*,” Harry defended.

“For who though,” Barty asked.

“The *twins*, Barty. And apparently Percy had pictures.”

Luna and Remus both winced appropriately. That’s why they were his favorite people right now.

“Why’d you have to do it again?” Sirius asked.

Harry leveled him with one (1) unimpressed stare. “Because for some unknown reason Augusta thinks I would make a suitable father figure. I didn’t grow up with a dad. How am I suppose to know what a suitable father figure looks like.”

“Well you’ve done fine so far,” Remus pointed out. Again why Remus was one of his favorite people right now.

“Well, it’s not like any of us have fathers to ask anyway, so it’s not like we’re going to judge you,” Barty said, which, coming from Barty, was practically admitting he was impressed.

“Well, technically you could talk to yours if you *really* wanted to,” Sirius said teasingly.

Barty chuckled nervously. “Yeah, that won’t be happening,” he said.

Remus patted Barty’s arm. “We understand. No need to face him again.”

“Yeah, we’ll go with that,” Barty said under his breath.

“Barty,” Harry said, suddenly suspicious. “Anything you want to share?”

“Yes, actually,” Barty said, face breaking out into a wide grin. “I’m leaving the country.”

“What?”

“What for?”

“Please tell me you didn’t do what I think you did,” Harry muttered mostly to himself.

“I’m going to get a history mastery.”

Harry let out a huge sigh of relief, earning him curious looks from Sirius and Remus, which he ignored.

“Alright, but why leave the country?”

“Well, funny thing, that. See, there isn’t anyone with a history mastery in Britain to study under, and isn’t that just sad. So away I go!”

Suspicion started creeping back in. Barty was far too cheerful right now.

“So where you going then? Australia?”

Barty gave Sirius an offended look mingled with horror. “Why would you even *say* something like that?”

“Wishful thinking?” Sirius shot back.

“And here I thought we were almost neutral acquaintances, Black.”

“Wait, what’s the matter with Australia?” Harry’s confusion was genuine.

“I think I would like to visit there sometime,” Luna said. Harry could *see* the respect growing in Sirius and Barty’s eyes for some untold reason.

“Er, well I’m going to Greece,” Barty said. “So no, uh, no demons, probably.”

Wait, *what*?

“Just try not to commit any murders while you’re there,” Luna said.

Harry’s eyes snapped back to Barty, suspicion back in full force. “Barty, whatever it is, just tell me,” he said, bracing himself for the inevitable.

“Well, we’re now all officially orphans?”

“Barty...” Harry groaned.

“Why did you kill him?” Remus asked.

“Because I didn’t want him alive anymore?”

“That’s fair,” Sirius said.

“No it’s *not*,” Harry protested. “Barty, you can’t just... *No more murder*.”

“It was only one,” Barty said petulantly.

“No more murders,” Luna said.

Barty nodded and ground out an apology.

“Why’s he listen to you but not me?”

“Because I’m a good minion,” Barty said.

“He does make a good minion,” Luna said, agreeing.

“No he’s not. He’s not even listening to me,” Harry cried out.

“Who said I was *your* minion?” Barty asked with confusion. Harry couldn’t tell whether it was real or feigned.

He looked between Luna and Barty for a moment. “Oh, that makes much more sense,” he said finally.

“So no more murder,” Luna said scoldingly, pointing a finger at Barty as if he were a misbehaving child and not a grown wizard who had committed murder sometime recently.

“Yes ma’am.”

“Next time just come talk to us. There are plenty of other ways of destroying someone without resorting to murder.”

And that would be why Barty had chosen Luna, most likely.

“Were you ever really mine?” Harry asked. Wait, that did not come out like he wanted it to.

“Until she showed up, yeah,” Barty said, jabbing his thumb in Luna’s direction.

Harry sighed. “Yeah, that’s fair.”

Luna patted his arm. “There’s plenty of people willing to be your minions if you want them.”

That was not at all as reassuring as Luna was probably trying to make it.

---

*August 26, 1993*

“Luna, do you want one?”

“I’m fine.”

“Great. Anyone else?” Sirius did not understand why no one was throwing up their hands in excitement. “Blaise? Ivy? Neville?”

“I don’t even like flying that much,” came Neville’s response.

“But, *quidditch*,” Sirius protested.

“I’m not on a team either,” Blaise said.

“We just got brooms last year,” said Ivy.

“Harry?” Sirius said pleadingly.

“I er, already got one?”

“You *what*?”

“Well I kind of had them on pre-order for Luna and I?”

Sirius gave Harry his very best I’ve-been-betrayed look. “Luna, is that why you said no?”

“Well yes, I’ve already got one.”

“Fine,” Sirius ground out. “Then *I* will admire and purchase this lovely feat of magical engineering which is the Firebolt, because *someone* forgot to tell me, and also because quidditch.”

“Is quidditch even a reason?” Neville asked softly.

“Yes, and it’s a good one,” Sirius proclaimed. He would convince them yet.

---

“Alright, now that the quidditch shop had been sufficiently searched, how about we go get the actual school supplies.”

Sirius and Harry both grumbled about quidditch, but everyone nodded and followed Remus back into the Alley.

The Alley was *packed*. More so than usual, even, because it seemed like everyone from Hogwarts had decided to do their shopping *today*.

Luna glanced at Ivy, who gave her the most innocent looking grin possible.

Harry noticed the exchange and groaned. At least it wouldn’t be like two years ago. He was *married* now, and not above using Luna as a shield to protect him from the witches who thought they still had a change of catching his eye. Luna would protect him. She was nice like that.

---

“So how many letters did you end up sending out?” Blaise asked.

“One hundred and seven,” Ivy replied. “I ran out of owls.”

“That’s still not too bad,” Neville said. “That means you got at least everyone in our year, right?”

“Yeah. Plus the fifth years. The twins wanted to remind everyone of their plan.”

“Does that reminder involve threats?” Blaise asked casually.

Ivy shrugged. “No idea.”

“Do I want to know?” Neville questioned.

“No,” came the joint response. Neville was perfectly willing to take that answer at face value.

---

“Ivy had something to do with this, I just know it,” said Harry, looking for a clear path through the sea of people.

“Seeing that almost everyone in her year is here today? Probably,” Remus agreed.

Just then someone ran into them, well, mostly into Remus, seeing as Harry stepped behind him just in time.

“Oh, I’m so sorry, Professor,” came a *very* familiar voice.

“Not to worry, Miss Granger. And please, call me Remus. I’m not your professor anymore. Have you met Henry before? This is Ivy’s guardian, Henry Peverell. Henry, this is Hermione Granger. She’s a Gryffindor in Ivy’s year.”

Harry sent a mental glare Remus’s way both for his choice of name usage and also for his obvious amusement at Harry’s discomfort. Some people were easier to face alternate versions of than others, and Hermione was not one of those. But he couldn’t send an *actual* glare Remus’s way because Hermione would certainly pick up on that and that would not do at all. Remus knew that too, if his smirk was anything to go by.

“Hello, Miss Granger,” Harry said, shaking her hand. “I’ve heard a great deal about you. And please, just call me Harry.”

“But Ivy always calls you Uncle Henry,” she said, brows furrowing slightly.

“Yes, well, she’s stubborn like that. Says Harry and Peverell don’t go together or some other such nonsense,” Harry said with a wink.

Hermione giggled and then Harry found himself with a face full of cat.

“Oh, Crookshanks, get down from there. I am *so* sorry,” Hermione said, pulling her cat off of Harry.

“Believe me, that is hardly the worst animal I’ve had in my face,” Harry said.

Hermione didn’t look like she was buying it.

“Ivy’s godfather is an animagus,” Harry explained. “He turns into a giant dog and likes to use it at the worst times. Oh, and Ivy and Blaise just got wolves and somehow I got stuck with them. And that’s not even to mention some of the other things Ivy has tried to bring home. So no, a cat is really quite tame in that regard. Even if it is a rather smart cat,” Harry said, scratching one spot he knew Crookshanks liked. Some things were universal constants.

Hermione, now convinced that Harry was being truthful, relaxed and stopped trying to pull the cat away. “He does seem like a smart cat, doesn’t he. They said he was part kneazle.”

“Well, that would explain it then,” Harry said with a grin.

“Do you know where Ivy is? I’ve been meaning to find her before I went to the bookstore.”

Harry grinned a huge grin on the inside, and a normal one on the outside at the predictability of that statement. "I knew she had something to do with this," he said. "Well, last I saw she was headed towards the apothecary. She was will Neville and Blaise if that helps."

"Thank you," Hermione said. "And it was very nice to meet you, Lord Peverell."

"You too, Miss Granger. And it's Harry. Or Henry if you must."

"You can call me Hermione then," she said. "Bye then. And goodbye Professor, it was nice to see you again."

Remus gave her a little wave as she walked off.

"Bye, Hermione," Harry said softly, smiling as the small, brilliant witch walked away.

---

"Ivy, for the love of Merlin, Morgana, Circe, Hecate, Isis, Odin, and all the other ones I'm leaving out, please tell me what the twins are planning."

"Sorry, Percy. Can't. They made me promise not to."

"You don't understand. I *need* to know. I'm Head Boy this year. I can't have them messing around especially on the first day back."

"Percy, they made me *promise*."

"Yes but... oh. *Oh*. Well, fine. I... Why would you *do* that?"

"It's the only way they'd tell me what they were planning," Ivy defended.

Percy sighed. "And what did you think of their plan?" He asked, adding "dare I ask" under his breath.

"Oh, I think it's brilliant."

Percy groaned.

"If it helps all the other fifth years know. And a few of the third years. And probably Luna."

Percy wanted to cry, he really did.

"But don't worry, it'll be great. And no one is going to get hurt or anything."

Somehow Ivy Potter telling him not to worry did not, in fact, make him not worry.

---

"I hear you made Head Boy. Congratulations, Percy."

"Thank you Lor... I mean, Harry. Thank you."

Harry grinned. Eventually he would wear everyone down to the point where they'd call by his name and not his title. Well, all the people he cared about at least.

They chatted for a few minutes, both waiting for their respective relatives who were stuck somewhere in the bookstore with an enthusiastic Hermione Granger. Harry knew from personal experience that it could be a while, so he was happy to talk to Percy in the meantime. And when Ron came out suddenly, looking like he was attempting a high-risk escape plan, he just gave the boy a wink and let him duck around.

---

"He really looks up to you, Harry."

"You think I'm doing alright?"

"Yes. You're good for him to be around."

"Thanks, Luna."

---

"I think he imprinted on you, Harry."

"Padfoot?"

"Hmm?"

"Shut up."

---

*August 27, 1993*

"I got it!"

Harry blinked, just to be sure he wasn't seeing things that weren't there, but it was true. There, in all its shimmering glory, was a fully corporeal patronus. A *dragon* patronus. Honestly, he didn't know what else he had been expecting.

"Congratulations, Ivy," Neville said enthusiastically. Blaise and Draco soon offered their own congratulatory remarks.

"That was great, Ives. Good job."

Ivy beamed. "I've got to go tell Charlie."

She dashed off and Harry briefly thought about sending a patronus of his own to warn the Weasley's of the upcoming dark-haired missile about to be launched through their fireplace. Of course then he'd have to explain what a missile was and that would be a rather long conversation so...

Except...



“Wait, is Charlie even in the country?”

The boys all shrugged.

“Ivy, no international travel without me,” he yelled out. “Ivy...”

---

*August 29, 1993*

*§And if ssomething happens, go to Ssirius right away. Have you got all that?§*

*§Yess, yess. Go to ssmelly wolf baby if baby sspeaker iss in trouble. I undersstand you ssilly sspeaker.§*

*§For the lasst time it'ss a dog, not a wolf baby. And sshe could be in danger.§*

Apparently snakes could scoff and show their disdain very well.

*§Ssilly sspeaker. Big mother ssnake issn't letting anything happen to her babiess.§*

Harry wasn't sure if he should be relieved that Ivy had practically been adopted by a basilisk, but if it kept her safe he could deal with it.

---

*August 30, 1993*

“Whoa.”

“Yeah.”

“I'm not seeing things, right?” Neville asked shakily.

“Nope. You really did it kid,” Harry said with a grin. “Congratulations.”

With that he thumped Neville on the back, and watched with amusement as Draco fished something out of his pocket and handed it to a very smug Blaise.

Neville's patronus was impressive. Partly because he actually *had* one, after only a few weeks of practicing, but also because it was a massive bear that towered over everyone and everything. Harry didn't see how anyone would be giving Neville a hard time ever again. Not with a patronus like that.

## Chapter 42

*September 1, 1993*

Ivy couldn't sit still. Sirius was there, and she and Neville had both managed a corporeal patronus now, but after Henry's warning she felt she was allowed to feel a bit nervous. She didn't have any conscious memories of the night her parents were murdered, but apparently that wouldn't matter if faced with dementors. Which was fine, really, if you ignore the part where they might end up on the train. This was one train ride she was not particularly looking forward to. Maybe she should have taken up Henry on his offer to get her to Hogwarts another way. Students were supposed to ride the train, but if anyone could find a way around that it would be him. Well, it was a bit too late for that, so now she'd just have to make the best of it.

---

Practicing the patronus charm in a controlled, dementor-free environment and casting one against a real dementor were two very different things. Ivy had managed a wisp, but nothing more. Thankfully Sirius had cast a perfect one, even if his face was a little pale afterwards. It had all happened almost exactly as Henry had said it might, which was to say it was completely awful, but it was over quickly and everyone else seemed to be recovering nicely.

Neville had moved over to sit next to her though. Without a word they had understood just what it was the other one had felt. Thus, the rest of the train ride was spent pressed firmly against Neville's side, eating the occasional chocolate frog, and gradually recovering from the day's ordeal.

---

Albus had not been thrilled with the minister's decision to post dementors at Hogwarts. Actually, that was a bit of an understatement. He had not been successful in getting that decree revoked, try as he might, but now he was beginning to wonder if it might not prove useful in some way. The students were not yet at the castle but already he had heard the reports of the dementors on the train. Concerning, yes, but what was of greater interest to him was the fact that Ivy Potter was reported to have cast a patronus, albeit an incorporeal one, successfully. She had obviously had some training with that, but it would need to continue. Perhaps Severus could do it. Albus had been trying to think up a good way to test her power, and this could prove to be the perfect opportunity. After all, the dementors were here for the foreseeable future, and if the events on the train were any indication, it would not be an entirely problem-free stay.

---

It wasn't even technically the first day of school yet, and already Thomas was tired. And done. So done. He caught Percy's eye across the room, but his friend just shrugged and shook his head. With a sigh he turned back to the person at his right.

"So how long are you planning on staying here again?" he asked.

Fred Weasley, which he knew because Ivy had passed by and said, “hi Fred,” grinned a grin that promised absolutely nothing conducive to a calm, peaceful, uneventful year. “A week, for now. Have to give the other houses a try, after all.”

What Weasley had not said, and which Thomas decided he didn’t want to know, was how the twins (because who else could have possibly been responsible for this), had managed to convince the *entire fifth year* to switch houses. He honestly wouldn’t be surprised if their trunks had all ended up in their “new” houses. The elves at Hogwarts loved exactly nine people by his last count, and unfortunately the Weasley twins were two of them.

At least it was Percy that was head boy. He could deal with it.

---

Ivy watched as Astoria practically skipped over to the Slytherin table, a large smile adorning her face. Astoria nearly took a seat next to Cedric, but Millie scooted over just in time offering a seat by herself and Pansy.

Ivy withheld a snort, instead catching Millie’s eye and giving her two thumbs up.

Millie’s face immediately turned an impressive shade of pink, but she gave Ivy a little smile anyway.

Ivy spent the next few minutes enjoying the sight of Millie talking with her crush, all the while being quite proud of her friend for actually managing to speak in the first place. Millie tended to get nervous about certain things, and Ivy felt that speaking to the person you’ve had a crush on since you knew what a crush could be reasonably counted as one of those things.

Just then she heard the name “Calanthia Nott” called out, mostly because Draco jabbed her in the ribs and pointed up the stool Theo’s little sister was now approaching.

Attention now back to the sorting, Ivy watched as the hat deliberated for a moment, then called out “GRYFFINDOR!”

The loud proclamation by the sorting hat was followed by a low, but drawn out word uttered by Theo that had Cedric leaning across Millie to cover Astoria’s ears. Theo, once he realized he had said it out loud, flushed a bit and ducked his head. Daphne patted his arm consolingly, and Ivy turned to Draco for an explanation.

“Lord Nott isn’t know for his love of anyone or anything Gryffindor,” Draco whispered. “He’s probably going to be fairly upset,” he said with a tone indicating how much of an understatement that was.

Ivy thought that was rather stupid, though she left that unsaid, but she knew how worked up some people got over things like that. Sirius had been in the exact same position, once upon a time when there were possibly still dinosaurs roaming the earth, after all. Some families reacted poorly to their children being sorted in houses other than their own. It was like they expected their children to turn out just like them or something. Again, rather stupid in her opinion, but Henry had long since informed her that sometimes people were just like that. Oh, now there was an idea.

Turning to Theo, she said, “You know, if you’re worried you could always talk to Siri... I mean, to Professor Black. And I’m sure Uncle Henry could help somehow too if you write to him. He can fix all sorts of things.”

The reaffirming nods coming from several of her friends at the table seemed to convince Theo, and he nodded as well, relaxing a bit and smiling. “Thanks, Ivy.”

“No problem,” said Ivy cheerfully, before returning her attention back to the sorting. Nothing else quite as eventful happened after that, but its completion signaled the beginning of the feast, which everyone seemed to be enjoying immensely.

---

Severus was not enjoying the feast. He had known Black was coming, he knew *why* the mutt was there, and he had thought he had prepared himself for this, but apparently it was not enough.

Merlin, he missed Lupin already, and wasn’t that a sad thought.

How did the world come to this? Was this his punishment for his sins? Couldn’t he just die and go to hell like normal people? Was this special sort of torture really necessary?

---

“...and that’s why I need you two to stick close to Ivy this year, alright?”

To Draco’s utter relief, Vince and Greg both nodded. He had been worried his two friends wouldn’t be on board with his well-thought-out keep-Ivy-safe plan, but so far they seemed to be in agreement. With a smile and a nod Draco headed off to bed, task complete. He was a good friend.

---

*September 2, 1993*

“Oh, hi Greg, what are you doing here this early?”

“Draco said we need to stick close to you this year,” Greg said, reaching over to grab a slice of toast.

“Because of the dementors,” Vince added, joining them at the breakfast table.

Ivy nodded solemnly. “Yes, that’s probably a good idea,” she said. “Don’t worry, I’ll protect you both,” she added brightly.

Both boys grinned back at her as they ate their breakfast.

Draco was a good friend for watching out for these two, Ivy thought.

---

“So, how’s the talking going?” Remus asked, picking up Dante to prevent the cub from chewing on the chair leg any more.

Harry tried to say, “it’s just fine, thank you very much,” but it came out not quite right, which really rather ruined the point he was trying to convey.

Remus grinned. “You’re already doing better than your dad did. Pretty sure all three of them avoided talking for the entire month. You know, I’m fairly certain Minerva knew what we were doing, but I think she was too relieved that James and Sirius were quiet for an entire month to put up much of a fuss. Although I do remember some books about animagus transformations mysteriously making their way into our dorm room...”

Harry snorted, since for the moment that was still easier than actually replying. Which he could have totally done if he wanted to. No problem. And yet, talking wasn’t really *that* important a function of daily living, right?

“Any guesses what your form will be?” Remus asked.

Harry was slightly distracted by watching Remus pet the wolf cub. “Bird? To fly? Big cat? Annoy Sirius?”

“Oh yeah, I bet he would just love that,” Remus said, chuckling. “Not like he mentions your patronus every single time he sees it or anything.”

They both rolled their eyes at their friend’s antics.

“So. Fatherhood?” Harry asked.

Remus looked puzzled.

Harry pointed to Dante, who was snuggled comfortably on Remus’s lap.

Remus sputtered indignantly and Harry laughed. Maybe having the wolf cubs around wasn’t so bad after all.

Harry ceased laughing a moment later when Luna came in and deposited Otso on his lap.

“Your grandchild was missing you,” she explained.

Harry didn’t think Remus really had any room to laugh, but that sure wasn’t stopping him.

“Wait, how did you figure out how to talk so fast?” Thankfully she understood the basic gist of what he was trying to say.

“Flattening charm.”

Harry sort of wanted to lean forward and bang his head on the nearest flat surface at the obvious solution but he resisted. “Tell me?” Short and sweet was the key. At least for the next twenty seconds until he had the leaf flattened sufficiently.

“Well, you didn’t ask.”

---

*September 3, 1993*

*...any advice or help you might be able to offer would be most appreciated.*

*Sincerely,*

*Theodore Nott*

Harry set the letter down with a sigh. He hadn't dealt with Lord Nott much, at least not one on one. He knew him a bit through the Malfoys and through the Wizengamot, but Thaddeus Nott was part of a different group than say Lucius, or Simon Parkinson, despite their common death eater past.

Thaddeus Nott was, as far as Harry had been able to gather, one of the original death eaters, at school with Tom Riddle, and a devout follower from the very beginning. Although he might not openly claim association with Voldemort now, he had in no way tempered his beliefs and opinions, and Harry could unfortunately imagine exactly what his reaction might be to having his daughter sorted into Gryffindor, the house many of the older generation especially associated strongly with the Light faction, muggle-lovers, and Albus Dumbledore. So, yes, Harry could see where Theo's worry was coming from.

He also had no idea what to do about it.

Time to ask the experts.

---

"So, what do you think?" Harry asked as Luna finished reading the letter.

"I think it's a good thing you have the name you do," Luna offered.

Harry groaned and put his head on the desk. "Please tell me I don't have to go try to intimidate some seventy year old death eater," he said, with both hope and resignation in his voice.

"Alright, I won't."

He groaned again, not feeling up to managing a different type of reaction at the moment.

"You could always ask Augusta. She probably knew him in school, or at least for however many years on the Wizengamot, and she might have some ideas."

Harry lifted his head up. "This is why you're the best," he said, before getting up and giving her a quick peck on the cheek. "If I don't come back you know where to look for my body," he called out half-jokingly.

---

Augusta humphed and muttered about "that old codger," but in the end she suggested he visit Carita Burke.

“If anyone knows how to deal with those good for nothing coffin-dodgers, it’s her. Merlin knows she’s been handling them since she first married into that family. Her father-in-law was a nasty piece of work, you see, and she handled him just fine.”

Harry just nodded along, sensing he was about to get another crash course in British Wizarding Family history/gossip.

“And she always knew just what to say to Magnus. And Herbert Rosier. Long before your time, of course, but he was part of Thaddeus’s group if you know what I mean.”

Original death eater then, by the sound of it.

“That woman has a talent. Tristram listens to her on occasion and they’ve always been on opposite sides. Even my Chester would heed her advice on occasion, and he didn’t listen to just anyone, you know.”

Harry was mentally keeping track of all these people. Magnus Deverill he knew, Herbert Rosier he had never heard of but he could draw the connection, and Tristram Brown was Lavender Brown’s... uncle? No, that wasn’t right. Grandfather, there it was. Right, he was Lavender Brown’s grandfather. And Chester Longbottom of course was Augusta’s late husband. He really should just invest in one of those “Wizarding Families of Great Britain” books. Or ask Sirius. Sirius had it all memorized already.

---

Carita Burke sipped her tea as Harry told her all about his dilemma, nodding at different points but not as of yet offering much in the way of advice or a solution.

“So... Any suggestions?” Harry asked, slightly hoping that she would come out and say, “don’t worry, I’ll handle it.”

“Well,” she began, “Thaddeus has always been a stubborn one, and has never had a problem letting everyone know exactly what he thought of them, even if he didn’t always use words. He’s been quieter in recent years, especially since Amanda died, poor woman, but if anything it has made him more stubborn, clinging to views that have been tempered in some people’s minds, especially since you arrived.”

Harry didn’t think he had really made *that* much of a difference, but now wasn’t the time to argue that.

Carita sighed. “Thaddeus took the Dark Lord’s fall rather hard, and once his wife died I’m afraid he began to conflate the two. Unlike some of the others I do not believe he ever truly held Ivy responsible for the Dark Lord’s defeat, but he certainly held a grudge against Dumbledore and some of the more... *vocal* members of the so-called Light.”

Harry sighed and rubbed his eyes, going against at least half of Narcissa’s etiquette lessons in the process. “Any chance he is not going to react poorly to this then?”

“I think if he knew about it we would already have heard of his reaction. As it is, I very much doubt he has been informed, likely due to Theo’s own worry and a caution on his part to his

sister to wait. Theo may be young but his name holds enough weight that the other students would withhold that information from their own parents for the time being as well at his request. So no, I do not think Thaddeus's reaction will be pleasant. However, he does love his children, and perhaps having someone to remind him of *that* fact first would prove useful." With that Carita raised an eyebrow indicating exactly who that person was going to be.

Harry sighed again. "Anything particular I ought to say then?"

Carita put her tea down. "Use your name to its full extent," she said, ignoring Harry's audible groan. "Thaddeus is many things but a fool is not one of them. Use your connection through Ivy to his son, and do not try to hide your power. If there is anything Thaddeus respects, it is power, both magical and political, and you have both in abundance. If that is not enough, bring up the Dark Lord."

Harry's head shot up at that, wondering just what good she thought *that* was going to do.

"I know you had something to do with it," she said, looking at Harry pointedly. "I may not know how you were involved, but I do know that the dark marks disappeared, and I have absolutely no doubt that you were involved in some way."

Harry didn't respond but also didn't try to deny it.

"So," she said lightly, "if he does not listen at first, do not hesitate to strike with information that will bolster your position."

Harry wondered if she could discuss the finer points of stabbing someone with a dagger with the same lightness. Probably.

"Morgana only knows we made a great enough mess of the world," she murmured. "No need to drag our children into it now."

---

Severus missed staff meetings that revolved around such simple, mundane things as "we need a new defense teacher for the second time in a month" or "seventeen students came back from the holidays with pet snakes." Those were such easy, straightforward problems to solve, especially since neither of them affected him directly. But this...

"It's really an impressive bit of charm work, you see..."

"Really, Filius, this is not helping matters any."

"I think it's wonderful to have them experiencing different houses. Perhaps we should make this a regular thing."

"Perhaps not in their O.W.L. year though..."

"Quite right, dearie. Perhaps in one of the earlier years? Second or third year perhaps. I think..."



“Maybe before they get sorted in the first place? Get to know all their classmates that way, before they go into the houses.”

“Well that might just make it harder for them to settle in, what with constant changing and all that.”

“Well that’s true. I…”

“As interesting as it would no doubt be to debate changes to the sorting process, perhaps we can return to the matter at hand?”

At least Minerva was sticking to the point. Albus meanwhile was sucking a candy and looking unhelpfully amused.

“Severus? Sirius? What are your thoughts on the matter? The two of you have yet to weigh in.”

And Severus had a reason for that, though he doubted Minerva would much appreciate it.

Black cleared his throat. “Well, I don’t really know what houses they were to begin with,” he said, “except a few, that is. But are you sure it’s the entire fifth year? It looked like Wood and Flint were both at their own house tables.”

“Wood and Flint are both seventh years, Black,” Severus said, happy to take part in the conversation for the first time.

“Ah. Well, that would do it then.” Black clapped his hands. “Well, at least it’s just the fifth year, right?”

Minerva did not look impressed with Black. Severus grinned on the inside, because Merlin forbid he ever let these people see him doing it for real. It would get out to the students somehow and his reputation would be shattered.

“Er, I mean, well…” Black turned to Filius. “So tell me more about the charm work they did?”

“Well you see, they took the school registrar, and instead of trying to override the existing charms, they merely added a layer on the section containing the current fifth year. Made into a sort of rotating list, like how you put several advertisements in the same spot on the newspaper. Much more complex, of course, but…”

“Filius,” Minerva said with a sigh. “Please. None of us are questioning the Weasley twins’ ingenuity, but we still have to deal with the problem that is the entire fifth year not being where they are supposed to.”

“Just for curiosity’s sake,” Black said, “are we sure it was the twins?”

Everyone, including Severus, turned to stare at Black. It was probably an uncomfortable moment for Black, which made Severus feel a small little twinge of glee, but alas, it was over too soon.

Black mumbled something along the lines of “never mind,” and the conversation resumed.

“Albus,” Minerva prodded.

“Hmm? Oh, right. My apologies. Where were we?”

*Lost in conspiracy theories, old man?* Severus thought.

“The fifth year students, Albus.”

“Of course, of course. Any indication how long they intend for this to last?”

“Three weeks,” Filius said, with all the conviction of a wizard who knows he’s right.

Severus could practically see Minerva counting to ten in her head.

“And what ever gave you that idea?” she asked.

“Well they want to try out each house, of course. One each week.”

“Filius, do you by chance know anything *else* about this...prank?”

“Nothing at all,” came the reply.

Severus couldn’t help but notice Black eyeing Filius with a profound degree of respect. Then the charms professor gave Black a wink and Severus wondered if he was worried about the wrong staff member being the instigator of chaos.

“Didn’t the twins work on a project with you last year?” Septima asked.

“They did indeed. Nothing related to this, of course, but there are always plenty of cross uses for charm work.”

Filius’s face was the personification of innocence, even while everyone else’s showed exactly how much they believed that. Merlin, Filius could have been a Slytherin. Maybe he would be up for a trade... It was the thing to do at the moment it seemed. Also, neither of the Weasley twins were currently in Ravenclaw, which had absolutely nothing to do with that idea. Unexpected benefits and all that.

---

*September 4, 1993*

Cold. Wet. Awake.

Sirius was very much awake now.

“Ivy,” he said, upon seeing the culprit, “what time is it?”

“Seven.”

“It’s Saturday.”

“Yes.”

“You woke me up at seven on a Saturday.”

“Mmhmm.”

“Merlin, you weren’t this much of a morning person before. What changed and who do I have to beg to change it back?”

“It’s the school year, Padfoot.”

“I should have stayed in the village,” Sirius grumbled into his pillow.

“Yes, well, you said since Sabrina wasn’t going to be there yet that you would take this weekend to spend more time with your kids. That’s me. So, rise and shine.”

“You are way too cheerful for a Saturday morning,” Sirius grumbled, though he did stand up.

“Lessons or breakfast first?”

Sirius sighed. “I truly want to say food, but honestly it’s too early to eat right now. Let’s get this over with.”

“Great,” Ivy said, entirely too cheerfully for seven o’clock on a Saturday morning. This was a point that bore repeating.

Sirius sighed once more dramatically, for emphasis and for the slight possibility that Ivy would somehow decide it was a great time to go back to bed and sleep in like respectable folk.

Finally giving up that one last bit of hope, he grabbed his wand.

“*Legilimens.*”

---

Harry tried to relax as a house elf showed him into Nott’s study. He had faced down much more intimidating people than this, but he wanted this to go well, which meant that charging in there wasn’t really the best plan. Not that he had a *great* plan, per se, but at least his plan was better than that. He hoped.

“Ah, Lord Slytherin, do come in.”

Well that was a good sign, at least, according to Luna, Remus, Augusta, Carita, and Sabrina, all of whom he had consulted on various parts of his plan. He still wasn’t entirely clear *why* that made a difference, but he had gathered that it had to do with which title the person respected more, and therefore how much respect they had for Harry, or something like that. Honestly it didn’t make all that much sense to him, since any title could be used in a number of ways, including by someone trying to win your favor or someone trying to kill you. He’d experienced both plenty of times so he felt qualified to make that observation.

“Tea?”

Narcissa’s voice from years ago echoed in his mind. “Yes, thank you.” He could always cast a silent, wandless detection spell or two.

He accepted the tea offered but to his relief, and slight surprise, if he was being entirely honest, there didn’t seem to be anything wrong with it.

“Now,” Nott said, growing more serious, “I believe you have something to discuss with me. Am I correct to assume that this has something to do with my daughter?” He gestured to a letter sitting on his desk.

Harry maintained a neutral expression, and gave an internal victory cheer for his success. “It does. I assume you heard then?”

“That my only daughter sorted into Gryffindor of all places? Yes, I did manage to finally hear about that.” Nott’s tone bordered on something bitter.

Not quite trusting his mouth, Harry raised an eyebrow, hoping it would work half as well as Narcissa’s did.

Nott sighed. “I’ll admit my initial reaction was...unfavorable, but I am not the young man I once was. I’d like to think I am not so hotheaded and stubborn as I was once. Well, stubborn, perhaps. But at least a little better as seeing things clearly.”

Harry gave himself a mental high five.

“I know why you’re here,” Nott continued, meeting Harry’s gaze straight on. “It is not difficult to picture exactly how it went. Theo would have been concerned with his sister’s sorting, must have worried over my reaction, one of his friends would have suggested you. The Malfoy heir, perhaps, or maybe Zabini’s boy.”

Harry made no verbal confirmation but Nott clearly took his silence as such.

Nott sighed. “You would not have ever met Walburga Black, but I’m sure you have heard of her? Black certainly would have mentioned her, if only to spit on her grave.”

“I am familiar with her,” Harry said. “And with Orion.”

Nott scoffed. “Orion was weak. Forever under the thumb of first his father, then his wife. He might not have agreed with her on everything, but he sure as hell didn’t stop her.”

Harry had a vague idea of where this might be headed.

“I am sure you are intimately aware of the scandal then, that was young Sirius Black’s sorting?”

Harry nodded.

“Walburga threatened to disown him on the spot, but old Arcturus would have none of it. He rather hated her on principle though, so it was anyone’s guess what his thoughts on it truly were. But oh, did Walburga throw such a fit. And that was just the beginning. First their heir sorted into Gryffindor, then Cygnus’s daughter ran off with a mudblood. Within a decade most of that generation of Blacks were dead, disowned, or in Azkaban, and any Blacks left were married outside the family or too far removed from the main line to matter. Many said it all started with the current Lord Black’s sorting. A bunch of rubbish, that. No, it began the moment Walburga took a child’s sorting at Hogwarts as a sign of betrayal towards the family.”

Harry carefully masked any surprise he felt. This had honestly not been what he was expecting when he had arrived.

“I may not like it,” Nott said, staring Harry down. “I may wish that my daughter had sorted anywhere else. I may yet be tempted to rant at the empty air after you have gone, or destroy some of the remaining evidence of my great-aunt’s horrible taste in decor, but I will *never* hurt my children, or fault them for not being exact replicas of their parents.”

Harry’s mind went back a ways, to a moment when Theo Nott was discovered to be free of the dark mark. When asked, he had simply said that his father had not allowed it. At the time many had taken it to mean that Theo’s father had perceived him as weak, or too young, or of no great significance, but now Harry couldn’t help but wonder if it was rather the opposite of that. He also suddenly had a newfound respect for Thaddeus Nott that he had never anticipated having.

“I have obviously failed, if my children were so afraid of my reaction that they hesitated to mention it to me, and sought outside help in mediating between us,” Nott said, sounding much more his age than he had previously. “I will be the first to admit that I am not as openly affectionate with my children as some parents. Perhaps that was a failure on my part. I could never have filled Amanda’s place in our children’s lives, but perhaps I ought to have at least tried. Whatever my regrets, however, I would like to believe that there is still a chance that I will not alienate them completely.”

“I imagine you would be quite successful there,” Harry said, hoping what he was saying was alright.

Nott gave Harry a look indicating something Harry couldn’t quite make out. “My reaction twenty years ago would have likely been much different, and not at all to my credit. But things change, do they not? *Lord Slytherin.*”

“And in what manner would you say they change?” Harry asked, not at all intimidated by the way Nott said his name.

“Do not forget that I knew the dark lord long before he became what he was. I knew more about him than most of the so-called inner circle. Take from that what you will, but understand that I know *exactly* what you must have done to now bear that title.”

Harry met Nott’s gaze, unafraid of what the man might know or say. Somehow, he felt that he truly had no reason to worry. “And your opinion of the result then, if I might be so bold as to

ask.”

“Why did you do it?”

Harry raised an eyebrow again. “Because it needed to be done.”

“But why did *you* do it? Oh, I already know the answer to that. You did it because you protect your daughter. Because somehow, if you hadn’t, she might have been placed in a dangerous position. So you took care of it.”

Harry couldn’t quite contain his surprise at that observation.

Nott chuckled dryly. “I was privy to many pieces of information, including things the dark lord would have rather preferred no one to know, I dare say. But are you going to tell me I’m wrong?”

“No,” Harry said in reply. “No, you’re not wrong at all.” Maybe Nott didn’t have the full picture, but really, when it came down to it, he was exactly right.

“You see then? You did what you did to protect your children, and somehow now that protection has been extended to mine. If I am not wrong, and I do not think I am, you will continue to fight for them, on their behalf, to protect them, and to make the world a little better their future. I have lived through two wars, Lord Slytherin, and regardless of my political views, I have no desire to witness a third.”

---

As Harry made his way to the apparation point outside Nott’s manor, he thought about the conversation he had just had. A conversation that had involved much less speaking on his part than he had anticipated for sure, not that he was necessarily complaining. It had been... insightful. Nott was almost contradictory, it seemed, as he was both holding to his views but simultaneously rejecting the path those views had taken in the past. He also seemed content to let his children form their own views, which Harry was relieved with. But he did hint strongly at knowing more than Harry was strictly comfortable with regarding Ivy and Voldemort. If nothing else, there was at least a strong possibility that Nott knew of the prophecy and of the horcruxes, which, admittedly, was quite a bit to know about, since prior to Harry’s arrival the number of people knowledgeable about either was small and those knowledgeable about both was almost nonexistent. Dumbledore, perhaps, but that was it really. And yet Nott had not, as far as Harry could tell, done anything with that knowledge.

Harry couldn’t help but feel that the entire interview had been nothing more really than a declaration of neutrality on Nott’s part, and he didn’t find himself all that bothered by that thought. Better a neutral party than an enemy, at least.

# Chapter 43

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*September 6, 1993*

“Dementors. At Hogwarts. *Have you bloody well gone insane?*”

This was at least the fourteenth time Amelia had yelled something along those lines to the Minister, but it hadn't as yet done anything. Neither had any of her other attempts to do something about the situation, and it was growing increasingly frustrating, particularly since she had spent the entire weekend fending off parent complaints. Instead of, you know, actually *doing something about the murderer on the loose*.

Sometimes she had to remember that she was doing good work as the department head, even if it meant dealing with paperwork and politics more than the fieldwork she did miss on occasion. Now was a good example of that, since Fudge had somehow managed to look good while simultaneously breaking her well-kept mental records of idiocy. Quite an achievement, that.

As Cornelius's excuses washed over her, she spotted one person she would have never expected to call upon as a potential ally. Desperate times and all that.

“Ah, Lord Malfoy,” she said, interrupting what was no doubt an entirely unpersuasive argument for why the dementors *absolutely had to be there*. “Are you here to file a complaint about the dementors' presence at Hogwarts as well?”

Malfoy lifted a single eyebrow. “Although I am opposed to their presence so close to our children, I believe your office has far better things to do than deal with complaints you can not do anything about,” he said, before turning towards the Minister. “I must admit I am curious, Minister, why exactly the decision was made to send dementors, instead of a team of aurors or such?”

“Well, I took your advice to heart, Lucius. It really is time that the Ministry put its best foot forward and take a firm stance on dealing with the situation at hand.”

Amelia had to hand it to him. Fudge was an expert at talking a lot while saying very little. Malfoy on the other hand looked like he was one breath away from losing his perfect control over his facial features. The beginnings of an eye twitch were certainly there.

“And what exactly was that advice?” Malfoy enquired. “I'm afraid I am having a difficult time recollecting.”

“Why, you told me that as Minister I ought to take a more active role in the situation, instead of a reactive one,” Fudge said, managing to sound proud.

Amelia leaned forward slightly, ready to see Malfoy's perfect pureblood mask drop, but at the last moment he recovered. She could admit, if only to herself, that she was mildly disappointed, having hoped to see definitive evidence that she wasn't the only one currently suffering from Fudge's idiocy.

"Madame Bones, do you have a few moments to spare?"

"Of course, Lord Malfoy," she said, hiding her surprise well. "If you would just follow me."

---

"That's it. I'm done. You're turn."

Luna looked at Lucius with amusement. "Harry's in the next room if you'd like to speak with him."

Lucius's face colored slightly. "I apologize. I... Yes, I'll be going then. Not that you... Never mind," he muttered, walking quickly out of the room.

Luna often found Lucius much more amusing than the others. He seemed mildly flustered around her sometimes, though she still couldn't figure out why.

---

"Your wife is terrifying," Lucius said, alerting Harry to his presence.

"My wife?" Harry had to make sure he wasn't hearing things.

"Yes."

"But she's so nice," Harry said with a small frown.

Lucius sighed. Harry did not know why Lucius was sighing, but he supposed it could be because he didn't have a bloody clue what Lucius was getting at. "She could take over the world."

"Well, yeah, of course she could. But she's never expressed an interest in doing so. Why? Did she say something?"

Lucius just stared at him for a moment. "You two really are perfect for each other, you know that?"

Harry agreed, though he still wasn't sure why Lucius was saying it like that.

"Now," Lucius continued, "how about you take your non-world domination focused enthusiasm and apply it to getting the dementors out. And maybe Fudge while you're at it. Amelia was ever so helpful is pointing out that neither of our efforts have done any good thus far, nor are they likely to."

"So you want me to make them go away?"



“Yes,” Lucius replied, looking very much like an eighteen year old Draco Harry had once known. The resemblance was disturbing, but he supposed familial resemblances did have to come from somewhere.

“And your plan isn’t working because...”

And now Lucius looked like an eleven year old Draco. Well, at least Draco had come by it honestly.

“I *recommended* to the Minister that he take a more active approach to dealing with the situation. I meant it as a way to send aurors instead of dementors, or actually track the madwoman down instead of just waiting for her to appear, but apparently he took it as encouragement to place the dementors there. Besides, I can’t very well push for their removal too aggressively. Neither can Black, for that matter. I suppose a few of the others could press a little harder, but so far parent complaints, even from those Fudge will inevitably have to face in the Wizengamot, have done nothing to sway him. Amelia can’t get through to him, and I want this taken care of before any of my children get their souls sucked out by a dementor that strayed too far.”

“Your children?” Harry asked with amusement.

“Our chil... *The* children.”

“Mmhmm. And since when is she Amelia to you?”

“We bonded over the idiocy of Cornelius Fudge,” Lucius deadpanned.

“Yeah, that’ll do it,” Harry muttered. “Alright, so why me though? What’d you mean you can’t push too hard?”

Lucius gave him a very unimpressed look. “Please try to remember that Bellatrix LeStrange is my sister-in-law.”

“Right,” Harry grumbled. He could have done without that particular reminder.

“Make no mistake; that woman is mad and dangerous, and I would much rather see her dead than within a hundred miles of my son, but the world does not easily forget your blood.”

“Indeed,” Harry mumbled. “And I suppose that same could be said of Sirius as well.”

Lucius nodded and Harry sighed.

“Fine. I’ll... do something more. Any suggestions?” What an interesting direction his life had taken, for him to now be asking advice of Lucius Malfoy.

“You could do it yourself, I am sure, but if you have one or two others behind you, preferably people to whom there would be no objection or accusations of aiding the fugitive...”

Harry caught on to what Lucius was trying not to come out and say. “You mean if I ask Augusta really nicely,” he said with a cheeky grin. Oh how he enjoyed the look of pained

resignation on Lucius's face at that moment.

"Yes, well, I suppose that might aid somewhat."

"You can just say it, you know."

"You are all ruining my reputation," Lucius grumbled.

---

*September 26, 1993*

"That bad?" As soon as Harry said it out loud he regretted it. Snape's glare didn't help either.

"Whatever gave you that idea," Snape drawled in a way that was apparently a multiversal constant.

Harry cleared his throat. "Right. So, what did you need to speak with me about?"

Snape continued to stare at him for moment without saying anything. Most people would probably be uncomfortable by that point but Harry was long since immune to that type of stare. Finally Snape spoke. "I think I liked it better when I believed you might possibly be the Dark Lord's replacement," he said. "Albus still thinks you are, of course. Well, he thinks you might be the Dark Lord himself at any rate. Minerva, on the other hand, has assured him that you are Canadian and therefore can't possibly be the next dark lord, or a reincarnation for that matter. I believe her exact words were, 'you've never heard of a Canadian dark lord, now have you?'"

By this point Harry had his head on the table in front of him. "Why me," he muttered to no one in particular.

Snape didn't even acknowledge his complaint. "So of course, Albus listens to *her*, as if I haven't been telling him more or less the same thing for the last year. He's not entirely convinced, of course, but since when does evidence matter to him," he said a bit bitterly.

Harry couldn't really blame him.

"And now, in all his 'greater good' nonsense, he's stopped even *trying* to get the dementors removed, because he sees it as a good way to test your daughter's magical power and prowess."

Harry was about to say exactly what he thought about that, but Snape waved him off. "Don't worry, he has me continuing the work on her patronus, and I'm afraid I've always had a talent for understating things at times."

Harry exhaled with what was both a chuckle and a sigh of relief. "Are the boys still working on it?"

"I'm afraid so," Snape answered. "Longbottom's bear is satisfactory, I suppose."

"Either of the others get a clear form yet?"

“Not quite, although they both have the beginnings of one. Zabini’s was looking suspiciously feline, and a brief glimpse of Draco’s looked far too similar to those blasted peacocks for my taste.”

They both shuddered minutely at mention of the Malfoy’s peacocks.

“Well, good. That’s good. Hopefully they’ll both get it down soon then. Anything else?”

“Well, I suppose congratulations on your most recent status change are in order.”

“My what?” Harry briefly (and with absolutely no sense of panic) thought back to the last few times he had been in Gringotts. The goblins had been as happy as ever, but he didn’t think they had managed to get anything past him. He hadn’t signed anything either, so...

“It seems you are now officially Ivy Potter’s father, as opposed to her guardian.”

“Sorry?”

“I believe it started with young Miss Nott’s declaration to Ivy that she had, and I quote, ‘the best dad ever.’ I believe both Nott children held you somewhat responsible for the, how shall I say, *lack* of reaction to the surprise sorting?”

“I really didn’t end up doing anything,” Harry said.

“Be that as it may, your willingness to involve yourself at the very least made an impression, and since Miss Nott declared you ‘the best,’ her simultaneous and unrelated declaration of you as Ivy’s father has caught on. I believe you graduated from Uncle to Dad. So congratulations on that.”

“Thanks?” Harry didn’t know how he was supposed to respond to that. “I think it sort of just... happened? That’s probably why Ivy didn’t correct her or anything.”

“Well your other nephews seem to have secured your previous title.”

At Harry’s confused look Snape did what could be considered the Snape version of rolling his eyes (since Harry was sure Snape didn’t actually do things like that).

“Longbottom, Zabini, and Draco have all taken to calling you ‘Uncle Henry.’”

Oh, well that kind of made sense. “There are worse things to be called,” Harry said with a shrug. Now if he could just get them to change it to Uncle *Harry*... Ivy had always insisted on Henry, saying it fit him better, but maybe there was still hope for the other three...

“Indeed,” Snape said with a slight drawl.

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*September 30, 1993*

“Is it weird being back here now?” Ivy asked.

Adrian and Terence both shrugged.

“A bit,” said Adrian.

“Has it always been this quiet at the Slytherin table?” Terence asked.

Kenneth Burke, sitting across and down a few spots from them lowered his book and peered over it at the group of quidditch players before shaking his head and resuming his reading.

“I’m pretty sure Gryffindor is just loud,” Adrian answered.

“Well, how was Hufflepuff?” Ivy asked.

“Good, good,” Adrian replied. “They’re so happy all of the time. I don’t think I’ve ever had so many younger kids following me around.”

Ivy snorted, having some idea of *why* the (mostly female) Hufflepuffs had enjoyed having Adrian around two of the past four weeks. Just down the table Kenneth snorted from behind his book as well.

“Well, you must’ve liked it, right? Or you wouldn’t have gone back for the last week?”

Adrian shrugged. “Yeah. It was good. Liked it better than the other two anyway.”

Terence nudged Adrian and gestured up to the head table. “Is Professor Snape *smiling*?”

All three looked up at the head table, and sure enough, Professor Snape looked like someone had just told him he was getting unlimited potion ingredients for Christmas. Or something. None of them precisely knew what could land a look like that on his face.

“He’s just happy to have Weasley gone,” Kenneth said, eyes not leaving his book.

The three turned toward him now. “Which one?” Adrian asked.

“I would say both of them, but I think it is more especially to do with the one that came back.”

“Well, Fred did say he wanted to try out Slytherin,” Ivy said with a shrug.

They ate in silence for a moment after that before Draco came in and joined them. His smile was nearly identical to their head of house’s.

“Missing someone?” Terence teased.

Draco’s smile didn’t falter. “I know you are trying to rile me up, but it won’t work,” he said cheerfully. “I just survived my second week with Fred Weasley living in such close proximity and nothing you say can ruin this morning’s joy. It’s quite a lovely morning, wouldn’t you agree? Pass the tomatoes, would you?”

Kenneth levitated the dish down.

“Thank you Burke,” Draco said. “Now, the twins have gotten it all out of their system, so Slytherin can go back to being...”

“Good morning, dragon,” a chipper voice called out.

Ivy, Terence, and Adrian all watched with rapt attention as Draco’s face lost its cheerful visage, going first to anger, then to irritation, before finally settling on resigned.

“And it was going so well,” Draco sighed, before picking up his plate and heading over to the Hufflepuff table, Cedric and Hannah making room for him without a comment.

“Morning,” Fred said cheerfully, taking Draco’s now vacated spot.

The others all chorused their greetings.

“Aren’t you supposed to be back at the Gryffindor table?” Terence questioned.

“Probably,” Fred said.

Ivy nudged the two other boys and gestured up to the head table. Professor Snape’s smile had been replaced with an eye twitch, noticeable even from that distance.

“All in a day’s work,” Fred said with a wink. “Pass the potatoes?”

Kenneth once again obliged, though the bowl did take a quick detour to land briefly (and with a tiny bit of force) on top of Fred’s head.

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*October 2, 1993*

“If you two ever pull something like that again I am going to *eviscerate* you,” Angelina hissed to the twins.

Fred and George both gave her their best expression of innocence.

“Someone had fun in Ravenclaw,” Fred said. He got a smack to his stomach for his trouble.

“*Five weeks*,” Angelina said. “This has been going on for five weeks.”

“Well, to be fair, I kind of thought they’d have stopped by now,” George defended.

“You really believed that?” Alicia asked skeptically, joining their hushed conversation.

“Oliver isn’t going to back down on any idea of how to make quidditch more intense.”

“To be fair, we didn’t really calculate quidditch into our plans,” Fred replied.

“Obviously,” Terence muttered under his breath. So maybe the conversation wasn’t quite as hushed as they had thought.

Just then their quidditch ~~dictators~~ captains joined the rest of the players on the field. To be fair, both the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff captains were a little nicer about this whole thing. Wood and Flint didn't believe in niceties on the quidditch field, however, and today was apparently their turn to run drills again as Wood pulled out his ridiculously loud whistle and Flint began shooting fireballs into the sky.

The group of fifth years collectively groaned.

"All right. Today's practice will be focused on dodges and rolls," Wood called out.

Flint looked positively gleeful. They all groaned again.

"Remind me whose fault this is again?" Adrian muttered.

"Fred and George," came the nearly collective reply.

"Ivy," said Cedric. When everyone else looked at him he just said, "What? They were worried about their quidditch teams so Ivy suggested they hold a combined practice for the first couple weeks. A shoe camp or something?"

"Boot camp," came a simultaneous response.

"Yeah, that one," Cedric said.

"I'm still blaming the twins," Alicia said.

"Same," came multiple responses.

The twins in question just shrugged. "At least we'll all be really prepared for next year's olympics," George stated.

"Let me guess. A new event?" Terence asked sarcastically.

George just grinned at him.

"Hey Flint, feel free to throw a couple extra fireballs over this way," Angelina called out, jabbing a thumb in the direction of the twins.

---

"I have never been so exhausted in my life," Draco complained on the way back to the locker rooms. "Just when I thought it couldn't get any worse, it did."

"Well, at least you didn't get singed," Ivy said.

Draco grinned at the memory of Fred getting one side of hair singed off and George losing the bottom few inches of his robe. "Yeah, that was pretty great," he said.

Ivy rolled her eyes. "I'm sure they'll settle down," she said. "Everyone is back in their houses now anyways."

Draco shook his head. “Nope. You gave them all the inspiration we never needed them to have. Flint and Wood are unstoppable now.”

“Well, at least they graduate this year?” Ivy said.

“Oh thank Merlin,” Draco said with an exaggerated sigh.

---

*October 7, 1993*

“Alright, we have thirty minutes before our meeting with Professor Flitwick, so let’s get started.”

Seven fifth-years sat in a semicircle, waiting for Weasley to continue.

“Now, as you know, we have had a vested interest in Ivy Potter’s... success, over the past few years. Unfortunately, we will no longer be able to continue with this level of attention after this year, seeing as we will both be graduating,” Weasley said, gesturing to Thomas who was sitting next to him.

“So you want to recruit us,” Terence inferred. He had wondered why Marcus and Wood were there too. He wasn’t sure which pair he feared more at the moment.

“And I’m the only girl you could find?”

Terence couldn’t remember the Hufflepuff’s name.

“Sorry Bridget,” Thomas said. So that was her name. “We tried.”

Weasley cleared his throat. “Yes, well, that part’s not important.”

“Because Angelina said no,” one of the twins said.

“And Alicia,” the other one added.

“And every fifth year Slytherin girl.”

“And Ravenclaw.”

“We didn’t actually ask any Ravenclaws,” Weasley interjected.

“Why not?” Cedric asked. “I thought this was about helping Ivy study?”

“Well...” Weasley looked a little nervous.

Thomas sighed and pulled out a stack of parchments. “Here is the list of books we have done our best to direct Ivy away from. Ongoing, mind you.”

Terence wasn’t loving the way this was going.

“Now, we of course don’t want to *stifle* her, or prevent her learning. It’s just...”

“We’d really like Hogwarts to remain standing past the next few years,” Thomas concluded for Weasley.

“Hey, we are doing an excellent job with that,” one of the twins said vehemently. Terence thought it might have been George. He would have never thought he would be sitting here, thinking of how one of the Weasley twins was the (albeit occasional) voice of reason and restraint in any scenario ever, yet here he was.

“And we appreciate your efforts,” the older Weasley said.

Terence really needed to remember his name. There were too many Weasleys here for him to keep referring to them all by their surname.

“But we just think it might take a bit... more than that. Especially given the amount of time you spend in the library.”

“Fair point,” the other twin said.

“Okay, wait. Can we go back to why you didn’t ask any of the Ravenclaws?” Walker asked. “Wouldn’t they be perfect for this?”

Christopher Walker was making a wonderful point. Terence liked the Hufflepuff even more than he did during their week in Gryffindor together.

“Well...” Thomas started, obviously not quite sure what to say, even as he gestured at his lengthy booklist.

“They’re afraid Ivy is going to get too many ideas and take over the world,” Marcus said from the back.

“Now that’s not exactly...” Thomas began, but Percy stopped him.

“We’d rather not have anyone likely to encourage her to research more obscure or arcane texts than she already does,” Percy explained. “Not that we’re keeping her from being friends with the Ravenclaws. Not at all. We just...” He gestured vaguely but everyone seemed to get the idea.

Next to him Adrian cleared his throat. On the other side of Adrian the Hufflepuff girl (Bridget, that’s right), looked amused.

“So you want us to hide library books?” Adrian asked.

Weasley and Thomas both looked pained.

“Just, don’t suggest books on weather,” Weasley said.

Thomas glared at the redhead. “You said you weren’t going to bring that up.”

“It’s a good example.”



“It’s... Oh fine,” Thomas grumbled.

“Don’t encourage hurricanes in the dorm rooms,” Marcus said again before getting up and walking to the front. “And don’t let her neglect quidditch.”

“Is that the only reason you two are here?” Cedric asked the two quidditch captains.

“Yes,” Marcus said firmly.

“And to offer moral support,” Wood added. “But mostly quidditch.”

“And we shall not fail you, oh captain, our captain,” the twins chorused.

Wood just rolled his eyes. “I was talking to Cedric, but good. I’ll hold you both to it.”

“I’m sorry, but what was that about hurricanes exactly?” Bridget asked.

At that question there were couple grins, mostly from the twins and Adrian, who all knew what was being referenced, a visible eye twitch courtesy of Thomas, and a few perplexed looks from the Hufflepuffs.

“It’s really not that important,” Thomas insisted. “But maybe I suggested a book, and she may have possibly been practicing in her dorm room, where a *small* hurricane was conjured. It really wasn’t that big of a deal.”

“So essentially you want us to... not do that.”

“Yes,” Thomas ground out, sounding slightly pained.

Terence sympathized with him greatly at that moment.

“Okay, we are all talking about the sweet little third year, right?”

Everyone turned to look at Walker.

“What?”

“First lesson,” Thomas said firmly, “sweetness and chaos are not mutually exclusive.”

“Second lesson,” Percy continued, “boredom is chaos’s enabler.”

“Third lesson, quidditch is a great distraction from taking over the world and also a great way to make sure we don’t hunt you down for letting all our hard word go to waste,” Marcus said with a tone of finality.

“We really...” Weasley began.

“No. That’s all they need to know. Go protect babies,” Marcus said, shoos Weasley and Thomas out the door.

“Protect babies?” Adrian mouthed to him.

Terence just shrugged and shook his head. He had no idea but he was happy to leave before they got recruited into doing something else.

“Oh, and Ivy found out about what they were doing last summer, so tread carefully,” Wood said, before he and Marcus departed as well.

“Well, I’m sure everything will be fine,” Cedric said, using his best “I’m reassuring because I’m a Hufflepuff” voice.

Terence personally thought the prefect’s time in Gryffindor had ruined the effectiveness of the voice. And also probably the other wizard’s ability to view things from a reasonable standpoint. Of course he himself had willingly returned to Gryffindor for a second week, so he probably didn’t have much room to talk.

## Chapter End Notes

My muse died, and in the process of finding a new one to adopt, I got distracted with about eight other fics. So now I have nine fics started. jgfdjkngarsdnkwnz. \*sigh.\* So someday I'll finish this one (this one is going to go through year five I think so it's still got a ways to go), and then I'll do the other ones. But enough of my sleep deprived rant. Enjoy an almost plotless chapter with some of my favorite kids haha. As always, I enjoy reading the comments y'all post, and thanks for the kudos.

## Chapter 44

*October 11, 1993*

Draco ignored the idle tapping of Ivy's fingers. He was going to win this round. Nothing was going to stop him now. He was *so* close to finally properly trouncing Weasley in chess. He just needed a few more moves before he'd be in position, and then...

"But that's completely idiotic," a female voice shouted. "How can you possibly expect anyone to get anything done if they have to keep stopping to reapply a charm like that every twenty minutes?"

A much more familiar voice shouted back, giving reasons that made no sense to Draco, though he felt he could be forgiven seeing as he had no idea what they were actually arguing about.

He tried to just keep his focus on the game, he really did. But the two girls were going at it and it was sort of distracting, especially since he may sort want to figure out who was winning the argument.

"And how would *you* know anything about it?" Pansy yelled. "You never even leave the library."

"I do so!" Granger yelled back. "And I know plenty about it, thank you very much, seeing as I'm actually *passing* the class."

The argument devolved back into insults at that point and Draco lost all hope in figuring out what they were originally fighting about.

"Er, Ivy?" Weasley asked. "You going to stop them?"

Ivy stopped her tapping and looked up from her book. "No? Why?"

"Uh, well, it's just that you make all of us be nice to each other, so I thought maybe you'd, I don't know, tell them to stop or something?"

Ro... No, Weasley. He was Weasley while they played chess. *Weasley* had a point. Draco wasn't going to inform him of this, but the point remained valid if unacknowledged.

"Well I can't get *everyone* to be friends," Ivy said as if it were obvious. Which, fair.

Ron (and darn it but now he was out of chess mode) nodded along, as if that made sense. It sort of did, but Draco still felt deep down that Ivy could just order everyone to be friends as part of her world takeover, but it was *her* world takeover (even if still theoretical at this point), so he *supposed* it was up to her.

Then Ivy gasped, looked as if she were about to cry, and ran out of the Great Hall. It was shocking enough to bring Pansy and Granger's verbal war to an immediate halt, as well as stir Theo from his book. Draco honestly hadn't even noticed him sitting there until now.

"Is she okay?" Theo asked.

Draco just shrugged, happy that Ron, Pansy, and Granger were all doing the same. He didn't enjoy being ignorant, but if he was going to be ignorant he preferred to at least not be alone.

---

Ivy Potter in the Hufflepuff common room wasn't that uncommon a sight. Ivy Potter with a tear running down her cheek and a slight waver in her voice absolutely was.

"Um, can I... I'll go find Cedric, yeah?"

Without waiting for a response Justin jumped up from his seat and went in search of the prefect that was generally acknowledged to be the one you went to when you had a problem. At least by the Hufflepuffs. And all the other students third year and below. What could Justin say, Diggory lived up to the hype. Or at least he'd better be able to, because he had left an upset Ivy in the common room and he was not at all confident in his ability to solve whatever problem was going on on his own.

---

Cedric was growing quite accustomed to younger students bursting into wherever he was at the moment and asking for help. He didn't mind, and he was honored that they all trusted him enough to ask for help, but he had yet to face such a scenario as this.

"But what if that's why I didn't get into Hufflepuff? Does that make me a bad person?" Ivy choked out in between worried tears.

He wasn't quite sure how to handle this. "Of course not," he began. Comfort, reassurance, support. Just stick to the basics and it would be fine.

"But I didn't try hard enough. Maybe if I worked harder to help everyone get along I..."

"Ivy, you can't possibly expect to be able to make everyone get along," Cedric interrupted. "People are people, and people are always going to be people, and people don't always get along. That's not on you, alright?"

"But..."

"No buts. You have done more to ease house boundaries and rivalries than anyone probably ever in the history of this school, and not even just within your year. Take Percy and Thomas for example."

Granted, their bonding had first occurred over a mutual desire to see Hogwarts remain standing, but that was neither here nor there.

"I doubt they had ever even considered the possibility of being friends before you came. Or Ron and Draco. *Everyone* knows about the Malfoy-Weasley feud. But you helped them find

some common ground, and they discovered that they could get along.”

“So what you’re saying is I need to help Pansy and Hermione find common ground.”

“No, not at all. You already did that with them. Now you just have to let them work it out. You can step in if it becomes dangerous, or if you think someone might get hurt, but you can’t dictate people’s feelings or actions.”

“I know,” Ivy said with a small pout. “I just wish all my friends could get along.”

Cedric pulled her in for a hug. “They’re both still your friends, even if they don’t get along. And you’re still an honorary Hufflepuff, no matter what.”

“Really?” Ivy asked in a small voice.

Cedric knew there was more to her concern than the fact that two of her friends got in an argument, but he didn’t feel there was anything more *he* could do.

“Of course,” he said. “Only Hufflepuffs get to play with Furball, after all.”

Then he raced off to find Bridget, and thus Furball. A physical reminder never hurt.

---

Bridget watched as Ivy played with the pig. She was fairly certain that there would have been a riot in Hufflepuff if she hadn’t taken her brother up on his offer to keep Furball there after his graduation.

“So, Ced told me you were a bit upset about your friends’ argument.”

“Just wished they’d all get along,” Ivy said, not taking her attention off the unofficial Hufflepuff mascot. No one was stupid enough to try and bring a badger. At least not in the last few years. The class of ’85 still had a lot to answer for apparently.

“And hopefully he told you that’s not your responsibility, right?”

“Yeah.”

“And?” Bridget was willing to press this point a little bit.

Ivy sighed and looked her way. “And that I’m still an honorary Hufflepuff, and I’m still good enough for Hufflepuff even if I’m in Slytherin.”

“There you go,” Bridget said. “You really did want to be in Hufflepuff then.” She certainly liked her house, but she was not under any sort of delusion that other outside her house thought as highly of the badgers as she did.

“I did,” Ivy said. “But the hat told me Slytherin would be a better fit.”

“And do you agree?”

Ivy shrugged. "I like it."

"Well, the sorting hat has been doing this a long time," Bridget said. "Pretty sure it has a good idea. What else did it say to you?"

"It said I had qualities of each house, but that Slytherin would be the best place to help me 'achieve my goals.'"

"And what would those be?"

Ivy ducked, maybe slightly embarrassed. Bridget could understand. The goals one possesses at age eleven don't always carry through super well, after all.

"I didn't want what happened to me to happen to anyone else," Ivy said quietly.

"With your parents?" Bridget asked for clarification.

"Yes. And after," Ivy said. "Before Dad found me. And I wanted to make friends. Real friends. I made some, you know, after he came, but we travelled a lot. It was great, but I didn't have anyone that really stuck around."

"Well maybe that's why the hat thought you'd do so well in Slytherin then." Ivy looked confused at that so Bridget continued. "Slytherins tend to find a couple people and stick with them. How many of the upper years have you seen in Slytherin that have one or two people they are with almost all the time? Not all of them are like that, mind you, but you do all seem to make friendships that last a long time. I bet even some of your friends' parents could tell you that they've been friends since *their* school years. And world peace sounds like as big an ambition as you can get," Bridget said, nudging Ivy and giving her a wink.

Ivy laughed. "I guess so," she said. "And I don't have just one person, but I see what you mean. I can't really picture *not* being friends with any of them just because we left school."

"So maybe the sorting hat looked at you, and figured out what it was that you really wanted. It tends to do that while it's rifling through your mind, you know."

"I guess he's pretty smart," Ivy said with a small eye roll.

"Course he is. Helga Hufflepuff herself helped," she said pompously.

"How come he's so snarky then?" Ivy asked with a grin.

"Obviously that was Slytherin's contribution," Bridget said with a wave before they both burst out in giggles.

---

"So... Is Ivy alright?"

Cedric nodded. "She was worried she wasn't good enough for Hufflepuff."

Justin let out a small sigh. "So, you fixed it?"

“No.”

Justin’s face must have shown his confusion because Cedric continued.

“Being a good, supportive friend isn’t all about fixing problems. Sometimes you just have to be there to listen.”

Justin nodded, but inside he was debating the validity of that statement. It sure seemed to him that fixing problems worked quite well. Why, just the other day Theo had been nervous about asking Ivy to play chess with him for some reason, so Justin had solved the problem quite spectacularly by asking Ivy on Theo’s behalf. Problem solved.

---

“Hey, have you seen Ivy anywhere?”

It was probably better that Theo asked the question before he could, because he would have probably said it more as a demand than a polite question.

“She was in Hufflepuff a bit ago,” Finch-Fletchley said. “Cedric was helping her feel better I guess.”

Draco didn’t know what Diggory had that he didn’t have. He was perfectly capable of helping Ivy feel better. And destroying anyone who dared make her feel bad in the first place. Or at least letting their dads know so they could do the destroying. Draco was aware of his own limitations, thank you.

“I guess she was worried she wasn’t good enough for Hufflepuff or something.”

On the other hand, Diggory was a nice person who was probably good at comforting and other Hufflepuff things like that.

Draco noticed that Theo didn’t comment on his friend’s statement either.

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*October 14, 1993*

“Alright, final bets for Boggarts. Pansy?” Tracey said, list and quill at the ready.

“Put me down for Weasley and spider, Patil and snake, Draco and mud, and Granger and failing a test.”

“Oh come on, at least go for something past the obvious,” Blaise complained.

“Hey,” Draco shouted indignantly.

“Oh, and Blaise and the Hufflepuff pig,” Pansy said with a smirk.

“You said you were never going to mention that,” Blaise said. No one could tell if his offended air was real or exaggerated.

Tracey rolled her eyes. “Draco?”

“Longbottom and Lestrangle, Pansy and a crup, Blaise and a badger...”

“I hate you all.”

“...and Ivy and Tiger.”

Tracey looked up from her note taking. “Wait, seriously? You’re joking, right?”

“Fine, let me specify a Tiger that she can’t talk to.”

Someone let out a low whistle.

“That’s dark, mate.”

Draco just shrugged.

“Okay, fine. Daph?”

---

“Where were you three? We finished placing the bets ages ago.”

Ivy almost laughed at Draco’s face but didn’t, knowing he’d just make another face and then she wouldn’t be able to stop laughing. It would be a vicious cycle, no doubt.

“We were just talking about all the scary things in the world to make sure that we are all set for whatever the Boggart ends up being.”

She felt a little bad for Greg and Vince. They hadn’t enjoyed learning about some of the terrors of the deep ocean, but she doubted something they had just learned about would really end up being their boggart, and this way whatever they did face they might be able to feel a little better about. Besides, even if they were a little pale now they had both done rather well, and Ivy had only needed to remind them that she would protect them twice, so really she was confident they’d be able to handle the boggart just fine. They had made her promise that she’d stand right there just in case, but she was happy to oblige.

“But what about the bets?”

“I already gave Tracey my list. Yesterday, in fact.”

“Fine,” Draco muttered.

“Oh, do you know why Blaise was complaining about the rest of you? He said something about pigs but I wasn’t sure what he was talking about.”

“Well if you’d been there for the bets you would know,” Draco said childishly.

Ivy rolled her eyes.



“Ivy Potter,” an upset sounding voice came. “I need to have a word with you.”

Ivy looked past Draco to see Fred walking towards her with a scowl on his face.

Draco made a hasty retreat, but Vince and Greg stood firmly by her side. She was so proud of them.

“Is everything okay?”

“No, everything is not okay, Ivy. *Minions*. You have *minions*, and you didn’t tell me. I had to find out from Luna. I was supposed to be your first one!”

“Who are my minions?”

Fred’s eye twitched and he gestured to the boys standing on either side of her.

“Oh, they’re not minions.”

“We’re not?” Vince asked Greg softly.

Seeing Greg shrug his shoulders and deciding she could answer any questions they had *after* she was done reassuring Fred, she turned back to the redhead.

“You can still be my first minion,” she said. “Besides, Dad told me no minions before I graduate.”

At that Fred’s face lit back up, scowl gone. “Oh, well in that case, carry on.”

“She’s going to protect us from the dementors,” Greg chimed in.

Fred paused and looked at them quizzically. “How are you going to do that?” he asked her.

“I’m learning the patronus charm. It repels dementors. Unless you’re Dad. Then I think it eats them or something, I don’t know.”

“You learned something really cool like that *without me*?”

“Mmhmm. So did Draco and Neville and Blaise. You can come learn it with us, if you want. We meet Professor Snape once or twice a week to practice.”

Fred’s face broke into a grin that reminded Ivy of why he had made an excellent Slytherin for two weeks. “Done,” he said.

“Okay great. I’ll let you know when we do it next. George too?”

Fred scoffed. “Of course. Since when do either of us go anywhere without the other one?”

Vince raised a hand. “Then where is he now?”

Fred sighed in a most dramatic fashion. “Alas, we are no longer entirely identical. My somewhat less intelligent twin had decided that Runes are worth spending time in the library

for. I am hiding from Runes and all books containing them, so, as you can see, we must spend this brief moment apart.”

Ivy giggled. “I know what I’m getting you for Christmas,” she said.

Fred fake gasped. “You wouldn’t dare.”

“Would so. And we have to go now. We have class.”

“Anything good?”

“We’re doing boggarts today. We were just in the library learning about all sorts of deadly sea creatures so I think it’ll go well.”

Fred did not seem to quite catch her brilliant vision, but he nodded. “Sounds exciting. Go conquer those... sea... things. You know what, I just remembered I needed to have a word with Diggory. I’ll catch you lot later.”

With Fred gone Ivy turned back to Vince and Greg. “Ready to make your worst fears look silly?”

---

“Diggory,” a voice hissed. “*Diggory*.”

Cedric looked around for a moment until he spotted a Weasley twin beckoning him over.

“What is it? And why are we whispering?”

“I can’t do this. I am not cut out for this. I can keep Hogwarts standing, probably, but I can’t be responsible for books too.”

“What are you talking about... Fred?”

Fred, who it must have been, seeing as he didn’t correct Cedric, shoved a book his way.

“*Terrifying Tides: 803 Devastatingly Dangerous Creatures of the Deep*,” Cedric read out loud. “What is this?”

“*That* is the book Ivy was reading. In preparation for boggarts. *Do you see the problem?*”

“Not really, but... oh. Yes, yes I do.”

“Have you *seen* some of these?” Fred demanded, grabbing the book back and flipping through its pages.

Cedric made a face at a few of them. He didn’t even want to read the descriptions but he couldn’t quite look away either...

“Well, they haven’t graduated yet, so...”

“Percy most certainly deserves this for thinking that we weren’t doing a good enough job looking out for Ivy. And for suggesting that we actually spend time in the library looking through things like this.”

---

“Oi, what’s that book your brother handed you anyway?”

Percy pushed the volume towards Thomas without a word.

“Well it doesn’t look *that* bad.”

“They’re doing boggarts today.”

There was a brief moment of silence.

“Well that ought to be interesting.”

---

Sirius couldn’t believe it was only Thursday. He so needed a drink after this.

“Alright then. Goyle? You’re up next.”

He had been mildly disappointed that Neville’s boggart hadn’t turned out to be Snape like Harry had said it had been before. Sure, it was probably a sign of a healthier psyche or something like that, but Snape in one of Augusta’s hats was something he had been looking forward to about this class.

Also he had expected Ivy to have a dementor as a boggart, not Neville. Still, Neville’s patronus had been strong, and the rest of the class had been suitably impressed. Sirius was confident that anyone who still doubted Neville would be rethinking their opinions now. Besides, the bear did look like it could eat them all if it so chose. It had certainly chased after that boggart.

And maybe a patronus wasn’t exactly what the students were supposed to be practicing for this lesson, but Sirius was proud of Neville so didn’t even bother correcting him. Besides, if someone could cast a patronus they could certainly cast *Riddikulus*.

He would just make sure Neville knew the wand movements and everything would be fine.

His thoughts veered back to the lesson just in time to see the boggart turn into...

Well he honestly wasn’t quite sure what that was.

Ivy, standing just a step behind Goyle, looked rather guilty for some reason.

“*Ri...rid...riddikulus*,” Goyle finally got out.

Faster than several of his classmates. Sirius was impressed. The somewhat indiscernible blob now had a small yellow top hat and a green striped tie. Sirius wasn’t sure what was funny about that, but it wasn’t his boggart so he couldn’t really judge.

“Well done, Mr. Goyle. Er, may I ask what that was, exactly?”

“You don’t want to know,” Goyle said, eyes still focused on the... whatever it was.

Crabbe shuddered. Ivy looked *really* guilty. He would need to ask her about that later.

“Right then... Well, Ivy, you’re up.”

He braced himself for another dementor. Instead he got... Harry?

It was a very tense, very silent moment before he walked forward to intervene. He wasn’t sure why *Harry* was Ivy’s boggart, but she was practically frozen in place and there was no way this was going to end well.

Just before he reached the boggart though, it spoke.

“*Leave,*” it said. “*Get out you worthless...*”

And then it was on fire. A fire coming from Ivy’s wand. Well, at least it wasn’t fiendfyre, which was good, since Sirius would have a hard time explaining *that* to anyone.

And now that the boggart was... well, dead wasn’t quite the right word, since they were technically amortal, but, well, if it had been alive it wouldn’t have been now.

And that was why he had made sure Ivy was last. He was learning.

“Well, class, I think that will be all for today. An excellent job on facing each of your fears, and make sure to let me, your head of house, or Madam Pomfrey know if you experience any nightmares related to this.”

He caught Ivy’s eye, giving her a silent request to stay behind.

After all the other students had shuffled out, he pulled his goddaughter in for a big hug.

“He will never do that,” he said. “He will never say that to you.”

Ivy just nodded, a single tear finally escaping as she held on tight.

“We’re your family, sweetheart, and nothing is ever going to change that.”

Sirius hugged Ivy close for a long time after that, until she eventually let go and headed off to her class, a smile now on her face.

With his last class of the day now complete, he headed to his office to make a floo call.

---

“Well technically I never said *which* Patil would get a snake, so it still counts.”

“But you always talk to Parvati. So it feels like it was kind of implied...”

“Still. Counts.”

Draco sighed, and mentally thanked Tracey when she put her foot down and ended Pansy and Blaise's squabbling.

Really he was fairly certain Blaise was just sore because his boggart had turned out to be an creature. Not an animal anyone had guessed, unfortunately, (for them), but it was still a little close to what they *had* guessed. At least it wasn't the pig. Blaise would probably have never lived that down, even if Draco agreed that waking up in the middle of the night with the Hufflepuff's strangest member on your face could be counted as startling. Perhaps not terror inducing, but startling Draco could allow.

Still, a quintaped was respectably terrifying and Draco knew no one was actually going to be teasing Blaise about that. Especially after witnessing his near maniacal laugh after turning it into the world's most terrifying starfish. Draco didn't know how that had been an improvement, per se, but Blaise had evidently found it hilarious.

And then there had been Neville with his stupidly perfect patronus. No, he was proud of Neville. And his stupidly perfect patronus. But Draco was *this close* to getting it, and he just needed to get it before Blaise so he could win that last part of the bet...

He should probably stop betting on his friends so much.

And speaking of bets...

No one had predicted Ivy's boggart. She had been a little quiet at dinner, even if she still smiled and talked to the rest of their friends. But Draco wasn't fooled. She had been affected by the boggart more than she was trying to let on, and he was determined that whenever she made it back to the common room she was getting a huge hug which he would not let her out of for at least a full minute. Maybe five.

Well, speak a demon's name...

He allowed her about fifteen seconds before he initiated the hug.

Ivy huffed. "I'm fine, Draco, really."

"One minute," he said.

She poked him in the side.

"Now it's five," he said.

Ivy rolled her eyes but relaxed into the hug. "You sure you didn't accidentally turn into a koala bear somewhere?"

"Positive. Now shush and let me enjoy my comfort-giving hug."

Ivy laughed a little. Mission accomplished.

They started chatting, and inevitably the subject turned to that day's lesson.

“So what was that with Greg’s boggart, anyway?”

Ivy pulled back slightly. “Er, well, you know how I was trying to help Vince and Greg get ready for the lesson today?”

“Yes...”

“Well, I may have thought that looking through that book wouldn’t have been enough to, you know, create a fear that strong, but apparently...”

“You meant that thing is *real*?” Draco asked, mildly horrified. “Also, what *is* that thing?”

By the end of her explanation Draco was terrified of the open ocean, and decided that swimming was an unnecessary activity that he could forego for the rest of his natural life. But Ivy was laughing, so it was alright.

---

*October 15, 1993*

“So, hypothetically, could you talk to sea snakes?”

Ivy paused at that. “Well, assuming I could talk underwater, then yes? I think so? I’ve never tried before though. Why?”

Tracey flicked the end of her quill over her chin. “No reason. Just thinking about what Vince was telling us about yesterday. I went to find the book you were talking about but I couldn’t find it anywhere.”

“Ask Thomas then. He probably knows.”

“Why would he... oh, is this about them trying to hide books from you?”

“You conjure *one* little hurricane and all of a sudden you might ‘knock over the castle’ or something. Honestly, it wasn’t even that big.”

“I thought it was about that spell you used on Corvin that one time?”

“That too. Oh, speaking of which, how is Linus?”

Tracey huffed. “Still annoying as ever. What is his deal, anyway?”

Ivy shrugged. “No idea. It’s like he makes a point of finding you just to bother you.”

“Ugh. I don’t know why he won’t just leave me alone.”

“You can always borrow Tiger again if you want. Or he knows his way into the fourth year boys dorm and he’s always up for a little adventure.”

“Thanks, Ivy.”

---

*October 16, 1993*

“We just *have* to stop by Honeydukes.”

“Don’t you have enough candy already?”

“First of all, there is no such thing. Secondly, it’s not all for me.”

Millie, Ivy, and Theo each gave Draco a face that told him exactly how much they believed that statement.

“Well, it’s not,” he defended, refusing to sound too much like a little kid.

“Who’s it for then?” Theo asked.

“Other... people”

“Uh-huh.”

“Fine, it’s for Thomas and Macmillan, alright?”

“Why are you getting candy for Ernie?” Millie asked, puzzled.

“And Dean?” Ivy added.

Draco sighed. “They agreed to take over my unofficial potions tutoring. Or, as I like to call it, the Cauldron Preservation Society. This is their bribe to make sure that they don’t back out.”

“Oh, well in that case what are you planning on getting?” Ivy asked. “If it’s going to be a bribe it had better be a good one.”

“And since when is Thomas good at potions?” Theo interjected.

“Is it really so impossible to believe that I have had *some* success?” Draco said with a huff. “Really it’s Finnegan and Neville. Finnegan’s ability to set anything on fire does not agree well with cauldrons that need to be set to very specific temperatures and that often contain volatile ingredients. And Neville. Well, his talent quota was clearly spent on other things, because I swear no one that has ever attended this school has gone through as many cauldrons as he has.”

“Is that why you got him a cauldron subscription for his birthday?” Ivy teased.

“Yes. Now, any other unnecessary questions about my plans for the day?”

Draco didn’t even give them time to respond, he just picked up his pace. As the tallest member of the group he was able to do so easily, and he took a small bit of delight in making the others have to work a little to keep up.

---

“I think Draco bought out the entire store,” Tracey said in awe.

“He tried,” Theo muttered, setting the bag he had been coerced into carrying on the ground. “I’d better get at least a few sugar quills out of this. He turned us all into pack mules.”

“As much as I appreciate your opinion of my talents,” Draco said, joining them at the table, “I’m afraid even I am not likely to be able to accomplish that until at least sixth year.”

Theo smirked. Draco frowned. Tracey watched in anticipation.

“Hey Ivy,” Theo said, once their friend was in hearing range. “Think you could change Draco into a mule?”

Ivy tilted her head slightly. “I guess. What for?”

“No reason,” Theo said, still smirking.

“Alright fine, you made your point,” Draco muttered. “Can we order now?”

Their now larger group managed to squeeze around the table, and they all placed their lunch orders.

“Ivy, isn’t that your dad?” Daphne asked a few minutes later.

All eyes turned in the direction Daphne was pointing, then to Ivy.

“That... certainly looks like him. Here, let me try something.”

With that Ivy pulled out her wand and cast some sort of spell the man’s way. When he turned towards them with an exasperated look on his face Ivy grinned. “That’s him,” she said, and ran out the door.

The group of Slytherins all watched as she practically leapt into the man’s arms, getting twirled around a couple times before being set back down.

The arrival of their food broke them out of their observations, and they each sheepishly turned away from their not so subtle watching.

---

“I can’t believe you’re here!” Ivy practically squeaked as Harry twirled her around.

“Surprise,” Harry said with a small nervous laugh. “Hopefully this was okay.”

Ivy laughed. “Of course it was. Why’d you come?”

“To see you obviously,” Harry said, laughing as Ivy rolled her eyes. He sobered for a minute. “And Sirius told me about what happened Thursday and I wanted to see you; make sure you were alright.”

“I’m fine,” Ivy said with a small shrug. “What else can you expect though. I mean, it’s not like I was going to see a dragon or anything.”



“Yes, because no one would ever find a dragon scary,” Harry said dryly.

Ivy gave him a little grin.

“I also heard something about sea monsters?”

Ivy’s grin fell. “Who told you about that? Besides, I already apologized to Greg. And Vince.”

“And did that book go mysteriously missing as well?”

Ivy’s grin came back, though it was a little more mischievous this time. “As a matter of fact it did. Until Tracey asked Thomas if he had seen it anywhere. I really don’t know why they bother anymore.”

“Because they worry for the continued existence of Hogwarts?”

“Hey, I love Hogwarts and Hogwarts loves me. We get along perfectly well and she’s not going anywhere.”

Harry laughed. “Good to know.”

“So... How’s the animagus training going?”

Harry stumbled a step. “How’d you know about that?”

Ivy gave him a very unimpressed look. “Who do you think?”

“Honestly it could have been anyone and it wouldn’t surprise me.”

Ivy rolled her eyes. “You know, your letter a few weeks ago was pretty interesting. Never knew that you could change the flavor of a mandrake leaf while it was in your mouth.”

Harry opened his mouth but couldn’t think of anything to make come out of it.

“Occlumency training is going really well, by the way.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Alright, maybe I forgot about that part of the letter, and of course you figured things out because you’re brilliant.”

Ivy giggled at that.

“So yes, Luna and I are both working on animagus training.”

“Any progress?”

Harry scowled briefly. “I wish. Do you know how hard it is to get yourself to sprout feathers?”

“Not yet.”

“Wait...”

“I think next summer we will have plenty of time, don’t you think?”

“Now wait just a second...”

“I’m sure everyone else will want to do it too.”

Harry’s eye twitched. He ignored the absolutely beaming smile Ivy gave him at that moment. “Let’s just... How about when you graduate?”

Ivy actually snorted at that. *Snorted.*

“Okay fine. How about this. You get an O in transfiguration and we’ll start it.”

“Do you think you’ll have your form down by then?”

“Hey I’m not that bad.”

“It’s already been like three weeks, Dad.”

Harry’s chest grew warm at that. “Two and a half. And you’re talking about eight months. I’m sure I’ll get it in eight months.”

“I can always have Luna help me.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Christmas. I’m going to have it by Christmas.”

“Mmhmm. So, what do you want to do?”

He would have it by Christmas. Absolutely.

---

“So, what did you and your dad do?”

“Talked, mostly. I helped motivate him, and he agreed to help me learn the animagus transformation next summer.”

“Really? No way. Do you think he’d teach me too?”

---

*October 17, 1993*

Harry looked at the note in his hand again.

*Blaise wants to learn too.*

No problem. No problem at all. Hogwarts could totally handle a bunch of underage witches and wizards becoming animagi, right? Right. Totally and completely fine.

Now, if he could just get the feathers to stay put a little better...

---

*October 23, 1993*

“It’s going to be Halloween.”

“Just because it is...eerily similar to what happened in your world, doesn’t mean it’s going to keep being the same.”

“It’s going to be Halloween.”

“Why Halloween?”

Harry gave Remus a look that made the man squirm in his seat ever so slightly. Good.

“Because Fate hates me and something bad always happens Halloween.”

Remus sighed. “Alright, fine. Bellatrix is probably breaking in on Halloween. What’s to say she will even be successful though? I doubt she knows the passages like we do, and Sirius and Severus have them all monitored anyway.”

“Don’t know. But something is going to happen, and it’ll happen on Halloween, and Fudge is an idiot, and even Augusta demanding the dementors get removed hasn’t done a single thing yet.”

“Couldn’t you just, you know, banish them or something? Send them back to Azkaban?”

Harry didn’t try to hide his confusion. “Sorry, what? How would I do that exactly?”

“Well, I don’t know. You’re the Master of Death, aren’t you? Maybe there’s some type of special power you can use to order the dementors to leave?”

Another look. Another squirm. Another small sense of satisfaction.

“Really?”

“Well, you never know,” Remus said, sounding not too convinced of his own statement. “Or you could always go to Hogwarts yourself on Halloween.”

Harry paused at that. True, he could. Maybe. Sirius and Severus could probably aid in that. Possibly Minerva and Filius if necessary. “Alright, that’s not a completely terrible idea. I doubt Dumbledore would be inclined to allow me there, but if I could get in without him knowing...”

---

*October 31, 1993*

“Let’s go over the plan one more time.”

Sirius wanted to roll his eyes. “Harry, I swear you are more paranoid than Moody. Look, the plan is solid, alright? Remus and Luna are in the village, Snape and I are here, you are... also here, and Lucius and Amelia are on standby. Everything will be fine.”

Harry kept pacing back and forth, and Sirius noticed even Snape looked about ready to roll his eyes.

“Fine. Fine. It’ll be fine. Alright. And Bogrod is in position?”

“The goblins were, dare I say, *gleeful* in their assurances that they would be ready to dispose of the fugitive,” Snape said.

Sirius allowed himself a small shudder at the image that brought to mind.

“Yeah, well, that’s what you get if you keep a horcrux in their bank,” Harry said sourly. “At least they’re good for something other than making my life harder,” he added with a mutter.

“All set then?”

Harry sighed. “Yeah, all set.”

---

*November 1, 1993*

Amelia signed the report with absolute glee. She couldn’t wait to hand deliver this to Fudge and see the look on his face. There was absolutely no reason for him to insist on the dementors remaining at Hogwarts any longer.

Not when Bellatrix Lestrangle had been captured by the goblins.

Fudge was going to have an aneurysm.

Well, there were worse ways to go. Amelia could think of several.

The *official* story, of course, was that the goblins were meeting with Lord Black and Lord Peverell-Slytherin, both of whom had a vested interest in keeping Lestrangle away from Hogwarts and Ivy Potter, being, respectively, her godfather and adoptive father. Due to Lord Black’s school commitments that evening, the meeting had naturally taken place in his office, where they had been interrupted by a warning from Lady Peverell-Slytherin that Lestrangle had been spotted just outside of Hogsmeade.

Werewolf senses could be useful like that, Amelia thought to herself.

And so it was a happy coincidence that the goblins were able to apprehend Bellatrix Lestrangle, with a bit of help from Lord Black and Lord Peverell-Slytherin, and take the fugitive into custody.

Of course, with the goblins being the primary force that succeeded in capturing Lestrangle, they had first rights to prosecution. Apparently she was wanted by them for harboring a soul remnant in her vault, which went against their policies or charters or something like that that Cuthbert would no doubt be able to explain in excruciating detail if needed. She really hoped it wouldn’t be needed.

In reality it might not have worked out *exactly* like that, but it's not like anyone could prove the meeting hadn't taken place at that precise time. Or that Lord Peverell-Slytherin had helped more than might have been strictly reported. He wasn't an auror, after all, so no one was obliged to disclose further involvement seeing as it could be argued it was done in self-defense *and* since the goblins themselves corroborated his story.

The goblins must really love Henry Peverell-Slytherin.

---

*November 4, 1993*

"Well, Lord Peverell-Slytherin, it has been a while."

Harry grimaced. "Yes, well, I've been busy, you know."

Ragnok grinned at him. Harry felt he was almost growing immune to these grins. About time, really.

"Well I for one am glad you came in today. We have so many things to talk about."

Harry recognized that face. That was not a face he wanted to see ever again. "No. Absolutely not."

Then the goblin pouted. *Pouted*. And Harry's newfound immunity to goblin smiles was suddenly worthless in the face of the newly discovered terror that was a goblin *pout*.

---

Luna took one look at Harry's face. "Which one did they try to land you with this time?"

"Gaunt."

Luna scrunched up her face a bit and Harry chuckled.

"Yeah, that's about what I thought too."

"So you made a swift exit?"

"Strategic retreat of the greatest speed."

They both laughed.

"Maybe next time you want to go instead?"

Luna smiled. "Alright."

---

*November 9, 1993*

Harry looked over Luna with suspicion. She didn't *look* shocked or terrified, which were the appropriate reactions after talking with the goblins for an hour, but then again Luna rarely

showed things like shock.

“So, did they get you with anything?”

“Oh, they tried,” Luna said with a laugh.

“But you got out unscathed?”

“Well, if I ever want to change my name apparently Lady Ravenclaw is an option.”

Harry just sank down into the sofa, laughing, with Luna joining him soon after.

---

*November 12, 1993*

Severus pinched the bridge of his nose. He wasn't sure information was really worth sitting through an evening of the headmaster's schemes and conspiracy theories.

“We didn't even get a chance to see how she would do going up against the dementors,” Albus argued. “And now they are gone. Fudge has had some terrible ideas before, but this one it something else.”

Yes. It was reasonable. Difficult to accept as coming from the man, but even a broken clock is right twice a day. It had to happen sometime.

“And of course ‘Slytherin’ is involved.”

“Are the quotation marks really necessary, Albus?”

It was as if the headmaster didn't even hear him.

“We just need to find another way to test her. If only we had had some more time with the dementors here. Now, there are a few other chances we might have, of course, but...”

Severus spent the next twenty minutes offering increasingly ridiculous commentary to Albus's musings, waiting in vain to get a reaction that indicated the man was actually paying attention to anything outside his own voice.

Finally he gave up.

“Albus, leave me out of this. Surely there is no need to place Potter through these so-called tests, seeing as the Dark Lord is *dead*.”

“He will return,” Albus insisted. “And he may even be closer than we think.”

Severus sighed, and regretting it before he even asked, he said, “Albus, what precisely makes you believe that Lord Peverell is at all associated with the *deceased* Dark Lord?”

“Ivy was taken from her family, where she was safe, and their house was eventually burned down. Pettigrew was found out after hiding successfully for years, then died after only a

month in Azkaban. Quirrell went missing, along with the stone. Barty Crouch wound up dead, and you know as well as I do his role in the last war. Bellatrix Lestrange went missing after an encounter with Slytherin, and it is only on the goblin's word that we are assured she has been captured."

Severus sighed. "Are you honestly accusing the goblins of covering up her, what, escape? Second escape? Why on earth would they benefit from such a scheme?"

"Slytherin must have promised them something," the headmaster mused.

Severus was so very tired of dealing with these same rants over and over. The headmaster was seemingly incapable of letting this go, however.

"Albus, has it ever crossed your mind that the Dark Lord is, as has been pointed out to you *repeatedly*, quite *dead*? He is dead, Albus. The mark is completely gone, as you well know. He is not coming back. Whatever means of immortality you claim he managed prior to his downfall has obviously been dealt with. The marks would not have disappeared after a decade otherwise. *Think*, headmaster."

Albus made to interrupt him but Severus pressed on.

"The marks disappeared at the same time as Quirrell's disappearance. *That* is a connection that is not difficult to make. But the marks are gone. The marks that failed to fade even when it was believed he was dead are gone. And nothing Lord Peverell has done has in any way indicated his allegiance or affiliation in any way with the Dark Lord. What he *has* done, however, is do everything in his power to assure the safety of his daughter, first by removing her from the abusive home *you* placed her in, and in every moment after that. When he learned there would be dementors placed at Hogwarts he taught her the patronus charm, knowing full well that any chance encounter with the dementors supposedly placed for the *safety* of the students could be disastrous. The students hadn't even made it off the train before just such an encounter. And then *you* stopped fighting for the removal of the dementors because you felt the need to test Ivy Potter. She is *thirteen*, headmaster. I once swore an oath to you to protect that child, and a child she still remains. And as you seem to be the one intent on placing her in danger in the first place, or at least doing nothing to prevent it, I believe this is the point where I inform you that I will have nothing further to do with your little schemes. I will protect her, even if, no, *especially* if it is from you."

Severus did not wait to hear the headmaster's response, not feeling up to another falsely concerned speech on how he was "turning back to the dark" or "preventing Ivy from fulfilling her destiny."

He was done.

# Chapter 45

## Chapter Notes

You know, when I started this I didn't actually set out to make it a crack fic? Not sure how I ever expected it to be anything other than that, but there you go.

*November 20, 1993*

Severus had not lived a particularly quiet, danger-free life. Still, nothing could have quite prepared him for seeing Ivy Potter stroll down the hallway with a couple dozen snakes following closely behind. Severus didn't mind snakes, really. I mean, how could you as a Slytherin? But moderation was a virtue or something like that, and this was pushing it.

Not quite sure if he dared ask, he raised an eyebrow at Ivy who responded to the silent question with, "I'm taking them to meet Hilda."

The basilisk. She was taking every snake currently residing in Hogwarts to meet a basilisk.

He was not paid nearly enough to deal with this.

---

*December 1, 1993*

Three little Gryffindors sat huddled in a corner of their common room. Percy felt the huddling was unnecessary, seeing as apart from him they were the room's only occupants. Still, since the three in question were his little sister, Seamus "I can blow up more things than Fred" Finnegan, and the little first year they had declared to be "theirs" (once they got over bickering who had called dibs), he decided that since nothing was currently on fire, and no screams were to be heard, it was probably all fine and nothing at all to worry about.

At least nothing on par with Ivy's playdate for the snakes of Hogwarts yesterday. Percy still didn't see why the basilisk was a necessary part of said playdate.

A knock on the entrance to the common room made him pause. It wouldn't be Ivy, since she didn't knock, and it probably wasn't Luna, since he had never seen her actually walk through the portrait entrance. She just sort of appeared.

Also it was far too early in the morning to be most anyone else who somehow found their way to the Gryffindor dormitories.

Percy opened the door and took a peek outside, only to find himself looking down at a very small little Slytherin whose name he was drawing a blank on.



“Can I help you?”

“I need to speak to George Weasley, please,” the little first year said.

Her tone was solemn but not agitated, so his brother probably hadn’t done anything to upset her. Unless she was here for help with revenge. But then again didn’t all the little Slytherins go to Ivy for things like that now? It was too early to think through something like this.

“Come on in,” he said.

The three plotters in the corner turned to face the door.

“Hi Tori,” Nott said.

Tori... Tori... Ah. Astoria. That’s right.

“Hi Cali,” Astoria said.

It was a little easier to keep track of people’s names when they used the same name every time. Like him. He went by Percy for everything except the most formal of instances. Easy.

“Is everything okay?” Calanthia asked with a small frown.

“I just need to talk to George,” the little Slytherin answered.

“George is probably still asleep,” Percy began, but Ginny leapt up.

“On it,” she said, with a grin that promised nothing pleasant.

Sure enough, only a minute or two later George came down, looking a little wet and very, very awake.

“Hey Astoria, what’s going on?”

“I need your help,” she replied.

“With what?”

“Well, you’re the smartest person I know...”

George looked a bit surprised at that statement.

“...and I need to figure out how to adopt someone.”

George frowned, and Percy decided that he was successful in life and could graduate in peace, knowing the next generation was safely in the care of the twins... Actually, no, that didn’t completely fill him with confidence, but there were all the Hufflepuffs and even the Slytherins to help out so it’d be fine.

“But you’re eleven,” George pointed out.

“That’s why I need help,” Astoria said with a dramatic sigh like only eleven year olds can do.

“Alright...” George said hesitantly. “So, is this person older than you?”

“Mmhmm.”

Percy’s mind flashed back to multiple occasions where adoption papers had been subtly placed in just the right spot. He was honestly surprise Charlie hadn’t experienced a legal name change by this point.

“So, who is it?” George asked.

“Professor Black.”

With that Percy decided he had heard enough, and, not wanting to become an accomplice in whatever madness was surely about to take place, he made a swift and graceful exit. When it came to the longevity of Hogwarts he had done his good deed already. Black would be fine. Probably.

---

Sirius sat with eyes focused on the Weasley twins. They were plotting something. Something to do with him, if the looks they kept sending his way were any indication. Twin one leaned over to twin two and whispered something in his ear, to which he responded with a laugh.

Great.

“Be afraid, Black,” Snape said with the slightest of smirks.

Sirius scowled but didn’t reply. No, he wasn’t going to be afraid. He was a Marauder for Merlin’s sake. He would take whatever prank war those two boys were foolish enough to begin and he would win. He would *obliterate* them. He would...

Finish breakfast first. Can’t prank on an empty stomach after all.

---

*December 3, 1993*

Harry genuinely liked the Greengrasses, he really did, but that did not mean he was expecting Nate Greengrass to show up at his house asking for suggestions on telling your daughter she can’t adopt an adult man.

He was even less prepared for said adult man to be Sirius.

“Er, may I ask why she wants to adopt Sirius?”

Nate sighed. “Apparently he’s been keeping the Slytherins company ever since Halloween.”

Harry frowned, trying to think if Sirius had mentioned anything like that. He was almost positive he hadn’t.

“As Padfoot,” Nate continued. “It seems a few of the students, particularly the younger ones, were left a bit frightened by the realization that Lestrage got so close to Hogwarts.”

Harry winced minutely on the inside.

“And Astoria has always wanted a dog,” Nate concluded.

Harry kept from laughing, but only just. “So she decided her professor was the best bet?”

Nate shook his head. “I don’t even want to know where she got the papers from.”

“Well I triple checked Ivy’s trunk before she left, but honestly there are so many ways...”  
Harry trailed off, thinking of a few of the more inventive ways Ivy had obtained the seemingly harmless bits of parchment.

---

*December 6, 1993*

“Has Sirius mentioned anything about spending time in the Slytherin dormitories recently?”

“Yes. I believe he has spent several evenings there, even spending the night in the common room a few times,” Sabrina replied.

Harry nodded.

“Severus was not particularly thrilled with that development, but even he admits it has helped some of the younger students who were worried Lestrage would somehow make it back to the castle,” Narcissa added.

Lucius and Remus both took that moment to snort slightly, knowing full well the understatement that most likely was.

“Is this about Astoria’s attempted adoption?” Luna asked, and Harry nodded.

“Oh, I think it’s moved a bit beyond that,” Sabrina said with a small grin.

“Oh?”

“Well, I’ve never received a marriage proposal for my fiancé before,” she said, producing a small letter out of her pocket.

There were quiet chuckles all around.

“Please tell me you told Nate that,” Harry said.

“Please tell me you told *Sirius* that,” Remus added with a grin.

“Oh, but of course,” Sabrina said with a wink. “Perhaps after dinner?”

“What are pensieves for if not entertainment at our relations’ expense?” Lucius said dryly.

“You’ll have to show Barty when he gets back as well,” Remus said. “I’m sure he would find it equally as enjoyable.”

“When does Barty return?” Narcissa asked.

“The sixteenth,” Luna answered. “He will be here for a little over three weeks.”

“So what’s Sirius done now that has you looking forward to this so much, Remus?” Harry asked.

“He knows what he did,” Remus said with a grumble.

Eventually Harry resigned himself to the fact that he wasn’t getting any more out of Remus at the moment.

---

*December 10, 1993*

Remus sighed as he looked in the mirror. He couldn’t believe he was actually doing this. Just because a version of him in another world had married Dora didn’t mean they were destined to be together here or anything, right? Sirius had clearly not gotten the message, hence the date he was about to go on.

Alright, so that may be stretching facts just a bit. *Technically* Sirius was only guilty of arranging the *first* date. Remus was maybe partially responsible for the ones after that, seeing as he was the one to have spoken the words “would you like to do this again sometime?”

Minor details, really.

But this was going to end in disaster. He just knew it. Dora was great and wonderful and perfect, and he was, well, him. And then there was the whole age thing he really didn’t like to spend very much time thinking about. And it’s not like he could talk about this to anyone either. Sirius would break out into an awful victory song, Barty would look at him like he was being stupid, Luna would tell him he was perfectly sweet and everything would be fine, and Harry... Well Harry would demonstrate once again how clearly he was the child of both James and Lily Potter, meaning Remus would get a lecture about how being a werewolf wasn’t a bad thing and didn’t mean he was worth less or incapable of forming a lasting relationship, et cetera, et cetera.

Harry Potter was many things, but good for the continued ignoring of your inner angst was not one of them. At least that’s how Luna had phrased it. Harry had said something more along the lines of “we’re all idiots sometimes,” while giving Remus a look that clarified who the idiot was at that particular moment.

So that was that, and now he was going on a date. Another date. Another secret date, because he had yet to get back at Sirius for all of this and there was no way he was going to let Sirius gloat in victory before he had his payback.

---

*December 16, 1993*

“Welcome home,” Luna greeted him happily.

He placed a kiss on her cheek. “It’s good to be back.”

It was. And she was right, it was home, as strange a concept as that was.

“Barty, is that you?” he heard coming from the other room.

“And how are you, oh Mr. Not-So-Dark Lord?”

Harry’s eye twitched. It was good to be home.

---

“I have nine days to get this. Well really three days until Ivy gets back, but technically nine days to still count.”

Barty was fairly certain Harry would achieve his animagus form by then through sheer willpower. Or maybe spite at this point.

“Maybe we should watch Luna do it again?” he suggested.

Luna obliged, and a second later a beautiful peregrine falcon was flying around them.

Barty watched with unabashed amazement. No matter how many times he witnessed an animagus transformation, it was always impressive. And Luna’s was way better than Black’s, of course. Well at least Harry was going to be some kind of bird, as the feathers that Dobby had taken to collecting proved. Then he turned back towards Harry.

“Oi, stop making lovey eyes at your wife and try to turn into a ruddy bird,” he said, snapping his fingers in front of Harry’s face.

“Sorry,” Harry said, clearly not meaning it at all.

Barty rolled his eyes and turned his attention back to Luna. “You think it’d work if we pushed him off a cliff or something?”

Luna changed back and shrugged. “Probably. But he might poke your eyes out.”

Barty weighed his options. “Any chance I could get one of those magical eyes Mad-Eye’s got?”

Luna laughed but didn’t answer.

“That wasn’t a no,” Barty called out, as she changed into a falcon once again and Harry resumed his lovey eyes. Barty could almost literally see the hearts in his eyes. At least Ivy came by it honestly then. Or they both did? Somehow he couldn’t picture Lily Evans making a face like that... But then again James Potter had mooned over Evans the entire time they were at Hogwarts, so actually that made a lot of sense.

Remus probably even had a memory.

---

*December 18, 1993*

Barty listened with rapt attention as Severus finished catching him up on everything that had happened in the few months he had been gone. Honestly, the man could do with a little more drama in his retelling, but not everyone could be Lucius. Which was probably a good thing come to think of it.

Everyone else who was in the know regarding the entirety of Harry and Luna's origins already knew everything Severus was telling him, but Barty did notice Harry's eye twitch a couple times. Luna didn't look too worried though, which was a good sign. If there ever came a time when Luna *did* look worried, Barty would know things were about to get serious.

"So, that crazy..."

Luna raised an eyebrow.

"...witch," Barty said, after a short hesitation, "is really gone?"

"Goblins," Harry said.

"Right. And you're sure that'll be enough?"

Harry looked at him like he was insane. "Are you suggesting that the goblins aren't enough to keep her contained?"

Black chose that moment to pipe in. "Can I be there when you tell them that?"

Barty just stuck out his tongue at Black, who stuck his out in return. They continued on in this completely mature handling of the situation until Narcissa cleared her throat.

"Great, well, what's next then?" Barty asked.

"Next?" Severus asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Yeah. Who's our bad guy now?"

He was met with eight pairs of blinking eyes.

"Oh come on, there's got to be someone, right?"

Harry cleared his throat. "Well in my timeline technically the next person was you, so..."

Barty waved a hand. "If I go crazy again Luna will fix it. Who else?"

"Well, there's always Umbridge," Black suggested.

"Has she even done anything though?" Sabrina asked. "In this time, I mean."

“Besides be a nasty little...”

Luna nudged Harry in the ribs and he didn't finish his thought.

“Well there were those werewolf bills she tried to introduce,” Lucius said.

“None of which went through,” Severus said dryly.

“Of course not,” Black huffed.

“She still tried though,” Luna pointed out.

A few head turned towards Barty's favorite person at that.

“Are you saying we ought to go after Umbridge now?” Harry asked.

“Well I'm sure you will need to take care of things eventually,” Luna said lightly.

Coming from Luna that was essentially a battle cry cast with a sonorus. And permission. Barty was definitely sensing permission there.

“Alright,” Harry said carefully. “I guess Umbridge it is.”

“Shall we assemble the minions then?” Barty asked, just to see the twitch of Harry's eye. He only had a few weeks here so he needed to make them count.

---

*December 19, 1993*

“I have four hours left and I *will bloody well get this*.”

It wasn't that Sirius didn't have full confidence in Harry, because he did, but watching him will himself into sprouting feathers was something he was finding great amusement in at the moment.

“Why does he need to get this in four hours?” Nate whispered none too softly.

“Ivy,” came the reply from at least four other wizards sitting around.

“And we're all here because...”

“Because Luna is perfect and far too distracting for Harry, and he is stubborn enough to get this figured out if we keep staring at him.”

Sirius couldn't fault Barty's logic no matter how much he wanted to.

“Has anyone tried throwing him off a cliff?” Westbrook asked.

Sirius was about to tell Westbrook exactly what he could throw off a cliff, but Barty beat him to it.

“Luna didn’t say yes but Remus said no.”

Those who knew Barty’s true identity nodded knowingly, while all the other wizards just looked confused. Sirius really couldn’t blame them.

---

Barty was trying to stay awake, he really was, but Harry had maybe slightly overpowered the heating charms, and the sun was shining perfectly for once, and he had been staring at the same patch of grass for three hours straight. Also it was a very comfortable chair.

“Alright, I think I’ve got it.”

Merlin’s beard, his minionly powers were finally working and Harry was going to get this.

“Let’s see it then,” Black said with a challenging grin.

Harry returned the grin and a second later there was a large black raven in his place. Because of course there was.

“He really went from sprouting feathers to a full transformation since this morning, huh,” one of the other wizards said. Barty was too focused on Harry to pay too much attention.

“Figures,” someone else said.

“Suppose someone ought to let the ladies know they can come out now?”

“Luna will know,” Barty said. He enjoyed seeing the surprised and skeptical looks on a few faces. They didn’t know Luna like he did. She would know, and she would be out in three, two, one...

“Should we race then?”

Harry transformed back abruptly. “Wait, no, you’re going to be way faster. You... are just teasing. Okay, right. Right.”

“Just needed to make sure you could transform back,” Luna said lightly, as if that wasn’t a horrific thought.

Harry’s face paled slightly, as did the faces of a few others.

“I didn’t even think about that,” he said, probably horrified at the thought that he could have done it wrong.

Barty would be horrified in that situation.

“And you have an entire hour to spare.”

Harry’s face turned smug, although the effect was somewhat diminished due to the lingering paleness and simultaneous flushing. Merlin, all these poor people stuck in Britain needed more sun. Barty should have suggested they all join him for the holiday instead.



And then they were kissing. They'd been married for six months already, or nearly. Shouldn't they be over this by now?

He needed an ally.

---

"Well, it looks like it's just you and me," a voice said, shocking Remus out of his internal musings. He hadn't even heard the man approach.

"Er, what?"

"Single. Not infatuated by all this lovey dovey nonsense."

"Uh, right," Remus said, with a chuckle that he hoped didn't come out as too nervous.

Barty's narrowed eyes demonstrated his failure in that regard.

"Right?" he said.

"What're you talking about over here?"

Barty answered, though his eyes didn't leave Remus. "It seems Remus has been keeping something from us. Speaking of which, have you heard from your cousin lately?" he asked Sirius far too sweetly to be innocent.

"Which one?" Sirius asked, before catching on to what Barty was saying and turning to Remus.

Remus withheld a groan, knowing what was coming next.

"Oh, so how is my dear cousin Nymphadora doing?" Sirius asked, matching Barty's previous tone.

"Probably cursing you all the way from London," Remus said under his breath.

"What's this then?"

Remus looked to see every single other man looking their way. He let out the groan now.

---

*December 20, 1993*

"So when can we all go flying?"

Harry had been wearing a permanent grin ever since achieving his animagus form. Yesterday, but still. And now Ivy was suggesting going flying, and he could fly without a broom, even if he wouldn't be able to match the speeds of either Luna or Ivy, but that didn't really matter. He could make himself have *wings* now. Wings that had feathers where they were supposed to be. Goodbye trails of feathers strewn throughout the house. Hopefully Dobby had collected all he wanted to already, because Harry could get rid of the feathers now.

And he had gotten it done before Ivy was home. Brilliant.

“How about you finish your breakfast first and then we can fly,” Luna said, gesturing to Ivy’s nearly full plate.

Ivy sighed a bit but dug in. “That’s fair.”

Harry was struck by just how much their little family had grown, and how complete it now felt. It was a nice feeling.

“So, Dad...” Ivy began hesitantly.

“Hmm?”

“I had a meeting with Dumbledore on Saturday.”

Harry nearly dropped his fork. “*What?*” He nearly hissed out.

“I think he waited until Sirius and Professor Snape were both gone.”

Because they had all met Saturday evening and...

A well-timed nudge of Luna’s head in Ivy’s direction kept him from uttering his thoughts out loud.

Ivy’s slight roll of the eyes let him know his original intention hadn’t been overlooked though. She really was a teenager now.

“Right. Back up a bit then. What was this meeting about?”

Ivy shrugged. “I don’t think he really ever came to a point.”

“Typical,” Harry muttered under his breath.

“Anyway, he just asked about school, and both of you, and Sirius, and Remus, and Barty, and...”

“Wait, he asked about Barty?” That wasn’t exactly reassuring. Not that Dumbledore was likely to *find* anything, but still.

“I don’t think he suspected anything though.”

“Er, right. And what wouldn’t he suspect, just to be clear?”

Ivy rolled her eyes again. “Well obviously Barty isn’t exactly who he says he is. Or wasn’t anyway. But it doesn’t matter now, right?”

Harry blinked a couple times then looked pleadingly at Luna.

“So how is your occlumency coming?” Luna asked.

Now it was Ivy's turn to blink, but she quickly recovered and started grinning. "Great. I mean, it's not all the way there, but Sirius and Professor Snape both test me on it regularly and I think I'm almost good enough to keep the headmaster out."

Luna beamed at her and Harry let out a sigh.

"Is that why you can't tell me about Barty yet? Or about you?"

"Do you have to be so smart all the time?" Harry said, mostly teasing. His life probably *would* be a little bit easier if Ivy weren't so great at figuring things out at the most inconvenient times, but it was all fine, really.

"Well I'm sure we'll have a lot to talk about this summer," Luna said.

Ivy's eyes lit up in anticipation.

Harry cleared his throat. "So back to your meeting..."

"Oh right. So he asked a bunch of questions, and then chatted about a few things that didn't really make sense, and then let me go."

"Did you sense a legilimency probe at all?" Luna asked with concern.

"No," Ivy said, and Harry allowed himself a sigh of relief. She was far enough along with her training that she would notice any attempt, even ones she might not yet be able to fully withstand.

"And what sorts of things did he talk about then?"

"Well I'm fairly certain he was hinting at the horcrux in my head, and the prophecy, and something about my patronus. But it was a little hard to tell."

Of course it was. Harry couldn't blame Ivy for feeling a bit confused. He was honestly impressed that she had gathered all that.

"So who else knows?"

"Knows what?" Barty asked, entering the kitchen with Remus following closely behind.

"About Harry and I," Luna answered. "And you."

Harry chuckled. That was one way to answer Ivy's question.

"Alright, so who else then?"

Luna listed off everyone else. Ivy seemed rather happy about it, not at all upset that so many people knew what she didn't, like Harry was half expecting. Maybe because that's how he had always felt. Then again, Ivy was learning occlumency so they *could* tell her everything, regardless of how terrified Harry was to do so, so she was perhaps not as concerned about that as Harry would have been.

“Oh, and Harry will need to tell Tonks eventually too,” Barty said.

“The Tonks?” Ivy asked, puzzled.

“Just Dora,” Luna said. “At least for now.”

“Why is that?”

“Because Remus is going to marry her,” Harry couldn’t help but say.

“Shut up Harry,” Remus said, face achieving an impressive shade of red.

Ivy meanwhile looked shocked. “And you didn’t even tell me?”

“To be fair I didn’t actually tell anyone,” Remus defended. “They just sort of figured it out. Yesterday, in fact.”

“Is that why Barty looks so smug?” Ivy asked gleefully.

“Yes it is,” Barty replied before Remus could.

“And we’re not actually getting married,” Remus hastened to add.

“Yet,” Barty and Ivy said at once, before giving each other a high five.

Luna offered Remus a sympathetic pat on the arm but her knowing grin probably didn’t help.

---

*December 24, 1993*

“You do realize they are not actually getting married yet, right?”

Sirius waved him off. “It’s only a matter of time. Good job on the matchmaking, by the way.”

Harry grinned. “Andy helped.”

“Of course she did,” Sirius said with a laugh. “What did you tell her to get her though?”

“Asked how Tonks enjoyed her date.”

Sirius laughed even harder.

“So, back to the house?”

Harry and Sirius both stared at the front door of Grimmauld Place.

“How about a joint Christmas present.”

“Because that’s subtle,” Harry said with a snort.

“You can’t make me keep this house, Harry.”

“You know, I don’t think Christmas presents are supposed to be things you’re trying to get rid of.”

“Well you’re the one who won’t let me burn it down.”

“You do see the houses on either side of this, right?”

“You have excellent control over fiendfyre. Best I’ve ever seen.”

“How many people have you seen actually using fiendfyre?” Harry asked with a roll of his eyes.

Again Sirius waved him off. “Not the point.”

“I’m not burning your house down, Sirius.”

Sirius stared at the detested house. “I bet Remus would do it for me.”

“After you try and give to him, yeah, probably.”

---

*December 25, 1993*

“Lucius, what the...”

“It is impolite to refuse a Christmas gift, you know.”

Harry’s eye twitch was making a full appearance. “You did this on purpose.”

“I do many things on purpose. Far more often than I do things on accident, I assure you.”

“Was that supposed to make me feel better?” Harry said with a grumble.

“Your comfort was not the primary purpose of this discussion, no.”

“Yeah, I sort of got that when you handed me a list of former death eaters you recruited. What, by Merlin, did you recruit them for exactly anyway?”

“I thought it better that they have you giving them direction than roam about aimlessly causing mischief.”

“So now I’m a nanny for death eaters. Fantastic,” Harry said with all the sarcasm he could muster.

“I could have promised them all a new mark.”

“You’re really not doing a great job of selling this,” Harry said, glaring as best he could.

“Again, not really the point,” Lucius said. “Now then. Any other presents left to distribute?”

---

Sirius wrinkled his nose. "I suppose they don't look awful together."

Narcissa smacked his arm. "They make a lovely couple," she said. "They are young, of course, but I'm sure in a few years they will be absolutely wonderful together."

Together the two cousins watched Draco and Ivy talking animatedly about something or other. Blaise meanwhile seemed happy to simply watch, no doubt fanning the flames with his occasional comments.

---

"Any more word on Dumbledore?"

Severus scoffed. "I think the headmaster is less inclined to share with me now than he was before, not that he's ever been particularly fond of such activities. No, I'm afraid I'm rather out of favor at the moment."

"And you think it unlikely you will regain that position," Sabrina stated, rather than spoke.

"I very much doubt I could," Severus said, a hint of bitterness creeping into his tone.

"Has he asked you to?"

There was no need to ask who she was referring to, even as they both eyed Harry.

"No, no he hasn't."

---

"Any chance you want to write for any of the journals I told you about?" Barty asked.

"Well I would need to brush up on some classical Greek," Luna said.

"Yeah, they're a bunch of snobs like that."

"Well at least they're not as bad as the Romans, right?"

"Oh, don't even get me started on the Romans," Barty said, before launching into a very passionate and in depth argument as to why the wizarding community in Rome was the snobbiest of the lot.

---

"They've been talking quite a bit over there," Sirius said, gesturing to where Luna and Barty had sat for the last hour, only recently having been joined by Remus.

"Well, their discussion looks..."

"Lively?" Lucius offered.

"Sure, we can go with that," Harry said.

Sabrina made her way over to them. "Any of you care to join the great debate?"

“Against those three? You’re joking, right?” Sirius said in mock horror.

Sabrina just rolled her eyes.

Lucius scoffed quietly. “Just because you are unable to hold your own in an intellectual debate does not mean the rest of are incapable of doing so.”

“I believe Luna is arguing in favor of Australia as the emigration destination of choice should such a move prove necessary.”

Lucius looked at Sabrina like she had said Jupiter instead.

“Remus is arguing for Canada, and Barty for Brazil, as far as I could gather.”

Harry’s head turned quickly to the group of debaters. “And he says he’s not my minion,” he said with a chuckle.

“I think he’s just terrified Luna will somehow get him to move to Australia,” Sabrina said amusedly.

“What’s the deal with Australia anyway?”

Everyone gave him blank stares.

“What?” Harry asked.

“You do know what’s down there, right?”

Harry frowned. “Kangaroos?”

“There have never been any successful dark lords in Australia,” Lucius said.

“That’s nice,” Harry said, not quite sure where this was leading.

“It’s the demons,” Narcissa said, walking past, far gone by the time Harry could form a question.

He turned with a pleading look to the rest of them.

“What she said,” Sirius said. “They don’t really like wizards disturbing their holiday spot.”

Harry had literally no idea what to say to that. He did, however, question for the first time Hermione’s decision a world ago to send her parents to the continent down under. That little plan was now taking on a whole new light.

---

*December 27, 1993*

“So Blaise, I never did hear what your patronus turned out to be.”

Blaise pulled out his wand and cast the charm, a large lion emerging from the end.

Barty nodded, stroking his chin. “A bit Gryffindor-ish, but impressive.”

Blaise rolled his eyes, but still thanked the wizard.

“What about you, Draco?”

Draco sighed and cast the charm as well.

After a second all Barty could say was, “Huh. I thought it was going to be a peacock or something.”

“A swan is a perfectly elegant animal to have as a patronus,” Draco said haughtily.

“And not all of us can have apex predators as our patronus,” Blaise said with a teasing tone. Seconds later he had a misty swan in his face.

---

*December 31, 1993*

“Next year, of course, you will all be out here with the adults, but I suppose you can join us now if you would like.”

Several pairs of teenaged eyes looked at Narcissa Malfoy in horror.

Eventually Draco saved them all, ushering them swiftly to the scene of their upcoming battle.

“That was close,” Tracey whispered. “I thought she was going to make us go with the adults there for a minute.”

“I haven’t even gotten to see Tiger for almost two weeks,” Daphne whispered back.

“I thought we weren’t going to get to stage out battle,” Blaise said. “We had it so well planned out too.”

“Since when are you looking forward to this?” Draco asked.

Blaise just shrugged.

“Well maybe we can add this to the olympics,” Ivy said, deep in conversation with Theo, who began offering his own suggestions for adapting their mock battle to a possible team event in Hogwarts’ newest tradition.

“We should have brought the wolves,” Blaise said, to Pansy’s horror.

“Why would you even suggest such a thing?”

“I really didn’t miss much by not being here the last couple years, did I?” Neville asked to no one in particular. Millie and Tracey both patted him on the back.



The door closed, and Ivy and Theo took their positions as the war generals.

They could be adults next year. Tonight they had a battle to wage, and enough pillows and exploding chocolates to make it last well into the night.

# Chapter 46

## Chapter Notes

I'm back! Covid has been kicking my butt for almost six weeks now so it's been very slow going as I reacquaint myself with the concept of words and also where I'm actually at in the story, which has taken some time seeing as this story has somehow reached monster proportions behind my back. For the record, I did not think it was going to be this long. Then again, this is the first fic I've ever written and I don't know what I'm doing so I guess I didn't have too many expectations to go off of. Anyway, not the longest chapter but it's here and hopefully future chapters won't take so long. I'm not even going to say how much time went into this one because compared to basically every other chapter in this entire fic it's a bit ridiculous. Okay, long rambling mostly over. Stay safe everyone!

*January 3, 1994*

“Are you sure we need to meet today? It’s only the first day back. We haven’t even had herbology yet this term.”

Neville was all for promoting the study of herbology, his favorite and best subject, but this felt a bit unnecessary.

“But we have so much to talk about,” Susan replied.

Millie nodded along, a slightly dreamy look in her eye that Neville couldn’t figure out.

Well at least now he’d have an excuse for getting out of the potion study group. He missed Draco being in charge of it. Draco didn’t share the same dorm as him.

---

Unless Cedric Diggory had become a variety of plant when Neville wasn’t looking, they were seriously off topic.

“Hannah, why are they still talking about Cedric?”

Hannah looked at him apologetically. “They’re just sharing their… appreciation for Cedric’s… face? Sorry, they just all have massive crushes on him, you know. Everyone does.”

Neville did not know this. “You too?”

Hannah wrinkled her nose. “Our mums are friends so he’s more like an older brother or cousin or something. Besides, I saw him run away from a bumblebee and face plant it in the

mud when he was ten, and honestly I don't think I'll ever get that picture out of my mind."

Neville nodded. "Wait, is that why there are so many girls here now?"

Their herbology group had grown, but now he was wondering how much of that was due to an interest in plants and how much was due to an interest in Cedric Diggory. He sighed and resigned himself to his fate, supposing there were worse fates to have.

---

*January 5, 1994*

"I hit two hundred," Barty announced proudly.

Remus snorted. "Of course you did."

Harry, sitting on the other side of the room, felt his eye twitch.

"Two hundred and one," Luna said.

---

Luna cast another heating charm on a grateful Barty.

"It's not this cold in Crete," he muttered.

"Relax, you only have a few more days before you head back," Remus said from behind his paper. "Ten letters for instrument used to copy at a different scale?"

"Pantograph," Luna replied promptly.

"Thanks," Remus said, filling in the crossword.

"So..." Barty began. "Any word on the Barty Crouch investigation?"

Harry gave him an unimpressed look. "Why, you preparing your defense?"

"No, and it would be belated self-defense, thank you very much," Barty quipped.

"That's not a... Why do I even bother," Harry muttered.

"This is why he's Luna's minion, you realize," Remus said unhelpfully, and, ignoring Harry's scowl, continued on. "A model of pantograph then."

"Paragon," Luna said, answering Remus.

"The annoyed leftovers?"

Barty gestured to Harry who threw a pillow at his face.

"Pht," said Luna.

"How on earth are you figuring that out?" Harry asked.

“It’s alright, my lord,” Barty said cheekily, placing a hand over his heart. “We can’t all be geniuses.”

Harry summoned the pillow back and threw it again.

---

*January 8, 1994*

“How was your Christmas? I feel like I haven’t seen you all week!” Ivy exclaimed, plopping down beside him. If only he could find a spell that would transfer some of that energy over to him... Maybe that could be his and Percy’s next project.

“Hmm? Oh, it was good. Good, yeah. Yours?”

“It was good. How was France?”

“It was nice, yeah. Just fine. How was New Years Eve? I heard it turned into quite the spectacle.”

“We had to take it outside once Blaise snuck Dante in. Although I think it might have had more to do with the the fire breathing dragon outfit he and Theo were trying to put on him.”

Thomas snorted.

“How’s Adélie?”

Then he sputtered. “Fine,” he called out a little too fast and a little too loudly. “Oh, would you look at the time. I have to, er, well, studying, you see. Library. Don’t set anything on fire while I’m gone.”

It wasn’t his best exit ever, but it served its purpose.

---

“You know you are going to have to tell her eventually, right?”

Percy was being decidedly unhelpful, and hadn’t even looked up from his essay.

“Not yet I don’t,” Thomas muttered. Ivy did not need to find out about his not-really-girlfriend. Ever.

“I suppose not. You can always wait until she’s the godmother of your firstborn child.”

Well, he wouldn’t be much of a Slytherin if he didn’t at least consider every possibility.

---

“Did he really say he was going to teach you?”

“He’s going to teach me.”

“But did he say that?”

“He will.”

Draco sighed. This was getting him nowhere. “Well, I suppose it would be a rather useful skill to have. And if Sirius could manage it I don’t see why I could not.”

“Sirius is brilliant,” Ivy stated matter-of-factly.

Draco ignored that statement. “And I suppose it would be nice to have something to do after graduation,” he mused.

“Oh no, we’re doing it this summer,” Ivy said.

“Excuse me?” Draco demanded, incredulity dripping from his voice. “I think I heard you wrong. You, thirteen-year-old you, is going to try to become an animagus *this summer*?”

“Well, I’m almost fourteen.”

“It’s January, Ivy.”

“And compared with the long, slow passage of time, I am almost fourteen.”

“Well just so long as you’re not doing it without me.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it.”

---

*February 5, 1994*

“A well-played game, Mr. Wood, most excellent. Might we have a few moments of your time?”

The rest of the team watched as Oliver headed over to talk to the third quidditch team representative of the day.

“They grow up so fast,” George said, wiping a fake tear away before glancing down. “Well, some of us, at least.”

Ivy elbowed him in the stomach at that.

“Where did you come from?” Angelina asked, looking down at Ivy who seemed to have appeared out of nowhere. “Actually, never mind. I don’t want to know. These two will try and recruit me again,” she said, jabbing a thumb in Fred’s direction.

Fred put a hand over his heart and made his best impression of innocence.

George patted Ivy’s head. “There is still hope for you,” he said comfortingly.

“Not much, mind you,” Fred interjected.

“But a little,” George concluded.

Ivy just glared, although the angle at which she had to look up to do so lessened the effectiveness somewhat.

A few minutes later Oliver returned and got only a “I’m going to climb on your shoulders now” in warning before Ivy preceded to do just that.

“Er...”

The chasers all burst out laughing at Oliver’s mixed look of confusion and resignation as Ivy settled atop his shoulders.

“Right... Well then. Lockers, everyone? Or...” He glanced up at his passenger.

“On it,” the twins shouted together, before drenching the two in water and taking off.

---

“He wants to. He really wants to.”

“He does have that look in his eye, doesn’t he Gred.”

“He does indeed. Do you suppose he’s finally cracked?”

“Stop bothering your brother,” Madam Pomfrey said, interrupting whatever answer Fred was about to give. “Now, tongues out. Honestly, soaking wet in February.”

“I would just like to say that this was not my fault,” Oliver piped up from his bed.

“It’s true,” Katie chimed in.

“Why are you even here?” Percy asked her.

Katie shrugged. “I saw an opportunity and I took it.” She and Ivy high-fived from the beds they had pulled close together.

“And people wonder why we never prank her,” Fred said, giving Katie a suspicious look.

“Vicious, that one,” George said, nodding.

“Tongues,” Madam Pomfrey demanded again. The twins immediately complied, not wanting to risk her wrath further.

“Is it too much to ask that you never do anything troublesome ever again?” Percy pleaded.

“Yes,” came the joint response from Oliver, Katie, and Ivy. Fred and George, still being subjected to Madam Pomfrey’s ministrations and therefore unable to reply, did manage to convey their feelings on the matter nonetheless.

---

“And you’re sure you are fine? No lingering symptoms?”

“I’m fine, Sirius,” Ivy assured him, rolling her eyes. “It was just a bit of water.”

“It’s *February*,” Sirius said. “You could, I don’t know, come down with something.”

“But I didn’t, and it’s fine. I’m fine,” Ivy said once again.

“Well, you’d better be,” Sirius grumbled. “I don’t want to have to be the one to tell your dad...” he trailed off, shuddering.

“Oh, not you too,” Ivy groaned. “What is it with everyone and thinking he’s scary? Percy was convinced Dad was going to suddenly show up and yell at him or something. Honestly, it’s just a little cold.”

“Ha!”

“That’s already taken care of. See?” Ivy sniffed to prove her point. “Completely fine.”

Sirius did not look entirely convinced, but he didn’t argue the point further.

Ivy sighed, loudly. “Are you going to tell me or not?”

“Hmm, what?”

“Why everyone thinks Dad is suddenly the scariest person around or something.”

Ivy heard Sirius mutter something about “...is the scariest...” but couldn’t quite make it all out.

“Come on, Padfoot,” Ivy said in her best you-can-absolutely-trust-me-with-the-secrets-of-the-universe tone. By the look on her godfather’s face it still needed some work.

“You weren’t *there*, Ives. You have no idea how absolutely terrifying...”

Well that was a start. She could work with that.

---

*February 12, 1994*

Severus glared at a particular stone on the floor as if it were personally responsible for the headache he had been carrying for the past three months. Albus Dumbledore was the stubbornest bastard he had ever had the displeasure of attempting to reason with, and he had given up entirely on trying to say things another way in hopes of actually convincing the man of anything. Even after seeing a half dozen memories, the headmaster was still not convinced that Peverell was not, in fact, in any way associated with the Dark Lord, or that he was indeed protecting Ivy Potter and not involved in some convoluted, roundabout plot that would end in her demise and his takeover of the world.

Severus very carefully did not point out that Peverell had sort of taken over already, even if mostly on accident, seeing as that would not have accomplished anything worthwhile.

Perhaps if he was feeling bored and moderately suicidal some day in the distant future he would bring up that little fact, but for now he would keep his peace on that particular point.

For now he would simply resign himself to the occasional mandatory talks with the stone wall that was Albus Dumbledore.

It was frustrating to no end, and even pulling out his final card had done nothing to assuage the old wizard's suspicions and accusations.

He had hoped (even if not with particular optimism), that informing Albus of the destruction of the horcruxes would have finally convinced the man that Voldemort was indeed gone for good.

But no. Instead Severus now feared the weight of Dumbledore's ire and suspicion was turned towards him. Especially when he would not directly confirm the existence of a horcrux in the famous scar. That had been Peverell's one condition for agreeing to Severus's scheme to bring up the topic of horcruxes with the headmaster, and Severus had a healthy enough sense of self-preservation to comply. Especially since the New Year's Eve incident...

He had not entirely understand Peverell's desire for that particular withholding until Albus had brought up the prophecy. Albus had, of course, alluded to the fact that *Severus* was the one who had overheard and reported on it in the first place, before telling him that there was more to it than he knew. Severus hadn't bothered to tell him that he did, in fact, know more of it, since that was rather counterproductive to his overall goals, but he had made a snide comment about whether the prophecy was even still in effect.

He was fairly certain that had been a mistake, but he would withhold final judgment for now. On the one hand, Dumbledore was no longer droning on about the same thing for the umpteenth time this term. On the other hand, Dumbledore had made a swift and not entirely graceful exit from Hogwarts, with the Hall of Prophecies as his obvious destination.

Severus knew exactly what he would find there, which was nothing, which would no doubt lead to more conspiracies and plans and headaches (at least for him).

And when Peverell found out...

Well hopefully he wouldn't be too upset.

Severus reasoned to himself that Dumbledore was bound to find out about the missing prophecy *eventually*. And it wasn't likely that Peverell would be so upset as to do anything *too* drastic. But the man was the most magically powerful wizard Severus had ever encountered by far, and had somehow ended up the most politically powerful wizard in Britain as well. The fact that it had been mostly on accident did not detract in any way from the fact that the man born Harry James Potter (which Severus could now think to himself without shuddering), had the support of an overwhelming majority of the heads of the extant Sacred Twenty-Eight families and other titled lines, as well as a basis of support that extended across all the major political and ideological factions in wizarding Britain.



Essentially, Potter/Peverell was stupidly powerful and it would not do to anger him unnecessarily.

With that in mind perhaps a quick note was in order...

---

*February 17, 1994*

Harry threw yet another balled up piece of parchment in the fire he had created a few minutes or hours ago for that express purpose.

How do you convince a man who lived most of his adult life as a spy beholden to one manipulator or another that even if you are mildly annoyed it's not, for the most part, directed at him and is certainly not going to result in his death or torture or whatever else Snape seemed to think Harry was going to do.

He was slowly getting used to dealing with this sort of thing from some of the wizards Lucius, Simon, and Alden kept "inviting" to their little get-togethers-that-weren't-really-meetings, but Snape? Really?

And it shouldn't be this hard to write a letter that assured the recipient you weren't about to murder them.

And yet it was, he thought, throwing another one in the fire.

---

"Luna, can you read this and see if it sounds alright?"

Luna took the proffered parchment and read through it quickly. Short, sweet, and completely devoid of murderous undertones was what Harry was aiming for here, and he really hoped the ten word body of his letter was sufficient.

Luna handed it back to him. "It seems fine to me."

Harry sighed in relief. "Thanks. Why is he being so apologetic about this anyway, do you think? The rest of us have let far worse things out before, and it's not like Dumbledore can really do anything about it anyway."

Luna opened her mouth but Harry interrupted.

"I realize as I said that that I should probably amend it to Sirius and I. Maybe Remus, I don't know. But really, does Snape honestly think I'm going to have a major freak out simply because he let a small detail slide?" He looked at his wife sheepishly. "Right, sorry."

"I don't know," Luna said, "but perhaps Sirius might? Or Remus? He and Severus seem to get along quite well now."

Harry wrinkled his nose a bit as he considered the many things that had led to Remus Lupin and Severus Snape of all people *getting along* as Luna called it. "Remus is probably the safer bet," he mused.

“Oh, is that something we need to consider?”

---

“You seriously have no idea, do you,” Remus said.

Harry firmly resisted the urge to squirm in his seat. He was an adult.

“Er, no?”

Not the best answer he could have given, but too late to go back now.

Remus stared at him a moment longer. “Remember New Years?” he said finally. “At the Malfoy’s?”

“When I got upset at the kids for sneaking two wolves indoors?”

Remus looked at him as if he were being deliberately obtuse. He wasn’t, just to be clear, but he didn’t really have anyone to point that out to at the moment.

“Or not...”

“Perhaps we ought to take a little trip to the pensieve? I believe you keep it around here somewhere.”

Harry followed, slightly bemused but knowing Remus’s request that wasn’t really a request would give him answers soon enough.

A few moments and one slightly cringeworthy pensieve experience later, Harry understood.

“Do I really look like that?” he asked Luna, who had come in unnoticed at some point.

“I thought you looked rather handsome,” Luna replied.

Harry beamed, Remus’s eye twitched, and somewhere many miles away another wizard paused and added a tick mark to his mental tally. It may not be the main list, but it was worth tracking regardless.

---

Somewhere else, another group of wizards exited a pensieve, all but one shuddering as they did so.

“And so you see, gentlemen,” the speaker said, with a tone that denoted exactly how gentlemanly he found the other men, “it would really be in your best interests to carry on as you have. No need to disrupt the order of your lives with such trivial nonsense as petty revenge or retaliation.”

Convinced that the pitiful wizards in front of him understood what he required of them, the speaker dismissed them with a wave of his hand before gathering up the pensieve and other props he had brought for the occasion.

Three more would-be continued Death Eaters down.

And if Abraxas Malfoy was rolling over in his grave slightly, well, all the better.

---

Augusta indulged in one more pensive viewing. Entertainment had to be found *somewhere*, and Merlin knows after today's Wizengamot session she deserved some sort of reward for doing her part to ensure all the idiots made it out alive.

She entered the oft-viewed memory with well hidden glee, more out of habit than the fear anyone would somehow discern such an uncontrolled emotion.

She watched as her boys made their way through the throng of people, each doing their best to find pleasure in that evening's events. Sirius and Henry stuck close by their respective partners, as the young and in love are wont to do. Remus was whisked out of the main ballroom as quickly as good manners would allow by wizards equally anxious to avoid too much noise and small talk. Barty, though only truly known to a few, mingled well among the crowd and was a favorite of many a young witch before long.

And then the good part began.

A small comment here, a minor insinuation there, and one increasingly irritated Lord Peverell-Slytherin in the middle. She would have almost felt bad for the poor fools who had opened their mouths if it had not provided her with such amusement over the past two and a half months.

She knew the rate at which Henry's anger increased in this scene so well by this point, that the faint glow that emanated from him was easily spotted far sooner than it had been on the occasion itself. Indeed, she could now note every tell the incensed wizard gave in the time leading up to The Moment, as she termed it in her mind.

Ah, and here it was at last.

Despite having seen the memory dozens of times since the initial incident, her attention was focused solely on Henry and the sheer power radiating from him. Even in memory form it was poignant.

"I will protect my daughter from anyone and everything that might foolishly attempt to bring her harm," she mouthed along with the memory version of Henry at her favorite part of the memory. If she mimicked the quiet and low, yet piercing tone, no one would ever know. She turned her attention away from him to enjoy the looks on some of the other faces in the room. You could have heard a feather drop at that moment, and faces conveyed more than words could in many instances anyway.

"What would you do?"

Augusta had to give some credit to the wizard who had asked, seeing as he had managed to sound not completely timid and apprehensive.

And then Henry let out a deep, dry chuckle, and she could feel the shivers in the room.

“Never ask what someone would do,” Henry said, looking every bit the powerful wizard he was. “Ask what they have already done.” It was her other favorite line of the memory without question.

And with that, Henry turned back to Luna and one of their other friends and continued whatever conversation they had been partaking in before The Moment as if nothing of note had happened at all. With that the tension and feel of static magic in the air was broken, though it took many people far longer to fully recover, and, if some of the looks Augusta remembered being thrown Henry’s way the remainder of the evening were any indication, some did not recover entirely at all.

She exited the memory, satisfied that something was worth observing today at least.

# Chapter 47

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*February 18, 1994*

*“Legilimens.”*

Ivy immediately felt the intrusion. She cleared off the stage of her mind before constructing her favorite defense.

A few moments later Sirius retreated.

“You did it!” he said excitedly. “You kept me out entirely.”

“Not really,” she replied, not feeling her godfather’s level of enthusiasm. “I didn’t force you out or anything.”

“But you still kept me from getting anywhere,” Sirius pointed out. “And that is quite impressive. But crocodiles? Really?”

Ivy giggled. “‘Earth’s Living Dinosaur,’ don’t you remember?”

Sirius muttered something intelligible. “I don’t suppose you want to try using butterflies or something next time?”

“Ooh maybe I could do some that set you on fire when you get too close.”

“You know what? How about you just stick to your swamp dinosaurs.” Sirius made a face and Ivy laughed.

“Alright. So can we try again? I’d really like to expel you completely.”

“...the room and into the wall,” Sirius muttered. Ivy couldn’t quite make out the rest of it. “Alright then,” Sirius said, clapping his hands. “Let’s try this again. *Legilimens.*”

This time at the intrusion into her mind Ivy focused on driving it out. Her mind became a blank force pushing against that which didn’t belong. The presence pushed back, so she imagined herself encircling it around, giving it nowhere to go. She gave a sharp metal push and felt it withdraw slightly. Feeling encouraged by the progress, she pushed again, this time envisioning the intruding presence disintegrating at her less than gentle nudge. A slight flickering gave her yet more encouragement, and she imagined herself pulling together an army of mental forces for a final assault.

A few feet away, now on his back on the floor, Sirius groaned.

“I did it!”

“You did it.”

“Ten points to Hufflepuff!”

“Ten points to Hufflepuff,” Sirius said with a laugh, pumping a fist into the air.

---

*February 19, 1994*

The many years he had spent alive thus far meant that Albus Dumbledore had had a great deal of practice in a great many things. And if he could have had things go his way, he would not be currently practicing the art of a neutral, yet genial expression masking inner rage. Just who did these people think they were, telling *him* of all people to “come back later” and “make an appointment.” He shouldn’t need an appointment to visit the Department of Mysteries. They should be thrilled to have him there, but *no*. He had been shuffled out the door last week when he tried coming to see the prophecy, and had been told to come back in a week! Didn’t they know how important this was? Well, probably not, but what good was his fame and reputation if it didn’t get him what he needed. And if Anthony Belby didn’t think Albus recognized him as the short little Ravenclaw from a few decades back he was sorely mistaken.

So here he was now, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, defeater of Grindelwald, Hogwarts Headmaster and a bunch of other titles that had their occasional uses, sitting on a bench outside the entrance to the Department of Mysteries, smiling at the witches and wizards hurrying past, waiting for his “authorized escort” to the Hall of Prophecies.

He had suffered many indignities in his lifetime but this was quickly earning a high ranking on his list.

---

Anthony Belby watched the esteemed headmaster of Hogwarts leave in a huff, and couldn’t quite hide the satisfied smile that had been threatening to break for some time now. Had he been petty? Absolutely. Did he regret it? Not for a moment.

In truth it would not have been difficult to accommodate the headmaster a week prior, but the wizard had failed to give any solid reason for being there in the first place beyond needing to “check on something,” and Anthony was not in the habit of allowing just anyone to waltz into the Department of Mysteries on his watch, no matter how many titles they might hold. No, the headmaster could make an appointment just like any other witch or wizard, and Anthony had told him as such.

Of course making Dumbledore wait in the foyer for an extra twenty minutes was being rather petty, but it was a trick that had worked on many others who believed their name or title ought to earn them special privileges and attention. Anthony snorted at the thought. No special privileges to be found in the DoM. That’s what the Minster’s office was for.

And to think Dumbledore had put up such a fuss over a prophecy that wasn’t even housed there anymore.

---

February 24, 1994

"Please tell me those are for you," Harry said to Luna, looking at the stack of letters on the table.

"I can lie to you if you'd like," Luna said, eyes not even lifting off the page.

Harry sighed but glanced over her shoulder to see what she was reading, making a face at the unintelligible print. "Or you could summarize what all those little squiggles are."

"Sinhala."

"Yes, that."

"I can after you summarize what is in that pile."

"You," Harry said, pointing an accusing finger, "know something. I know you do."

"I know plenty of things," Luna replied cheerfully.

"Not what I meant."

"Then perhaps you need to say what you mean."

"I don't want to look at the mail."

"It might be something informative."

"It's going to be terrible, isn't it."

"I doubt anything terrible will happen."

"That's what you said about the last little 'get-together.'"

"It wasn't so bad."

"Simon Parkinson said I had minions and people *agreed*."

"Only Remus and Carita."

"That doesn't make it better, you know."

"Augusta thought it was hilarious."

"Still not helping."

Luna made no further comment and Harry eyed the stack of letters for a moment before resigning himself to his fate. Somehow he doubted Voldemort had ever had to deal with this much mail. Then he realized who he was inadvertently comparing himself to and shuddered, throwing himself wholeheartedly into his task with the hope that it would distract him from that unfortunate comparison.

---

“So, what did I miss?” Remus said, sitting down across from Harry on one of the more comfortable chairs.

“Dumbledore discovered the prophecy is missing from the ministry and is attempting to blackmail Severus; about a dozen ‘emergencies’ came up in the Wizengamot so we’re going to have push back our plan to deal with Umbridge; the TriWizard Tournament is apparently still on even though Crouch, who was the driving force behind it, is dead; the goblins have deigned to inform me that Dumbledore has been poking his nose around *there* trying to find out exactly what they did to Ivy’s scar, then they also took the opportunity to remind me of the whole Master of Death thing and ask if I had any plans to use that status; and finally Neville overpowered a spell in charms yesterday and ended up in the hospital wing overnight.”

Remus paused a moment before responding. “Sounds like a lot...”

“Oh, and I had to argue with nine different people that we couldn’t just go around killing people we don’t like.”

“Umbridge,” Luna mouthed to Remus, who nodded.

“And did that get... resolved?”

“The no killing thing? Yes. Sort of. Probably. I honestly don’t entirely want to know, but at the same time I feel responsible, do you know what I mean?”

“I don’t have minions so no, not really.”

The glare Harry leveled at Remus for that statement would have been enough for most grown witches and wizards to flee for their very lives, but Remus managed to remain seated, calmly sipping his tea.

---

*March 12, 1994*

“Must we?”

“Yes Draco, we must,” Fred said, theatrically placing a hand over his heart.

“Just so long as he doesn’t try to feed us again,” Draco grumbled.

“We can feed you if you get hungry,” George offered.

“Pass,” Draco replied sarcastically. He possessed something in the way of survival instincts, after all.

Upon reaching their intended destination Fred knocked on the giant wooden door. A moment later a tearful Hagrid opened the door, ushering the three boys inside.

Draco looked at the ceiling, silently counted to ten, then asked, “what happened?”



“Aragog’s dead.”

The loud blowing of the large man’s nose drowned out George’s question of “who?”

“They’re all dead,” Hagrid cried out, before beginning to sob.

Draco did not do comfort and so looked to the twins who had dragged him here in the first place to convey his insistence that they do something to fix whatever this was. Unfortunately for him, they seemed as lost as he was. *They* were the ones with more siblings than anyone could keep track of; they should be used to this sort of thing. Absolutely useless.

“I’m sorry for your loss,” Draco began. “How did it happen?” Maybe this would give him some clue as to who this Aragog fellow was.

“He was fine before. No one bothers the Acromantula in the forest, you know. Who’d wanna do something like that?”

Draco processed that load of information as quickly as he could, simultaneously thinking up several reasons why someone would want to rid the forest of such a creature.

George cleared his throat. “So, er, how many more are there?”

Draco elbowed George’s side but waited to hear the answer.

“They’re all gone,” Hagrid sobbed.

The three each let out their own small sighs, but Draco spoke up before Hagrid could notice their relief. “Was he a friend of yours then?” Seemed entirely plausible.

“I raised him since he was a baby,” came the tearful response. “Saw him grow up, and all his children, and their children, and their children, and...”

Thankfully this was interrupted by yet another sob, leaving Draco free to try to think of something other than the several generations of Acromantula apparently inhabiting the forest. Well, past tense on that now, he supposed.

“And you’re sure none of them are left?” Fred asked.

It lacked tact of course, but Draco was relieved when the answer came that yes, Hagrid was sure.

Draco shot down all further comments from the twins with a glare. The sooner he could comfort the man the sooner he could leave, and tactless questions that might prompt renewed expressions of grief were in direct conflict with that goal.

---

“Come in, Draco. Is something the matter?”

“There is a dead colony of Acromantula in the forest. Thought you might be interested.”

“And how did you come by this information?” The last thing Severus needed was to learn his godson had been traipsing around the Forbidden Forest.

“Hagrid. He’s rather upset. I guess one of them was his friend. Or pet, maybe?”

Of course it was.

---

Ivy scoped out the library, and, eyes coming to rest on her target, began walking quickly in that direction. Upon reaching the desired table she grabbed its two users by the arm and pulled them away. Surprised, they offered little resistance and stumbled onto their feet.

“I need your help,” she said.

---

This was it. He knew this was it. Nearly three years of work and it was all for naught. Fire? Probably fire. Something had to be on fire, right?

He glanced at Thomas, trying to convey his line of thinking. Thomas just shrugged, but pointed out to Ivy that she wasn’t wet.

“Why would I be wet?” she asked, a confused look on her face briefly displacing the previous look of concern and mild alarm.

Yes, definitely fire.

---

It was not fire. Thomas had thought for sure it had to have been fire. If something were drowning or flooding she would have been wet, and logically that left something being on fire. Percy had clearly shared his opinion, but they were both wrong. Instead, they were standing in his least favorite room in the castle, proud member of Slytherin House notwithstanding.

“Why are we in the Chamber of Secrets?” Percy asked, voicing their joint question.

Ivy shifted from one foot to the other. She was silent for a moment before suddenly blurting out, “Hilda took all the snakes on a field trip to the forest to teach them how to hunt and I think they killed an entire Acromantula colony and Hagrid is really sad now and I think it’s all my fault.”

Thomas blinked. “I’m sorry. Could you repeat that?”

“Yes, you said an Acromantula colony?”

Ivy looked back and forth between the two and nodded. “Am I responsible for murder now?”

---

After reassuring Ivy several times that she was not, in fact, guilty of murder or responsible for the actions of a thousand year old basilisk, parselmouth or not, Percy couldn’t help but

feel a little relieved that there was at least one magical creature in existence that Ivy Potter didn't seem to want to meet. There was hope for his sanity yet.

---

*April 5, 1994*

"I'm out. I can't take another round like that." Draco eyed the grass for a moment, wondering if his stomach was going to wish to meet it, but found his insides were content enough to stay where they belonged for now.

Fred and George nodded in sympathy. The flying barrel roll race had seemed like a good idea at the time, but now...

"Who is still in?" Blaise asked.

"Ivy," said Draco.

"Katie and Alicia too," Fred added.

"Bridget Holmwood, Cho Chang, Artemis Keighley, and Madeline Daubney are all still in as well," George said.

"Anyone else?" Draco asked.

The other three all shrugged.

It was another forty minutes before the round came to an end, and Katie Bell was declared the winner of the barrel race. Once Ivy was spotted Draco made his way over to her, followed closely by the other boys.

"Nice flying," Blaise said.

Ivy thanked him, and was about to say something else but was interrupted before she could begin.

"How did you girls manage to stay in for so long?" George asked.

"And how come it was all girls left?" Fred added.

Ivy looked confused for a moment but then realization hit her and she grinned. "You know there is a really nice little anti-vertigo potion. Fairly easy to brew. Rather effective."

The boys let out a collective groan.

"That's how you all lasted so long?" Draco asked, rather upset that *he* hadn't thought of doing that.

Ivy shrugged. "It was Cho's idea."

“I’m fairly certain I didn’t get this sick in last year’s Olympics,” Fred muttered as they walked back towards the Quidditch field.

“Hey Ivy, you got any of that potion left?” George asked, gratefully catching a vial a moment later.

---

*April 18, 1994*

To anyone who found themselves in the Great Hall an hour before dinner inevitably noticed that group of seventh-year boys huddled together at one end of the Ravenclaw table. It was ostensibly neutral ground for the gathering of seventh-years, which was considered to be for the best based on the faces some of them were making. At the center of it all sat Oliver Wood and Marcus Flint, the two Quidditch captains who had been bitter rivals before becoming nearly inseparable. How long that would last was a matter of great speculation at the moment, since the two were seen glaring each other down by many of the student body over the course of the afternoon. Now, as they sat in the Great Hall, surrounded by several of their fellow seventh-years, it was anyone’s guess, (and a few people’s bets), as to how long it would take for the rivalry to resume in full force.

---

Percy wanted to bang his head on the table. He loved Oliver like a brother, but by Godric the man could be stubborn. When Oliver’s argument with Flint had started earlier in the day over some Quidditch thing or other, Percy had foolishly thought it would be over within a few minutes, but now it was nearly dinner time and they were still going at it. Glares had replaced words for a while, but now, with so many of their fellow seventh-years near them (the boys at least, seeing as the girls had all had the good sense to avoid the situation entirely), the two Quidditch captains had resumed their use of the English language as a tool to beat each other into submission. Or something like that.

Earlier Percy would have happily left them to their glares and insults, but he had been cajoled into staying by the uncomfortable combination that was Thomas’s pleading and Burke’s glare, and now he was too invested in whatever “this” was to leave without seeing the outcome.

---

Cedric, like every other student in the Great Hall at present, was a bit more than mildly curious why the two Quidditch Captains were locked in such a heated battle of words. Traditionally that had not been their preferred manner of fighting but who was he to judge.

Finally seeing one of the seventh-years break away from the group at the center of it all, he hurried on over to find out what exactly was happening.

“May I ask what is going on between Wood and Flint?” he asked, hoping that the Gryffindor didn’t catch onto the fact that Cedric couldn’t remember his name at the moment.

The other boy hesitated momentarily before responding. “It’s about Quidditch. Not sure what, precisely, don’t think any of us know for sure. Last I heard they were arguing something to do with Cardiff.”

The Quidditch portion of that reply was entirely unhelpful, because of course it was something to do with Quidditch. The only logical reasons for the two to be arguing would be over Quidditch or Ivy, and if it was Ivy it probably still had something to do with Quidditch. The Cardiff portion was interesting though, if not entirely informative. His attempts at unraveling the mystery with so little detail were interrupted however, as a sudden boom drew his attention to the two captains, who were now sporting a few small fireballs between them. This was... not good.

---

This was not good. Percy knew that he could reasonably deal with this on his own, but it would be so much easier if he had reinforcements. Suddenly he spotted Diggory a little ways away, looking their direction.

“Help me,” he mouthed, gesturing to the two idiots who thought indoor fireballs constituted a viable fighting plan.

---

Cedric was a little far away to be reading lips, and he didn’t have a particular talent for that in the first place, but Percy mouthing “Ivy” made plenty of sense to him, so he turned towards the door quickly to complete his appointed task.

---

Percy watched the Hufflepuff get up and walk straight out and sighed, thinking to himself that Cedric Diggory was proving to be almost as unhelpful as Thomas was being at the moment.

A brief moment later though he reentered the Great Hall, followed by... Ivy?

Ivy marched her way right down to the group of seventh years, most of them unconsciously parting the way for her.

Even Oliver and Flint looked up from their battlefield. The change was instantaneous.

“Hey Ivy, what’s up?” Oliver asked, as if nothing at all were the matter.

Ivy did not look particularly pleased. “You two can’t throw fireballs *indoors*,” she said indignantly. “Do you know how much trouble I almost got in when George and I tried to do that? Fred made us take it outside by the greenhouses instead.”

Percy’s brain skipped a heartbeat as he tried to process how or when Fred became the responsible one of any group ever. He ignored the fact that Ivy, fire, and the flammable indoors were all mentioned in the same sentence. It was better that way.

“It was for a good cause?” Flint offered, as if unsure of his excuse himself.

“And what would that be?”

“Wood’s being an idiot.”

Oliver, obviously protesting this statement and subsequent reasoning, set about to explain loudly and in no unclear terms why that was not the case.

“And what’s wrong with Cardiff?” Ivy asked.

“*Nothing*,” Oliver insisted between gritted teeth.

Flint threw up his hands. “How can you even be considering it?” he demanded. “Not only are they the worst team in the league two years running, but they are hardly the best offer either of us received.”

Percy saw Ivy’s eye twitched and thought to himself how remarkably like her...Uncle? Father? she looked right at that moment.

“I am *not* joining the Tornados,” Oliver said hotly.

“And I’m not going to live in Dorset,” Flint countered with the same heat.

“You are both idiots, you know that, right?”

Percy looked at Ivy just like everyone else.

“I mean, there is this lovely little devil’s powder that you all seem so fond of,” she continued. Seeing the general confusion she rolled her eyes. “Floo powder. Apparation. Portkey? *Brooms*? You two are bloody wizards so I don’t see how it matters where you live.”

“Language,” Percy called out absently. Force of habit, really. He was Head Boy, after all.

Ivy just huffed and plopped down in the nearest seat, which happened to be next to Flint. “I don’t see how being on different teams is likely to interrupt your plans in any way. You can live wherever, after all, and I’ll still come visit you.”

Although put out at having the flaws of their argument presented to them, both wizards seemed content to voice their complaints or protests quietly and at a low enough register so as to remain unheard by the rest of their fellow students. A bit late for that kind of consideration, but Percy would take what he could get.

After a few moments to ensure the two weren’t about to go at it once more, he pulled Ivy off to the side. “So what was all that about then? They wanted to play together?” For some reason he couldn’t quite explain he felt that might not end well for everyone involved.

“Oh, well they had made plans to find a flat together, see, and so they thought they would need to be on the same team, only they each prefer offers from different teams, and I promised to visit them and keep training during the summer sometimes, but if they find’t live together I might not have time to visit both and I think that might have been what started it. I can’t say for sure though.”

There was so much to unpack with that, though the main conclusion Percy was drawing from this so far was that Oliver and Flint were, as Ivy had so eloquently put it, idiots.

“Why do they need to live to... You know what? Never mind. Thank you for interfering.”

With that dismissal Ivy shrugged and ran off, no doubt to take more years off of Percy’s projected lifespan in some way or another.

Stalking back over to the assembled seventh years he pointed first to Oliver then to Flint. “You two are idiots,” he said. “You were entirely unhelpful,” he said, pointing an accusing finger at Thomas now, “and Burke, stop looking so damn smug.”

The prefect just grinned more.

“I...” Percy was interrupted by a clearing throat behind him. “What?” he said sharply, turning around.

Professor McGonagall raised a single, unimpressed eyebrow. “Language, Mr. Weasley.”

Once she was safely out of hearing distance a very flushed Percy leaned in towards the two who started this whole mess. “I hate you both very much right now,” he hissed, “and you had better hope I don’t have to endure any more of this nonsense or I swear to Merlin I will... something. I will do something. And you won’t like it.”

Hardly a suitably forceful threat, but he must have looked angry enough because he only received two sharp nods in response.

---

*April 19, 1994*

“So about yesterday...”

Percy snorted. “A great help you were,” he said bitterly.

Thomas sighed and sat down across from his friend. “You know when Quidditch becomes involved going against those two is like facing a pair of dragons head on. Literally too,” he said, mimicking an exploding fireball and earning himself a small upwards tilt of the corner of one mouth... There. Satisfied, he leaned back in his chair. “So,” he continued, “looked over any of our own offers?”

Percy groaned and Thomas couldn’t help but smirk. Percy Weasley, Head Boy, who had aspired to nothing more than a perfect Ministry career for longer than Thomas had known him, had thus far received many offers of employment. Exactly zero of those had been for the Ministry or any other form of work that could be considered “office work” by any stretch of the imagination.

“You know if we had published in a different journal it might not have been like this.”

“It’s a charm most useful for monitoring babies, where else were we supposed to publish it?”

“Professor Flitwick might have...”

“Professor Flitwick is the only reason we’re only being inundated with offers from your eldest brother’s associates and not that dragon keeper brother’s friends as well,” Thomas pointed out.

“But also the reason so many happy parents are extending such a variety of horrid propositions in their gratitude. And to be fair you could use it on large creatures as well...”

“Yes and I’m sure that’s exactly what every new parent in Britain wants to hear. ‘Monitor your baby and your illegally sourced dragon with the same spell! Keep close track of both your magical fire producing responsibilities at once!’”

“Well not if you phrase it like that,” Percy said with an eye roll. “Besides, babies don’t produce fire.”

“You sure about that?”

“I have four younger siblings. Five if you count Ivy. I’m sure.”

“And you’re positive neither of the twins ever managed to set something on fire as babies? Or Ivy for that matter?”

Percy opened his mouth but closed it again, shaking his head ever so slightly.

“So, any offers you’re leaning towards?” Thomas asked, changing the subject somewhat.

“I have not heard back from the Ministry, so no,” Percy said.

Now it was Thomas’s turn to roll his eyes. “You don’t have to be at the ministry to study law. Besides, I thought you were already had an in there. Several, actually, if I remember right.”

Percy shrugged. “I suppose. But nothing solid as of yet. But what about you?”

“Thinking about the Australia one.”

“Oh, your parents are going to love that,” Percy said with a great deal of sarcasm.

“Cursebreaking in Australia isn’t all that different from politics in Britain,” Thomas began.

Percy seemed entirely unconvinced.

“Well, it isn’t,” he defended. “Both dealing with old, potentially lethal things that want to eat you alive.” This earned him an actual snort of laughter from the redhead and he grinned.

“I have reached out to a few people, you know,” Percy said after a moment.

“Well, there’s always curse breaking,” Thomas retorted cheekily.

“As Bill reminds me in every letter he sends,” Percy said with another eye roll. “I think I’ll pass, thank you very much.”



## Chapter End Notes

Hello. It's been a bit, hasn't it. It has been a long last few months but \*hopefully\* I will be able to pick up the pace again. It's really hard getting back in a groove after being gone. Like, I have to remember what even is happening in the story and where everything is supposed to be heading. Don't get me wrong, I have dozens of pages of notes, but it's somehow not the same. As always, this is my first fic ever so thanks for the positive feedback and comments, and for kindly ignoring all the mistakes.

## Chapter 48

*June 17, 1994*

“I don’t think I want to use that one.”

Kenneth sighed, albeit internally. “I’m not saying you have to use it, I’m just saying it might be good to learn just in case.”

“Just in case someone starts bullying me again, you mean.”

“Yes.”

“I have friends now, you know.”

“Luna, please just take the book.”

Luna took the book, but he sincerely doubted she would ever open it.

“Look, I know you’ll probably be fine, and there are plenty people that will be keeping an eye on things if they know what’s good for them, but I don’t want to leave you to come here next year unprepared.”

“It’s all right, Neville will look out for me.”

“Nevi... *Longbottom*? Fine, you know what? Just, fine.”

“I’ll miss you too,” Luna said, leaning into his side.

“Yeah, well, you’re stuck with me now, princess,” Kenneth said, pulling her in for a tight hug.

“You make a good big brother.”

“Of course I do. I’m the best.”

---

“Here’s the list of books. We updated it last night.”

Cedric went to take the list from Percy but Bridget grabbed it before he could.

“You know, this isn’t going to do much. Ivy has the entire Peverell and Black family libraries at her disposal, and even if she didn’t she’s not going to be dissuaded by a few light misdirections,” Christopher said, smirking slightly at Percy’s eye twitch.

“This is our very last evening at Hogwarts, Walker,” Thomas said wearily. “Just let us have this.”

“Why is there even a book on the art of defenestration in the library?” Bridget asked.

Cedric leaned over to see the list. “Hey, why is a book on Kneazle breeding on the list?”

The two almost graduates looked between the Hufflepuffs for a moment before turning away and walking off without another word.

“That was strange,” Cedric mused, more to himself than to anyone else present.

“Not really,” Christopher said. “They have dedicated an inordinate amount of time to their babysitting efforts, after all.”

“And we’re the new babysitters?” Bridget asked jokingly.

Christopher just grinned at her.

“What about the twins and the Slytherins?” Cedric asked. “Why not give this to them?”

“Do they look like babysitters?”

“Do we?”

“Do you see any babies here?” Christopher countered.

Cedric couldn’t argue with that logic.

---

“It’s up to the two of you now.”

“We know.”

“You have to make sure she doesn’t lose interest.”

“We know, Flint.”

“*Every week*, do you understand?”

“Yes, Marcus, we get it. We already told you we would.”

“Good. See that you do.”

They would. There was no way Terence was going to risk the wrath of Marcus Flint, removed from Hogwarts or not. Not when it came to Ivy and Quidditch, particularly in combination. No, he and Adrian would be the encouraging team members Flint wanted them to be. Hopefully Wood would give up his original plan of asking for weekly progress reports though. He could do without those.

---

“*Psst*. Ivy.”

Ivy only had a split second warning before being dragged around a corner and into an unused classroom.

“George, what are you *doing*?” she demanded, though she carefully matched his low volume of speaking.

“Why is your dad at Hogwarts?”

“What?”

“Your dad. He’s here on the map.”

“What map?”

Fred had chosen the precise moment to enter the room as well, but he began slowly backing up, only to have his brother motion for him to come over.

Ivy watched in amusement. “I’m just kidding. I know about the map.”

“You do?” Fred asked.

“Figured it out,” Ivy said with a shrug and a grin. “And Dad may have mentioned it once or twice. Sirius too.”

Fred chuckled nervously. “Well, isn’t that something.”

“But why is your dad here?” George said, returning the conversation to the matter at hand.

Ivy frowned slightly. “I can take a guess, but I don’t know how accurate it would be. Where is he?”

Eying Ivy warily Fred pulled out the map and whispered the passphrase too quietly to hear, much to Ivy’s amusement.

“Here he is,” George said, spotting the name first. “But what would he be doing in Professor Binns’s office?”

“Oi, look at that,” Fred said, pointing to another name just arriving at the same location. “What’s Sirius doing there?”

“Snape too!”

The three stared at the map for a moment in silence.

Finally Ivy spoke. “I think this is probably one of the things I get to learn about when I get home,” she said.

Suddenly Binns’s name disappeared from the map. Three pairs of eyebrows raised exceptionally high.

“Well, um...”

“Definitely one of those things,” Ivy said in awe.

“Did he just kill Binns?” Fred asked, in a slightly awed, slightly horrified voice.

“Can you kill a ghost?” George asked back.

“I think... I think maybe we had better leave this alone for now,” Ivy said, giving the map a chary look.

“You sure?” George asked.

“Just for now,” Ivy hurried to say. “Dad told me there were some things he couldn’t tell me about until I learned occlumency. And I’ve been practicing with Sirius all year. So, well, when I get home...”

Fred nodded. “Let us know if you need help.”

“Thanks.”

All three turned back to watch the map very intently. They watched as Sirius and Professor Snape both left, and waited to see where Henry would go, only to see his name vanish as suddenly as that of Professor Binns.

“Well I don’t imagine he died,” Fred said.

George elbowed him in the side. “He could have apparated.”

“Inside Hogwarts?” Fred asked incredulously.

“Oh, I think he’s done that before,” Ivy said, still giving more attention to the map than to anything else and therefore not in a position to see the looks on her friends’ faces.

“Right,” was all either twin managed in response.

---

It was the last night at Hogwarts for the students, and nothing entirely terrible had happened to Sirius. It was a good thing, really, and maybe the fact that he had only planned on staying a single year in the first place canceled out the curse, but seeing as he had been unable to find the source of the curse all year, he was not about to let his guard down. His family may have been a crazy, bigoted, curse-happy lot, but sometimes inherited paranoia wasn’t such a bad thing.

“...regret that I announce the departure of our beloved Professor Binns, who has finally moved on...”

Sirius suppressed a snort. He didn’t think there was a single person living or dead who would actually miss the ghost as a professor. Well, perhaps some of the students would miss having a free nap period, but then again they might also enjoy learning about something other than goblin wars for a change.

“...announce the winner of the House Cup...”

Sirius continued to tune out the general noise in the hall and, more precisely, the ramblings of the headmaster. He had gone the entire school year without cursing the aged wizard and he wasn't going to give into temptation now by paying close attention to the words coming out of his mouth. Severus could handle that.

“...Gryffindor, with 547 points, and...”

Then the headmaster paused and Sirius glanced up to ascertain the cause.

Dumbledore cleared his throat. “And in first place, Hufflepuff, with 1,483 points.”

Everyone cheered, though no one as loudly as the Hufflepuffs. Understandable, really.

“Yes, well, congratulations to Hufflepuff,” the headmaster said, sounding rather bemused.

Sirius was rather confused as well. How had that house managed to get so many more points than any other house?

It was a mystery worth... Why did Ivy look like she was about to fall out of her seat laughing?

It all came crashing down on Sirius's mind at once. It was him. He was the reason Hufflepuff had so many points. He had never given Ivy's little habit much thought, pretending to give points to Hufflepuff. Except then she had gotten him doing it, and he was a teacher, and apparently those points did actually count...

He slunk down in his chair, but not enough to make anyone suspicious. Hopefully.

Ten points to Slytherin, he thought.

---

“How did we manage to get that many points?” Wayne whispered.

“No idea,” answered Justin in a whisper to match that of his friend, “but just go with it.”

Similar conversations happened up and down the Hufflepuff table amidst their cheering and clapping, with similar results in all cases. They might not know how they did it, but they weren't going to complain now.

---

*June 18, 1994*

“Right. Here you go.”

“Both of them?”

“Well I couldn't very well separate them now, could I?” That was Harry's reasoning and he was sticking to it.

Sabrina eyed the wolf cubs, if they could even still be called that. Harry was fairly certain they had passed that stage months ago but if needed he would still appeal to their cuteness. Or just leave. Whatever worked.

“I’m not getting out of this one, am I?”

“Nope,” Harry replied cheerfully.

Sabrina gave a long-suffering sigh before turning towards the door. “Come on in,” she said, before whistling to the wolves. Dante and Otso followed obediently behind.

It took Harry just a moment to stop staring at the two perfectly behaved wolves. “Now how’d you get them to do that?” he asked, following Sabrina inside. They had never listened to *him* that easily.

---

“So rumor has it that Binns has finally passed on,” Sabrina said more than asked.

“That was fast,” Harry muttered into his teacup.

“You didn’t expect otherwise, did you?” Sabrina asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Not particularly,” Harry admitted, “although I did think it’d wait until the Express arrived this evening.”

“So how did you do it? Last time we talked you still weren’t sure.”

Harry shrugged and leaned back in his seat a bit. “We just had a chat, really. He was really quite cooperative once we informed him Barty has completed his mastery. Did ask whether he could be counted on to teach about the goblin wars though. He was rather insistent on that point.”

“Yes because I’m sure that’s what Barty will be most concerned with,” Sabrina said dryly.

“I’m sure he’ll mention it,” Harry said with a slight smirk. “Eventually.”

“So no special ‘Master of Death’ powers involved?” Sabrina quipped.

Harry rolled his eyes. “Well, I don’t know if you could call it that, really. Binns did ask permission to move on, which was strange, but that doesn’t necessarily mean anything.”

Sabrina hummed.

“It doesn’t. It’s not like I did anything.”

Sabrina did not expound on her previous reply and Harry resisted the urge to fidget.

“Well I didn’t,” Harry said. So there. That was all there was to it. He had had a nice little chat is all. No extraordinary powers or magic involved whatsoever. ~~Probably~~.

---

“You used to like small animals.”

“He’s not that large.”

“Whatever happened to you liking small animals?”

“Isn’t he beautiful?”

Harry eyed Buckbeak warily. Bloody Hippogriff seemed amused. Harry was much less amused.

“So can we keep him?”

“Do I want to know why he’s here instead of with Hagrid?” Harry muttered, mostly to himself.

“That wasn’t a no,” Ivy prompted.

Harry sighed. It wasn’t the worst thing she could have brought home. Better this than a boy, at least. Or a dragon. Honestly the dragon was more likely and nothing about that thought filled Harry with any sort of confidence. “It wasn’t a no,” he agreed.

“Come on, I’ll show you around,” Ivy said to the hippogriff.

Buckbeak appeared to give Harry a small bow before following Ivy. Harry chose not to think too hard on that. It’s not like the hippogriff could sense familiarity in him, right? This wasn’t the same Buckbeak he himself had known once upon a time and universe. It was probably just a figment of his imagination.

Then Harry’s line of thought came to an abrupt halt. “Wait, you didn’t bring him on the train, did you?”

Ivy was not so far away yet and turned back towards him. “Of course not,” she said. “He flew.”

Right. Flew. That was good. Not actually as obvious as she made it sound, knowing her, but still.

“Besides, he wouldn’t fit through the door,” she added.

*There it is*, thought Harry. He chuckled to himself. Ivy may be growing up but it looked like some things weren’t going to change. At least not yet.

---

*June 20, 1994*

“What can Gringotts do for you today, Lord Slytherin?”

“Yeah, yeah, focus on that part. I still blame you, you know.”



Gornuk grinned and Harry suppressed a shudder. You would think he would be used to this by now, but every time he entered Gringotts they seemed to find new ways to unnerve him. Okay so maybe it wasn't always a new way, since their grins seemed to do it just fine a majority of the time, but even then...

But back to the matter at hand.

"Dolores Umbridge."

Gornuk snorted. Actually *snorted* at that. Harry only resisted scowling because he knew Gornuk would find it amusing and that would accomplish nothing he wanted.

"It is amusing, is it not, what...*creatures* can prove the most troublesome?"

Harry didn't doubt for a second that Gornuk's word choice was entirely intentional.

"So... Have anything I can use?" *Because I need a good reason to keep telling a bunch of spell-happy wizards that murder is not the answer*, he thought to himself.

Gornuk looked amused, and Harry wondered what he had ever done to deserve being the recipient of goblin humor.

"Gringotts of course prides itself on anticipating the needs of our...*favorite* clients," Gornuk said with a sharp-toothed grin.

Harry did not like being their favorite. He did not *want* to be their favorite. He had done absolutely nothing to deserve this whatsoever.

"Unfortunately the Ministry Toad deals mostly with the secrets of other witches and wizards, so there is very little Gringotts can do apart from providing you with a thorough list of such incidents."

With that Gornuk snapped his fingers, bringing in a brief flash a rather thick document. Harry had no doubt Gornuk was not over-exaggerating in the least when he said the list was thorough.

"Thanks."

"Is there anything else Gringotts can assist you with today, Lord Slytherin?"

Harry shook his head and started to stand. "Actually, you have anything that can explain the Master of Death thing?"

Gornuk just smiled a knowing smile that looked vaguely patronizing. "Good day, Lord Slytherin."

---

"Mr. Potter, welcome. What can I do for you today?"

Harry glanced around to make sure he didn't need to throw any memory charms around. "You know, Mr. Ollivander, no one actually calls me that anymore."

"But that does not make it your name any less, does it?"

"I think the goblins would disagree with you there..." Harry muttered.

Ollivander laughed as if Harry had just said the most delightful thing. "Come in, come in. Here, have a seat."

Harry sat down, expecting Ollivander to say...something else. Instead the aged wizard just sat there looking at Harry expectantly.

"So... You have any idea what a Master of Death is?" Might as well get straight to the point.

"Someone who has mastered the Hallows and Death itself."

"I head a capitalization in there. Death as in an entity of Death?"

"Well no one knows, do they. No one has died and come back."

"Well I have," Harry said, not that he entirely meant to. It just sort of came out. "And there's all the ghosts. What about them?"

"I believe you would have to ask a ghost that, Mr. Potter, but it is generally believed that though a ghost has died, they have not yet, in fact, truly met Death."

"Right... So, when someone... say you, or the goblins, perhaps... gets all excited about me being the Master of Death, does that actually *mean* anything?"

"Well I'm sure I don't know. I've never encountered one before, you see."

Harry wanted to groan, but kept it on the inside and instead nodded politely.

"But of course there are stories. Mostly forgotten now, I should think, though the story of the Hallows themselves lived on quite well."

Harry leaned forward a bit in anticipation. Now maybe they were getting somewhere. "What sorts of stories?"

"Well, some say that uniting and mastering the Hallows gives you control over Death itself. Others talk of becoming Death, or simply not being subject to Death at all."

Well none of those sounded like *great* options...

"Of course no one knows for sure, no one in this universe at least having become one."

"How can you know for sure?"

"Well you're here, aren't you?"

Ollivander's reasoning seemed sound, if a tad cryptic.

"And how did that get me a vault full of gold?" Harry asked.

"I believe you would have to ask the goblins about that."

"Of course I would," Harry muttered.

Ollivander laughed. "Oh, the goblins do enjoy making sport of wizards from time to time," he said, as if that were not at all a horrifying notion. "They don't care much for idiocy."

Harry didn't quite know how to respond to that. "So you don't know what this particular title means for me then?"

"I suppose not. It is all rather a bit exciting though, isn't it?"

---

"Did you learn anything today?"

Harry wordlessly handed Luna the packet from the goblins.

"And about being Master of Death?"

"Not particularly, no."

Luna did not seem nearly as distressed by this as Harry was. That was probably a good sign, actually.

---

*June 21, 1994*

*"Legilimens."*

Harry pushed by degrees until he was exerting more force than he would need to in most ordinary instances. Finally he was thrown from her mind completely.

"Well done," he said.

Ivy beamed at him. "So I believe it's time for a bit of a story, yes?"

"Yeah," Harry chuckled, "story time it is."

Ivy settled into the sofa and let Tiger wrap himself around her shoulders. "We're ready," she said.

Harry couldn't help but laugh at the sight. "Okay, so this story begins a long time ago, in a universe far away," he said as dramatically as he could.

Ivy grinned.

---

“Thanks for taking care of Quirrell.”

“No problem.”

---

“I can’t believe you killed Hilda.”

“She was trying to *eat* me.”

“Are you sure she actually wanted to eat you?”

“Well, no. But she was definitely trying to kill me. Besides, I don’t even know if it was a she. It could have been a totally different snake for all we know.”

Ivy looked unimpressed by this reasoning.

“You’re not going to kill her now though, right?”

“Is she going to go crazy and start killing students?”

“No?”

“Then no.”

“She did sort of wipe out a colony of Acromantula in the Forbidden Forest though.”

“...Yeah I think we’ll be coming back to that one.”

---

“You thought Sirius was trying to *kill* you?”

“Well, yeah.”

---

“Can I get a time turner?”

“Absolutely not.”

---

“You had to fight a *dragon*?”

“Well not *fight* it, per se...”

“I’m going to have to do that, aren’t I.”

“Hopefully not but...”

“Fate really hates you.”

“Yes it does.”

“If I have to fight a dragon can we keep it?”

“We’ll see.”

“That’s not a no.”

“Also not a yes.”

“That’s not what you said about Buckbeak.”

“Buckbeak doesn’t breathe fire.”

---

“You’ll save Cedric, right?”

“That’s the plan.”

“Good. You’d better.”

“I know.”

---

“Wait, they actually track underage magic? I thought that was just a myth?”

Harry’s eye twitched. It hadn’t done that as many times today as he was expecting, so it made sense that it was a little overdue.

---

“Wow. Go Fred and George. Hey, do you think we can make a swamp sometime still?”

“You do realize I’m hoping to avoid most of this, right?”

“We won’t do it inside…”

Harry raised an eyebrow.

“…any important hallways,” Ivy concluded.

“How about you don’t add parts of my story to your to-do list just yet.”

---

“I can’t believe you and your Draco almost killed each other.”

“He’s not my Draco,” Harry insisted. “Besides, we got over it. Sort of.”

---

“Is that why you didn’t want to go camping?”

“We all have our traumas, Ives.”

---

“You *DIED*?”

Harry was glad the house had such extensive wards. He didn’t need the whole of Britain hearing that little bit of information.

“Well it didn’t stick.”

“I can’t believe you died.”

“I got better.”

---

“So, what do you think?” Harry asked, just a tad nervous. It wasn’t every day you told your alternate universe self that you were, well, their alternate universe self.

“So you really are sort of my dad.”

“Well, I think older brother would be more accurate...”

“But we could be considered biologically related, right?”

“Well I suppose so, yeah.”

“That’s so cool.”

“You know I always expect people to take this a little less well.”

“I can still freak out later if you want.”

“I’m good, thanks.”

“Great. So when can you and Luna start teaching me how to become an animagus?”

“Isn’t Sirius going to help?”

“Not if it means waiting until after the wedding.”

“Fair enough. You know, there’s no reason why we have to do it all right now though...”

“Tomorrow sounds fine,” Ivy said determinedly.

“Yeah, alright,” Harry said. Choose your battles and all that. Besides, better to have adult supervision than risk her doing it on her own. It was still strange considering himself as adult supervision, child raising notwithstanding.

“Draco is going to come too.”

*Great.* “Before or after he gives his parents a heart attack?”

## Chapter 49

*June 23, 1994*

“Here you go.”

Ivy and Draco both accepted the mandrake leaves from Luna. Ivy plopped hers in her mouth without a second thought but Draco eyed his without moving.

“This had better be worth it,” he said, before sighing and placing the leaf in his mouth as well. To his credit, he only gagged slightly.

“Now if you like I can perform a flattening charm on you both. It makes talking much easier.”

Charm cast, both Ivy and Draco set out for the Quidditch field where Buckbeak was currently basking in the summer sun.

“I can’t believe he’s following me,” Draco said.

“He’s not following you.”

“He hates me.”

“No, he doesn’t.”

“Does too.”

“If he hates you why would he follow you?”

It took Draco a moment to find a suitable refutation for that argument. “He obviously means to continue to torment me throughout the summer.”

“You could just not visit.”

“Rude. Besides, that would mean I would be carrying around this disgusting leaf in my mouth for no reason. I’m not stupid enough to attempt an animagus transformation on my own.”

“Like Sirius, you mean?”

“They were Gryffindors. What else can you expect?”

“My dad was a Gryffindor too.”

“Well, obviously your mother managed to raise his overall level of intelligence.”

“She was a Gryffindor too.”

“I’m not going to win this one, am I.”

“Probably not.”

---

Harry never particularly *loved* attending Wizengamot sessions, but today was proving to be especially trying given the number of people who had spent the last century or so perfecting their passive-aggressive insults. Not towards him, mind you, but most certainly to each other. And here he was, stuck in the middle, listening to yet another rendition of Lord Hunnicutt and Lady Waldroup’s verbal war. Half their fellow centenarians were asleep at this point, having most likely heard it all before over the last many decades. There couldn’t possibly be *that* many new ways to insult the same person over and over again.

The story, as Harry had learned quite unwillingly from Lucius, who believed to be of the utmost importance that he know the personal and family histories of everyone on the Wizengamot for some reason, was that once upon a time, most likely before Harry’s grandparents were even thought of, Edward Hunnicutt and Cecilia Thorburn had been betrothed, though neither could stand the other. The betrothal was broken by their parents, who had miraculously come to realize that such a marriage was more likely to result in bloodshed than the much hoped for continuation of the family lines. While pleased at the overall outcome, both Hunnicutt and Thorburn blamed the other for the embarrassment of a broken betrothal, and now, a century or so later, Lord Edward Hunnicutt and Lady Cecilia Waldroup née Thorburn continued to wage verbal warfare against the other.

And again, Lucius had forced all this knowledge on Harry, and Harry most certainly did not thank him for it.

So yes, today had been rather trying thus far.

Oh, and he hadn’t had time to do much with the goblins’ annotated list of Umbridge’s blackmail efforts, so it was yet another Wizengamot session with nothing productive happening in that regard. Yet somehow the worded javelins being hurled across the room still managed to be the foremost cause of annoyance on this particular day.

He missed the days before Lucius’s unwelcome fountain of knowledge when he had truly thought that Hunnicutt and Waldroup were simply *very* opinionated about tea and the number of ministry-owned owls.

---

*June 24, 1994*

“I’m surprised you’re here,” Remus said softly. “I thought you hated these sorts of things.”

“Lucius was being particularly obstinate,” Severus replied with a particularly hard sideways glance.

“Oh like you can’t out stubborn him any day of the week.”

“He enlisted Narcissa’s help.”



Remus grimaced at that. If Narcissa Malfoy told you to come to dinner, you would be at dinner, hence Remus's own presence here only one day after the full moon.

---

Lucius looked down the table at their assembled guests. He would never have imagined this particular grouping of people, yet here they all were, a half-hour into dinner with no wands having been drawn. Yet. Having the director of the DMLE sitting across from the man formerly known as Barty Crouch Jr. was not doing anything good for his blood pressure, but so far things were fine. It was all fine.

---

Harry wondered whose brilliant idea it had been to have Barty sitting across from Amelia Bones, but he really didn't want to think too hard about it because if he did he would certainly start thinking about the whole "Am I a dark lord?" question and the "Is hiding a wizard that is technically a fugitive even if no one knows he's a fugitive because they all believe him to be dead even though he is sort of innocent a dark lord thing?" question. And, as previously stated, he didn't want to think too hard about it.

He needed to find another topic...

"So Thomas, tell us about your plans."

As the young Mr. Harrington began explaining his plans, Harry mentally patted himself on the back for finding a sufficiently diverting topic of conversation. He also completely understood now why Samira was not looking forward to her son's departure. After having finally learned in-depth about the magical side of Australia Harry couldn't say he would be excited to see a child off to that continent either, but at least Thomas was unlikely to bring something back with him.

He would need to remind Ivy that unaccompanied international floo travel was off limits.

---

"Neville has improved greatly over this past year, even mastering the Patronus charm."

Amelia had heard rumors, but Augusta's confirmation of that was still a bit surprising, though she carefully did not let it show.

"He decided against attempting an animagus transformation this year, which is probably for the best. Improvement or not, transfiguration is *not* his strong suit."

"He was going to attempt an animagus transformation?" Amelia couldn't quite keep the incredulousness out of her voice.

"Well, Miss Potter certainly extended the invitation enough times, though I've been led to understand that only Mr. Malfoy has decided to join her."

Amelia took another sip of wine to give herself a moment to process that before she would have to respond. Oh, she had heard plenty about Ivy Potter from a variety of sources over the past few years, but an animagus transformation? At age thirteen?

Her thoughts were well occupied by that subject for several minutes until she caught a bit of conversation further down the table from where she sat.

“...just a Hippogriff this time. I’m still half convinced I’m going to come home to a dragon one of these days,” Lord Peverell was saying, sounding entirely serious as far as she could tell.

“Well, you’re more than welcome to take the wolves back anytime,” the soon-to-be Lady Black responded.

“Just no toads, please,” the young Mr. Harrington said, sounding more concerned than jesting.

Sirius snorted at that, but Peverell was the one to reply. “Don’t worry,” he said, “I’ll make sure she doesn’t illegally breed a basilisk.”

Amelia wondered why so few people looked concerned. If nothing else, though, this evening was shedding a bit more light on some of Susan’s stories from Hogwarts. She’d have to ask Lucius to fill in some of the details later.

---

“...finally resolve that whole business with Umbridge...”

There were many days where Severus dearly wished it hadn’t turned out to be his lot in life to deal with adolescents day in and day out, but at least *he* wasn’t having to deal directly with this Umbridge nonsense.

“...didn’t the goblins insinuate there was a great deal of blackmail going on...”

“...bordering on extortion...”

“...even collect so many secrets...”

Severus very nearly snorted to himself when he saw the deceptively uninterested look on Madam Bones’ face. She was most certainly taking very thorough mental notes at the moment. At least no one had been idiotic enough to mention the prevailing desire to simply murder the Undersecretary. One perk of having the majority of wizards involved in any of this Umbridge business somewhat terrified of Peverell was that when he told them “no murdering” they actually listened, and Merlin, what he wouldn’t give for Peverell to show up to Hogwarts one day, tell all the students to not be idiots, and then have it have even a third of the effectiveness that his presence seemed to have on Severus’s fellow former Death Eaters.

Well, there was always that little shrine that he hadn’t bothered to rid the common room of for reasons that had nothing to do with its apparent effectiveness at curbing unwanted behavior...

“...glad if she stops bothering me.”

Well that was one way for Parkinson to quickly gain the attention of the director of the DMLE and Peverell in one fell swoop. Both looked particularly interested in what was all but

an admission of Umbridge having something on Parkinson. Based on the twitch in Peverell's eye, he could imagine what sort of conversation would be happening in the very near future, and based on the look Bones was giving Peverell now, well, those two would also likely be having a conversation. He would be very interested in witnessing the former, though he really couldn't say he would be thrilled to be present for the latter.

---

Harry was so very much regretting not having made the time to fully read through the goblins' packet before now. So much regret.

"So, is there anything you would like to tell me?"

There. Open, inviting, non-threatening, and not at all dark-lord-ish.

Simon did not seem to be appreciating Harry's efforts, but he was probably just concerned about whatever it was Umbridge had on him.

Except now Simon's nervousness was making Harry nervous, and he really just wanted this to be over with.

"Just spit it out, mate. Whatever it is I'm sure we can deal with it."

After Parkinson did, in fact, spit it out, Harry was almost sorry for having asked. At least Simon looked somewhat contrite about having illegally imported potions ingredients, but Harry really did not need to know the details of Simon's little Veritaserum antidote manufacturing side business. Or about just who the "clients" were. Now Harry felt obligated to do something about it, and he didn't want to feel that way. He had enough on his plate, thank you very much.

"And so does this little bit of blackmail have anything to do with why you haven't been as... vocal...in your dislike of Umbridge in the Wizengamot?"

"Well now, I don't think there is any question of where I stand in regards to her."

"Murder is not actually an option, you know."

"It could be."

Harry sighed. He needed to get this whole Umbridge mess over with as quickly as possible for the continued preservation of his sanity (or what he could salvage of it, at least).

On the other hand, at least a few more things made sense now.

---

*June 27, 1994*

"Your ten o'clock is here, director."

Amelia put the weekend reports aside just as Lord Peverell came in. Although she wasn't precisely looking forward to this meeting, she was at least curious to see where it would lead.

She had met Peverell a few times over the past few years, ever since he came into her office and informed her that the most notorious murderer in recent wizarding history was, in fact, innocent. The other few times she had met with him had usually involved some other sort of headache-inducing problem, though thankfully none so severe as the issue with Sirius.

In short, she was curious, but could already feel the headache forming.

“Have a seat, Lord Peverell.”

“Just Harry, please.”

She raised an eyebrow at that, seeing as those who referred to him by his first name did not call him that.

As if knowing what direction her thoughts were going, “Harry” sighed and said, “Everyone insists on calling me Henry, but really, Harry is just fine. It goes perfectly fine with my last name.”

There was certainly a story there, given the muttered nature of the last part, but Harry, as it seemed he preferred to be called, did not seem inclined to elaborate further and Amelia herself would rather get on with the primary purpose of their meeting so as to be done as soon as possible with whatever mess was almost inevitably about to be shown to her.

“Very well, *Harry*,” she said. “Shall we get started?”

Four minutes. It took four minutes for that headache to fully manifest.

She almost pitied Dolores Umbridge for whatever she had done to get on Lord Peverell’s bad side. Almost. Even still...

“Is any of this going to cause me or my department any problems, Lord Peverell?”

“No ma’am,” he said hurriedly.

“Well I’m sure I would love nothing more than to *not* hear anything remotely worthy of an investigation. Nothing at all illegal, to be clear.”

“Absolutely nothing. Nothing at all.”

So he had already taken care of whatever mess Parkinson was involved in. A part of her felt she should inquire further, but part of her was just glad it was apparently resolved and no one had turned up dead. She could live with that for now, seeing as she had quite a few other things to deal with at the moment, not the least of which was the fact that an Undersecretary to the Minister was apparently blackmailing half the Wizengamot, not to mention the whole case file that had magically appeared over the weekend detailing a number of smuggling and customs fraud cases.

Oh, she wasn’t an idiot. She knew this was most likely somehow linked to Parkinson, and in turn to Peverell, but she was also realistic and without any evidence that Peverell (or Parkinson, for that matter) had actually done anything illegal she was content to focus on the

cases they did have evidence for. For now. She'd keep an eye on Peverell, of course, but she doubted she would ever find anything.

"Have you ever considered running for office? Minister, perhaps?"

She wasn't sure what surprised her more; the look of surprise on Harry's face at the change of topic, or the accompanying look of horror.

"No," he said with finality. "No, definitely not. No thank you. Bad enough I got dragged into the Wizengamot, there is no way I'm getting roped into something like that. Nope. Just, nope."

Amelia so very much wanted to ask. This wizard, the one clearly responsible for most of the changes that had come out of the Wizengamot over the past several months to those who knew what to look for, felt like he had been dragged there?

Oh, how she wanted to ask.

---

"What would you think of inviting Madam Bones to the next little get-together?"

"Before or after I formally introduce her to Barty and finish covering up everyone's little illegal side hobbies?" Harry deadpanned back to Lucius.

"Just a thought."

---

*June 30, 1994*

"She's like a cockroach that won't die," Harry complained, shrugging off his Wizengamot robe that somewhere along the line he had been manipulated into wearing. He still referred to wear it like he was "supposed to," preferring to wear it open over his much more comfortable dragon hide, but somewhere out there there was someone laughing at Harry Potter in a plum-colored robe sitting in a chamber engaging in "politics." Fate, most likely. And yes, those mental air quotes were entirely necessary.

"Oh, so is death an option again?"

"It never was!" Harry practically shouted, glaring at Sirius who only shrugged.

"It could be," Burke said, swirling his glass.

A few more nods of affirmation. Harry's eye twitched.

"We're not going to just kill her," Anthea said. Harry was so glad she had taken the last week of June. She seemed to be the sole remaining person with sense left in the room. "Far too messy now that we have rather publicly gone after her."

Never mind.

"I appreciate the conclusion," Harry said dryly, "if not the reasoning."

Anthea did not seem the least bit disturbed.

No one did.

For Merlin's sake, what was wrong with these people?

Harry glanced over the assembled group, most of whom were looking at him expectantly, and groaned. "For the last time, we are not killing anyone," he said as firmly as he could muster at the moment.

"Why, though?"

"Why are you even here, Barty?" Harry asked incredulously.

"Moral support," Barty deadpanned, unaffected by Harry's glare.

Harry bit back a retort. "No murder," he said finally, pointing a finger slowly around the room. "No murder. Am I clear?"

Several nods, one or two muttered "my lord's" that he *very* pointedly ignored, and a general (even if begrudging) consensus.

He was so done.

---

*July 1, 1994*

"Lord Peverell."

"Hello Harry, how are you Harry, nice to see you, Harry, no I'm most certainly not here to tell you that anyone has been murdered. Well hello to you too, Severus."

"Is this a bad time?"

Snape looked uncomfortable. Well, more so than usual. Harry could see that much from the very brief flicker of emotion that crossed the man's face and oh no now he felt bad.

"Sorry," Harry said with a bit of a sigh. "I'm just running out of ways to keep adult wizards from committing murder." The *again* was left off, since both of them knew who was being referred to and what exactly some of them had (probably) done under the direction of a certain snake-faced dark lord. "So, what can I do for you?"

"Lord Peverell," Snape began again, only to be stopped by Harry who lifted his hand up.

"Please," he said, "Harry. Or Henry, I suppose, since most everyone else seems to insist on that, but really, there is no need for titles here." *Or ever*, Harry thought to himself, but that was probably wishful thinking at this point. He'd had some title or other since before he knew his own name and at least these weren't the worst ones he had ever had.

---

He might not have gotten Snape to call him Harry, but at least he had gotten away from the full title. He may or may not have completely convinced Snape that he would stand up for him against Dumbledore if and when that proved necessary, but Snape was very clearly trusting him to a certain extent, and that somewhat limited extent was honestly more than Harry would have expected not too long ago.

He would take what he could get.

---

*July 6, 1994*

“Do I need to ask?”

Harry didn’t answer and didn’t stop glaring at The Book in front of him. Yes, that book.

Remus huffed a sigh. “Alright then, I’ll take that silence as confirmation that yes, I do need to ask. So consider this me asking. Harry?”

Harry finally looked up at his friend. “I’m having a crisis.”

“Alright,” Remus said carefully. “What sort?”

“Ethical maybe? Existential, moral... take your pick, I have no idea.”

Remus looked carefully to the page open. “Ah. I see.” Yes, the “How to be a dark lord” section of the book could certainly be contributing to said crisis.

“What am I even doing, Remus?”

Remus was instantly alerted to the weariness in Harry’s voice and he felt a pang of guilt at not having realized sooner how much this was truly weighing on the wizard. For Merlin’s sake, the man hadn’t even reached thirty, and yet was trying to keep an entire country from plunging into chaos. Harry would probably scoff or shrug and say that wasn’t what he was doing at all, but Remus had heard plenty of stories of Harry’s old world and there was no doubt in his mind that already fully deceased dark lord or not, Harry was a necessary part of keeping things together. He might loathe and complain about the titles and the influence and the followers (though Merlin forbid anyone should say *that* word out loud near him), but he had accomplished what few seemed able to do and had done so almost without trying.

Harry was a leader. Like it or not (and Remus knew Harry did not particularly like it), people were attracted to him. For a variety of reasons, yes, many of which had to do with his power both magical and political, but regardless, Harry had emerged as a leader in Wizarding Britain.

“And where is Sirius anyway?”

It took Remus a second to disengage himself from his previous line of thought and latch on to the new topic addition. “He’s probably working on wedding preparations,” he said after his brain finally made the leap.

Harry looked oddly horrified at that. Remus had a sneaking suspicion he knew why.

“Did you forget?”

“Not a word to Sirius,” Harry demanded.

“Not a word,” Remus agreed.

“I am the worst friend.”

“Fairly certain you don’t even qualify for consideration.”

“First I forgot he was in Azkaban and now I forgot he’s getting married in a week.”

“To be fair you have been trying to prevent murder.”

“You do realize neither Sirius nor Sabrina would count that as a valid excuse, right?”

“Which is why we’re not telling them?”

“Which is why we’re not telling them.”

---

*July 12, 1994*

“Not that I’m not impressed, because I am, but is that going to be gone by tomorrow?”

“But Blaise, *look at the fur.*”

“That’s literally all I can look at right now. My eye is drawn to it and everything else fades into the background, which is why I’m going to ask again. *Is it going to be gone by tomorrow?*”

“Yes, yes, it’ll be gone. Dad promised to help me with it if I couldn’t get rid of it on my own.”

Blaise sighed in relief.

“You know, you’re rather worked up about the wedding,” Ivy continued. “Maybe you need to relax.”

“*I do not need to relax,*” Blaise practically shouted, which didn’t exactly disprove Ivy’s point. He took a deep breath. “I just need this one to be perfect.”

“Why?” Blaise’s eye looked like it was about to twitch so Ivy continued. “I mean, I’m sure it will be, but why is this so important to you?”

“Because this is the one that we’re actually happy about and must therefore outshine every previous wedding.”

Ivy nodded, conceding the point. “That makes sense.”



“And that fur will be gone by tomorrow.”

“Of course.”

“So what is it anyway?”

“No idea. Not a bird, I guess.”

“Yes, I would think that would be a safe assumption at this point,” Blaise said dryly, looking pointedly at the patch of fur on Ivy’s neck. “But isn’t that a bit backwards? I thought you were supposed to know what animal you were transforming into *before* transforming into it.”

Ivy just grinned.

Blaise rolled his eyes and sighed. “And of course you didn’t because you’re you and you’re probably going to be something no one has ever heard of before or some magical creature that no one ought to be able to have as an animagus form.”

“But not a bird.”

“Guess that means you’re not a dragon either, huh.”

“Do you think that was an option?”

“I didn’t think you got ‘options’ when it came to animagus forms.”

“Just because no one ever has doesn’t mean no one ever will.”

“Well when you figure out how to do it, let me know.”

“Alright.”

“I was being sarcastic.”

“Were you? I couldn’t tell,” Ivy said as sarcastically as she could, which was quite a bit.

“You’re just trying to distract me from the wedding.”

“Is it working?”

“No.”

---

*July 13, 1994*

“What if something goes wrong?”

Harry went to say something but failed to get a single word out in time.

“I mean, this is such an important day. *Nothing* can go wrong. But what if it does?”

“What’s going to go wrong?” Harry asked wearily.

“Don’t *say* things like that. You’ll jinx it.”

“That’s not how jinxes work,” Harry said with exasperation.

“But it’s you so they just might.”

Harry sighed. “Look, everything is in place, the wedding will begin in ten minutes or so, and *everything is fine*. Relax.”

“*How can you possibly tell me to relax at a moment like this?*”

“Barty, it’s not even your wedding. Why are you freaking out?”

“*It’s not your wedding,*” Barty mimicked back.

“I didn’t think you even liked Sirius that much.”

“What does he have to do with it?”

“He’s getting married,” Harry deadpanned.

“Eh,” Barty said with a shrug. “I suppose, but it’s more of Sabrina’s wedding if you ask me.”

“They are getting married. To each other. It literally takes both of them to have the wedding in the first place.”

“Debatable.”

“It’s really not.”

“Everything is debatable if you try hard enough.”

“You know, that explains so much,” Harry said, doing his best to show Barty exactly how much he thought of that statement.

---

“It’s not too late to join Blaise on our holiday, *mia passerotta*.”

“I would love to, but I need to finish my animagus transformation. If I don’t do it now then I’ll have to wait an entire *year*.”

“And how is that going?”

“Well, I got a bit of fur yesterday.”

“Well done, *mia cara*. But my almost grandson told me you only just began with the leaf.”

Ivy looked guilty for the briefest of moments and Cesare contained a smile.

“Well, I may have sort of done the leaf already?”

“Are you asking me?” he said with an amused look on his face.

“No.” Ivy took a quick breath. “I did the mandrake leaf part already. I wasn’t sure if anyone else was going to do it with me, but then Draco said he would, and I felt bad, so I’m doing it again.”

“I see,” Cesare answered with a twinkle in his eye. “And you began the transformation already because...” he trailed off, waiting for her to fill in the rest.

“I got bored.”

Cesare let out a strong laugh at that.

---

Percy shuddered.

“What was that for?” Thomas asked.

“Have you never heard anything about Cesare Zabini?”

Thomas glanced over to the man in question. “Well, yes, but what does that have to do with anything?”

“*Thomas*,” Percy began.

“Alright, alright, I see your point. Powerful, scary wizard who could probably make someone disappear without a trace, or make it so it looks like they never existed in the first place. But what’s the issue? He’s practically Ivy’s grandfather at this point.”

“And you see absolutely nothing wrong with that?”

“No one will get away with hurting Ivy?”

“Lord Peverell has that taken care of, I think.”

Thomas nodded in agreement.

“But that’s not the point. The *point* is that when Ivy inevitably takes over the world, she’ll get through Europe in a day. Day and a half at most.”

“Well, good thing we’re all friends then.”

“You are far too calm when faced with potential world takeover scenarios.”

“I was told that was a good quality in my job interviews.”

“You used to be concerned, you know.”

“Does a world takeover necessarily equate to fires, hurricanes, and other forms of magically induced disaster?”

Percy had to concede that it did not.

Thomas gave a well-there-you-go gesture with his hand.

“When did you get this calm?”

“I’ve always been this calm.”

“You most certainly have not.”

“And I will deny that for the rest of time.”

“You’re worried about something else then. What is it?”

“Adélie will be at the World Cup which I somehow got roped into attending, and I still haven’t told Ivy about it.”

Percy looked at his friend for a moment before patting him soundly on the shoulder. “Well, it was nice knowing you.”

“Say something nice at my funeral, will you?”

“Of course.”

---

“What are you two doing here?” Pansy asked snidely.

“Well, funny thing, invitations.”

“Usually taken to mean you’re invited somewhere.”

Pansy rolled her eyes at the twins. After suffering their presence for so long due to Ivy’s unassailable determination to have them as friends, she had grown somewhat used to their particular brand of teasing. “I meant what are you doing *here*, sitting next to me.”

One of the twins gasped, putting a hand over his heart as if she had just broken it. “Why, someone might think you don’t like us.”

“I don’t,” she replied frankly.

“Consider our hearts broken,” the other twin replied.

“Well if you’re not going to leave, at least shut up. I have important people watching to do.”

Both of them leaned forward at that. How they managed to coordinate their every movement in such a way was still a mystery to her. Perhaps it was some sort of twin telepathy or something.

“Oh, and just what handsome young wizard has caught your eye?”

Pansy rolled her eyes again but discreetly pointed to Draco. “I am *not* interested, just to be clear,” she said firmly when both redheads looked like they were about to say something. “But look at him, then look over there,” she said, pointing to Ivy this time.

“Oh, playing matchmaker, are we?”

“Of course I am,” she said. “Someone has to.”

---

The wedding was beautiful, the reception afterwards was awkward for reasons Remus was not going to get into with *anyone* right now, or ever, if he could help it, which he knew deep down he would not, and by the end of the evening even the most social of Wizarding Britain’s socialites had tired from the day’s events.

Going into this Remus had known it would be different than Harry’s wedding, but he had still been caught somewhat unawares by just how exhausting the entire day was. Harry and Luna’s wedding had been just as much the event of the year as Sirius and Sabrina’s, but whereas Harry and Luna had a limited guest list...

It wasn’t the entire wizarding community but at moments it sure felt like it. Remus wasn’t even convinced they knew half these people, but they didn’t seem to care, the guests didn’t seem to care, and everything had gone rather well all things considering.

And now, it was time for bed. Sweet, sweet bed. That wonderful place where...

“So, are you ready for the Wizengamot tomorrow?”

If ever there was a moment Remus was glad he was not Harry, this was it. This moment, right here. He couldn’t quite keep the grin off his face, and he got a scowl from Harry for his efforts (or lack thereof), but at least he didn’t have to be up in the morning to deal with round whatever-it-was of trying to get Umbridge out of the ministry.

Life wasn’t so bad after all.

# Chapter 50

## Chapter Notes

Much longer coming than I had hoped for, but here it is. And now we're getting into fourth year and I have been waiting FOR THIS FOR SO LONG and I'm maybe just a tad excited about fourth year haha. Anyway, thank you all for reading and for the comment and kudos as always. Sorry for the imperfections that are no doubt present.

*July 14, 1994*

“If I hear *one more person* suggest murder as a way to deal with Umbridge, I will personally escort them to the head Auror’s office on suspicion of conspiracy to murder, *am I clear ?*”

---

“Hey, Harry, may I ask you something?”

“Of course, Remus, come on in.”

Remus stood awkwardly at the door, and Harry’s mind immediately went into overdrive thinking of all the things that could possibly be the cause of that. Remus was not this way normally, not around him at least (anymore), and that meant something was wrong, which meant something had probably happened, and now Harry had to figure it out so he could fix it.

“Is everything alright?” he asked, deciding it was best to start with the most general of questions.

“Hmm? Oh, yes, everything is fine,” Remus said, not quite meeting his eyes.

Oh, something was definitely up.

“Did...something happen?”

“Yes. Well, no. I mean, yes, but it’s not that important.”

“Right...” Harry was not finding Remus at all convincing right now. This needed immediate fixing. “So, you needed to ask me something?”

Remus cleared his throat and finally took the final steps into Harry’s study. Harry felt a bit like a teacher staring down an anxious student, and wasn’t that just a heap of strange role reversals that didn’t bear thinking about at the moment.

Clearing his throat once more, Remus began, “So what would you say your position on murder is?”

Harry didn’t precisely have an inkling of what sort of question Remus was going to be asking, but that was most certainly not it. “Er, bad? In general, I believe murder could be termed a bad thing. Why? Do you need someone killed?” Harry racked his brain for other possible reasons for this question. “Did *you* kill someone?”

He mentally began running calculations on how quickly he could dispose of a body. Most likely a matter of minutes, really.

Remus’s vehement denial of the existence of a body in need of disposing brought that line of thought to an abrupt halt.

“So...” Harry wasn’t quite sure how to proceed. “May I ask what prompted this question?”

“Umbridge,” Remus stated.

Harry winced. So maybe he had been a *little* hard on...everyone regarding Umbridge, and it was possible he had forgotten how much reason Remus personally might have for wanting to be rid of her, but...

“And Pettigrew.”

Oh. Well, that was an unexpected direction.

“Go on...”

“Look, I get why you are against killing someone you don’t agree with, or that has done terrible things,” Remus said.

Harry was feeling much better about this entire conversation.

“But...”

Ah. He understood where this was going now. “Why did I break *into* Azkaban, let Sirius kill Pettigrew slowly, and then cover the entire thing up?”

Remus’s slight wince was an indication that *maybe* he was being a little blunt.

“I suppose that about sums it up, yeah. Of course, at that moment I probably would have joined you, although the effigy was a decent substitute, I suppose.”

They both grinned briefly at the recollection. Remus had certainly been... *inventive* .

“So I take it you’re asking why I helped with one killing and am actively preventing another?”

Remus nodded.

“Well, I honestly am not sure I could say,” Harry said with a sigh. “I think maybe because with Umbridge it is about the things she *might* do. She’s done a great many terrible things already, of course, but with Pettigrew, it was about revenge, plain and simple. For myself, I suppose, and for Ivy, but mostly for Sirius. I got in the way of his revenge in one lifetime, and maybe I’m just jaded now, but I couldn’t see a good reason to stand between Sirius and Pettigrew this time, do you understand? And with Umbridge, well, she hasn’t done anything yet that I could claim wanting revenge for. I’d like to prevent her from doing any of those things in the future, obviously, and from continuing in what she’s been doing now, but killing can’t possibly be the only answer to that, can it?”

Remus nodded but didn’t say anything, instead letting the two of them sit in silence for a moment before finally responding with, “You’re nothing like Voldemort, Harry.”

“What?” Harry said quickly, feeling a bit of mental whiplash at the moment. This conversation was really not what he was expecting when Remus walked in looking like an awkward fifteen-year-old who had accidentally just kicked a puppy. He was also not quite sure where *that* imagery came from, but the mind does funny things when on overdrive.

“I’m just saying, you’re not a dark lord. Or not a bad one, at any rate.”

“Really not helping, Moony.”

“Well, obviously your friend wouldn’t have put together a guide to becoming a dark lord if she thought you were going to do a poor job of it.”

“I’m not sure that’s what Hermione meant...”

“What I *mean*, is that you care, and you’re trying. You’re trying to do good, to *be* good, and that’s what matters, right?”

Harry found he did not have an easy answer for that.

---

*July 15, 1994*

“You’re attracting Wrackspurts like liver attracts Thestrals.”

“That’s a horrifying thing to be compared to.” Luna looked entirely unapologetic and Harry sighed. “I suppose I am.”

“Any reason in particular?”

Harry relaxed in his seat, enjoying the comfortable silence as he sought to put his thoughts in order.

“Am I a good person?” he asked finally.

“Yes,” came the near-immediate response.

“And is that enough?”



They sat together in another moment companionable silence.

“Am I a dark lord?”

Luna thought it over for a moment, before shaking her head. “Not by most definitions, no.”

“And by yours?”

“Not entirely.”

Harry nodded. “I’m just afraid that I’m going to be,” he said, his voice gaining a greater hint of anxiousness. “Or that I am, I don’t know. Voldemort, Grindelwald... even Dumbledore, for that matter... They achieved positions of power and used that to get their way. Is that not what I’m doing?”

“I suppose that’s one way of looking at it.”

“Is there another way?” Harry practically choked out, “Because if there is, I’d really like to hear it.”

Luna turned his face until he was looking her in the eyes. “You are not them. You are Harry Potter, Henry Peverell, and you make your own choices. You are not trying to control the world or gain more power, you are trying to protect those you care about.”

Harry let himself lean in slightly to her touch. “I feel like I have no right doing what I am, making these choices, but...”

“But you have to try?”

“Exactly,” he said with a minuscule smile. “That firmly-ingrained people-saving thing.”

Luna laughed softly beside him.

“Does wanting to protect Ivy, everyone... Is that enough? Does that give me a right to keep doing this?” A vague summary, but one that was understood nonetheless.

“Perhaps not,” Luna said. “But what right have any of us to do anything at all?”

“I thought you were supposed to help the Wrackspurts go away?”

Luna made a “who me?” gesture and said, “I simply informed you they were there.”

---

*July 16, 1994*

“So, you’re having a crisis. You know I have a few plans for taking over the world if you want. Entirely theoretical, of course.”

“Thank you for that, Ivy. There goes my plausible deniability.”

“You’re welcome. Now, crisis?”

“You do understand I’m not actually trying to take over the world, right?”

“Well, I should hope not. If so you’re doing a terrible job of it.”

With that Ivy hopped off the stool and went out the backdoor, hopefully to go torment Barty or something. Strangely, Harry felt a little better.

---

“Do you think it’s really as simple as making good choices?”

Remus didn’t need to ask what brought this on, seeing as he was only here because Luna told him he and Harry could have their crises together like the friends they were. How that translated into them watching Ivy shoot brightly colored paint spells at Barty, paint already covering her clothes and the few tufts of fur on her arms and neck... Well, there were worse ways to experience an internal crisis.

“Maybe, maybe not,” Remus answered vaguely, perhaps a little too caught up in watching Barty squeal as a bright green patch appeared on his calf.

“I mean, Dumbledore told me I wasn’t like Voldemort because I chose differently, but that’s not really my best gauge of ethical behavior now.”

Remus huffed a chuckle. “He told you that when you were twelve, about something that was hardly a choice at all, let alone a marking of right or wrong.”

Harry snorted. “I suppose that’s true.”

“So, crisis averted?”

“For now,” Harry said with a slight grin. “How’s your crisis going?”

“Well the wedding was a little awkward, but I haven’t seen Dora since and it’s honestly not that bad. We’re all adults, and it’s not like...”

“Wait, Dora? *Tonks*? What’s going on there? Why is it a crisis?”

Remus banked a couple of times. “We...broke up?”

“You *WHAT*?”

“Er, sorry?”

Remus didn’t catch much of Harry’s mumbling, werewolf senses or not, but he did hear the word “godson” in there and winced just a bit. He should have known Harry was hoping for that...

“That’s a terrible difference to have between worlds, but I suppose not everything can be the same and...”

“Harry?”

“Yes?”

“I’m sorry.”

Harry huffed. “Nothing to be sorry for, Remus.”

“Just out of curiosity, what *did* you think my crisis was about?”

---

*July 19, 1994*

To be entirely fair, Harry had tried, he really had. He had been admittedly somewhat laid back in the whole “destroy Umbridge” thing, considering what he could have been doing. She was still *breathing*, after all, and he was trying so hard not to be a dark lord.

But seeing a pair of dementors in his backyard?

Alright, so maybe he snapped just a bit.

Perhaps not his finest moment, but then again he did feel rather justified in his response.

“You mean to tell me that these are...”

“Dementors? Yes. Two of them. I apologize for their mangled state,” Harry said, without particularly meaning it, “But I didn’t appreciate them loitering about my *garden*.”

He felt a little bad for showing up at Madam Bones’ office with yet another disaster-in-paperwork-about-to-happen, but at the same time she was a competent woman and by this time tomorrow he should have all the evidence he needed compiled and ready for her perusal. Honestly, it could have been worse.

---

Amelia sighed, and just barely resisted the urge to rub her temples. There was always going to be something, but did it have to be *this*?

“And what else you can tell me about the incident? Were there any others present?”

“Yes. Apart from myself, my wife, my daughter, Mr. Parry, and Neville Longbottom were also there.”

Amelia winced at that. *Everyone* knew how protective Lord Peverell was with his adopted daughter, and although she had the feeling Lady Peverell could defend herself quite well, his protective instincts no doubt extended to her as well. And Augusta’s only grandchild? Well, hopefully, the Dowager Lady Longbottom would find the efforts of the DMLE sufficient, because Merlin help them all if she didn’t.

“Also, it still needs a little work, but by this time tomorrow I will have all the evidence I have sent to you.”

“All the evidence?” She had to ask, even if she really didn’t want to.

“Yes. It seems a certain undersecretary did not appreciate being accused of wrongdoing and decided to take care of it.”

Amelia bit back a groan. She was a professional. She could handle this. “You’re sure? You have proof?”

“Plenty.”

There was no doubt in her mind that the rumors of Lord Peverell-Slytherin being exceptionally friendly with the goblin nation were true because there was no way anyone could grin like that and not be.

---

“Who’s got the Fairclough file?”

“Here,” Percy said, levitating the file over to Sebastian Bromford who had taken charge of the entire evidence assembly operation.

“Good. The Thorburn one?”

Lupin tossed the file in question to their temporary leader. “Dunstan isn’t involved in this, right?”

Bromford waved him off. “Not at all. He never liked that cousin anyway.”

A head poked through the doorway. “You boys need any snacks?”

“No thank you, Mrs. Holmwood,” several voices answered in unison.

“Oh, Percy, what are you doing here?”

“It’s an excellent chance to understand the legal process, Mrs. Holmwood,” Percy replied, because sure, let’s go with that, shall we.

“Oh well isn’t that just so thoughtful of you to help out? And call me Elizabeth, dear.”

Percy would most certainly not be doing that. Give Bridget more material to enact her slow, torturous killing? Not bloody likely. He still had no idea how she had gained access to restricted ministry archives, but so long as she chose to use her powers for good and not for assisting Ivy in any one of those “theoretical” plans he would let it be. Still didn’t mean he was going to give her anything else to torment him with. Hopefully, when she was back at Hogwarts she would have less time to owl him all her latest “findings.”

---

“Well, that’s going to keep you busy for a while.”

“Thank you, Alastor. I had absolutely no idea,” Amelia deadpanned.

Moody just chuckled. “It’ll be good for the trainees to get a little evidence processing in.”

“A *little*? Thanks to Peverell’s astonishing evidence collection prowess that I’m really hoping I don’t have to end up looking into too much, I have ninety *separate* investigations I have to open up, not including the suit against Umbridge which was the reason for all this in the first place,” she said, waving her hand around.

“Have you thought about recruiting him?”

Amelia groaned. “I asked him if he would ever consider running for office. Looked like a frightened rabbit at that, so no, I don’t think that will work.”

Moody huffed another laugh. “So what are you going to do?”

“Not look a gift horse in the mouth?”

“Unless it’s made of wood.”

“You think he has an agenda?”

“Everyone has an agenda.”

Amelia could just tell he was just barely not rolling his eyes. “Let me guess. Constant vigilance?”

Moody’s grin was something from many a criminal’s nightmares. “Precisely.”

“You sure I can’t convince you to stay?”

Moody snorted and bit out a quick “no.” “But you’re more than capable of handling this. You don’t need some old windbag like me around.”

Amelia rolled her eyes fondly at that. “And what about Peverell?”

She watched as he took a moment to contemplate his answer.

“I always urge caution, you know that. But from what I’ve seen you don’t have too much reason for concern at the moment. He’s done quite a bit of good, and he’s managed to tone down a lot of the purist vitriol. He’s made it clear he doesn’t agree with the supremacist views, yet has managed to get some of the hardliners onto his side. Even those who don’t agree with him keep their mouths shut around him. He’s got some of the most brilliant politicians on his side, including some from every major faction. Can you think of anyone else who would have gotten Malfoy, Greengrass, Longbottom, and Brown all together without blood spilling?”

It was a rhetorical question because no, certainly not.

“And Deverill? Magnus may be relatively harmless politically, and he isn’t known for being a hardliner, but anything he hears gets circled around faster than whatever Skeeter can turn out. Besides, whatever lack of political ingenuity he lacks is more than made up for in his sons.

They may be young but I have no doubt they will prove themselves major figures in the future.”

“So your overall assessment?”

“Intriguing, potential, go in with one eye open,” he answered, tapping his magical eye.

“I’m afraid I don’t have one of those,” Amelia teased.

“Well, you office types…”

She matched his grin. No one who had ever trained under Mad-Eye Moody was going to be accused of that in earnest.

---

*July 28, 1994*

“Cheers.”

Harry raised his bottle in salute before tipping it back and chugging most of it in one go.

He spied an uncomfortable-looking Percy with a bottle in hand out of the corner of his eye and a half-second later caught it as it came whizzing over to him. Wandless magic was helpful like that.

“Stop giving drinks to the underaged,” he yelled out.

“He’s not underaged,” Barty yelled back, because of course it had been Barty.

“He is for three and half more weeks,” Harry argued back.

Percy looked surprised, but whether it was Harry remembering his birthday or not letting him have the drink he wasn’t sure, and honestly, after the day he had had putting the final nails in Umbridge’s coffin (a metaphorical one, *Barty*), it didn’t matter. Ivy had sort of adopted Percy which meant Percy was sort of his kid, which meant he was sort of the parental figure in this situation, and that’s what parents did. Both things really; remembering birthdays and not giving vodka to seventeen-year-olds.

“But he helped take down Umbridge,” Barty whined. Yes, genuinely whined. Harry claimed no responsibility for however Barty felt in the morning.

“So make him a cake.”

Barty’s face lit up like that was the best idea ever and Harry’s sense of dread chose that moment to manifest itself.

“No, no, do *not* go in the kitchen. *Barty*.”

---

“So, we did it.”

“Mmhmm.”

“Umbridge is out.”

“Yep.”

“So what’s next on the list?”

Harry shot a glare at Remus, who, as always, remained unperturbed.

---

*July 29, 1994*

“Ah, Lord Peverell, thank you so much for meeting with me.”

Harry shook the Minister’s hand, and if he shook it with a *bit* more force than strictly necessary, well, he was positive most people didn’t enjoy their breakfast being interrupted by an urgent owl from the Minister’s office. He knew what this was most likely about, and he was already wishing he had just said no.

“Oh, and Lucius. Come in, come in.”

Well, at least he wasn’t suffering alone.

“Now then, can I get you anything? Tea?”

Both Harry and Lucius answered in the negative.

“Ah, well...”

Madam Bones came in just then, giving Harry a twinge of hope that perhaps the meeting wouldn’t be as awful as previously expected. Lucius might have a clever way to get the Minister to lay off, but Madam Bones would cut right to the chase. That’s what she had spent the entirety of yesterday’s session doing, at least. Harry would treasure the looks of pain and discomfort from those bothered by the head of the DMLE’s bluntness for years to come.

“Well, now that we are all here,” the Minister began, “I know each of you played a great part in uncovering the shocking and extensive fraud committed by someone this office had once so mistakenly trusted.”

Ah. Attempting to distance himself from Umbridge and pretend that literally anyone other than himself had ever fully liked or trusted her. How terribly not shocking. It was almost as if he could have predicted this exact scenario.

He also wondered why his presence was necessary. The Minister had most likely hoped for some encouraging sign or indication that Harry was not about to turn on him as well, but Harry was having too much fun making the Minister squirm a bit in his seat. Did that make him a bad person? To be fair, Fudge was the one who had hired Umbridge in the first place, so a little squirming could hardly be considered cruel and unusual punishment.

Harry concluded that he was on the safe side of ethics for this one.

As assuming as it was to watch Fudge squirm slightly at Harry's carefully controlled neutral-face-of-mild-disinterest, it was at least equally if not more amusing to watch Lucius and Madam Bones handle the situation so... Diplomatically was one word that came to mind, but the subtle insults that Lucius sent Fudge's way were a thing of unparalleled beauty, and Madam Bones seemed quite capable of telling the Minister he was being an idiot in all sorts of seemingly polite ways.

He also noticed that Lucius didn't mention his previous, er, *encouragement packages*, and that Bones certainly caught on, though she too kept silent on the matter. Hopefully, Lucius had had enough sense to stop such bribery attempts before now, but Harry wasn't going to be the one to bring it up.

"...such a vocal supporter. I'm sure you are well aware of the need to reevaluate the policies and procedures of this office to ensure nothing like this is allowed to happen again."

Lucius was such a beautiful hypocrite. And root out all corruption in the Ministry? Well, perhaps if they convinced Madam Bones to run for Minister...

The current Minister, who Harry doubted was going to be capable of much at this point, seemed to be eagerly agreeing to all of Lucius's remarks about being careful.

Bones had made similar comments over the course of the meeting, stressing that continued cooperation with the Auror's office would go a long way to ensuring this turn out as favorably as possible for Fudge. Granted, it was most likely a scale between getting kicked out tomorrow and actually lasting through the end of his term, but again, Harry was not going to be the one to bring that up, instead feeling rather comfortable in his continued silence. He also idly wondered how many other high-ranking members of the Ministry were about to be investigated, specifically those closely associated with the Minister's office, sparing a brief thought of gratitude that he was not the person who had to deal with it.

---

Harry managed to make it through the entire meeting only saying perhaps a dozen or so words altogether. Quite an accomplishment, that.

Of course, now Madam Bones was giving him a look that clearly meant she wanted to have a word.

Lucius too received a look, and a moment later he found himself in yet another office, sitting down for yet another meeting. Hopefully, this one wouldn't last as long.

"Hypothetically speaking," Madam Bones began.

Harry did not love that beginning.

"If an investigation were to occur, specifically relating to fraud and corruption within the Minister's office, say, the taking of bribes, for example," she continued, with a wave of a hand as if it were an idea that had just suddenly popped into her head and not something that



she was one step away from interrogating a certain blond wizard about, “would I find anything of concern in, say, oh, I don’t know, the past year?”

Harry applauded Lucius’s ability to keep a straight face while answering, “Nothing I am aware of.”

“And if I were to look further back?”

Harry could almost swear he saw the faintest of smirks on her face.

“I am sure there is nothing unduly concerning that would come up in such an investigation.”

Harry wondered if what Lucius really meant by that was “so maybe I did it but so did everyone else.” Not a great defense but probably true nonetheless. At least it appeared Lucius had stopped, and that was good, right?

A few minutes later as they walked out, Harry could hardly control his own smirk at Lucius’s barely perceptible discomfort. What a great ending to this little outing.

---

*July 31, 1994*

Harry rapped on Ivy’s door.

“Are you up?” he called out.

There was no response.

“Ivy?”

Still nothing.

“Happy Birthday, Ives,” he said, “I made breakfast.”

Still nothing.

Carefully he opened the door and poked his head in, but the bed was empty. Had he missed her getting up already? A quick spell showed that no, she was in her room still, but he didn’t see anyone. And when had she brought home a new...

Oh.

*Oh.*

“Er, Ives? That you?”

Two seconds later he had his arms full of very excited...was that a...

Oh, they were never going to hear the end of this.

---

§*Sshe ssmellss sstrange.*§

§*Sshe'ss changed but sshe will change back,*§ Harry assured Tiger.

§*Iss there sstill room for me?*§

§*Ssure. Sshe'ss not that ssmall.*§

With that Tiger slithered dutifully up onto Ivy's back. Harry felt he really ought to take a picture or something. It could go on a poster for inter-house relations at Hogwarts, and since Ivy was already apparently the poster child for that, well, it seemed fitting.

---

"I thought you had to be something native to Britain," Draco began. "Happy Birthday by the way."

Ivy just shrugged. Probably. It was a little hard to tell what with the fur and the teeth and all that, but Harry had the idea that's what she was going for. Now if he could just convince her to turn back, since she wasn't letting *him* do anything about it.

"But this *is* Ivy we're talking about," Neville argued. "And I'm not sure that's an actual rule or whatever. Maybe just more of a commonality?"

"And is that even really a badger?" Draco asked with a slight tint of incredulousness in his voice.

"Does it matter?"

"I'm just saying. She obviously is going to be lauded as the second coming of Hufflepuff or some other such nonsense, but she's not a real badger, is she?"

"You take that back," a suddenly transformed Ivy shouted. "Honey badgers are real."

"Yes, but do they actually count as *badgers*?" Draco argued.

"Well..." Neville began, before closing his mouth as quickly as he had opened it. Ivy's glare might have had something to do with that.

"Honey badgers have been known to take on lions," baby-Luna said. Harry had to make some sort of distinction and that worked as well as any.

Draco's eye twitched. "You know, that explains so much."

Harry agreed. Small, happily taking on things far bigger, an affinity for sweet things...

"You know, I told the hat I belonged in Hufflepuff, but did he listen? *No*. But I knew it! I knew I was meant to be a Hufflepuff, and I'm going to tell him so."

Harry rubbed his eyes. This was going to be a long month before school. "Ivy, please don't steal the sorting hat."

Ivy looked affronted. "I'll put it *back*."

---

"Fred, my wonderful almost-minion. I have a proposal."

Fred's face lit up with mischievous anticipation and George leaned in along with his twin.

"We're going to borrow the sorting hat when we get back to school."

George wondered when and how he had become the responsible one out of the lot. It was wrong, and someone needed to take it back.

---

"I can't believe you."

"Sorry."

"Why didn't you just *tell me*?"

"Sorry I didn't tell you."

"I mean, why would you go through that *again*? It was bad enough once! Why would you subject yourself to that kind of torture a second, *completely unnecessary* time?"

"I...didn't want you to feel left out and I felt bad that I had done it before I knew for sure you were going to do it too?"

Draco sighed. "I can't believe you went through leaf torture for me."

"It really wasn't that bad," Ivy said with a laugh.

"It was horrible and nothing you say will convince me otherwise. I *suffered*, Ivy. I can't believe you did it a second time."

"Well, you could always do it again too if it would make you feel better."

Draco's squawk of protest left everyone in the immediate vicinity with no doubt that Draco would not, in fact, be doing that.

---

*August 4, 1994*

Sirius stepped through the floo into Harry and Luna's home for the first time as a married man, whistling as he went. The Seychelles were absolutely lovely and the cloudy weather back in Britain was in no way going to diminish his sunny mood.

Strolling into the kitchen where he knew everyone would most likely be at this time of day, he asked, "So, what did I miss?"

# Chapter 51

## Chapter Notes

Seriously, the comments I get are amazing and give me so much motivation to continue. Thanks to everyone who comments or leaves kudos or even had just read all the way through to this point haha. Did I ever mention I was in no way expecting this thing to get this long? Also, I've never, er, you know... \*edited.\* So that will be something I'm going to go back and start doing. All five hundred and forty-seven pages..... I do realize I did this to myself but in my defense, I have severely lacked impulse control when it came to posting this story. I finish a chapter and it's posted a few minutes later. Not the best plan, I know, but what can you do? (Go back and edit a year later, that's what you can do).

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*August 15, 1994*

“Not. One. Word.”

Of all the things... That’s it. He was never, ever going to transform where someone might spot him. Ever. He would just claim defeat, or perhaps claim to be something no one could see. Could people have a thestral as an animagus form?

Perhaps he should do it again just to be sure...

---

“Alright, so I got the snacks... Ivy, what is that?”

“It’s a lion.”

“Yes, I can see it’s a lion. I meant, what is a lion doing here?”

“That’s Draco.”

Harry looked at the lion and then back to Ivy. “Is it really? Well, that sure explains a lot now, doesn’t it.”

The Draco-lion huffed, presumably unamused at Harry’s conclusion.

“So who’s going to turn into an eagle then? Or a snake? Might as well aim for the whole set.”

Ivy rolled her eyes at him and Draco-lion pouted. Not an expression he had seen on a lion before, but this was Draco, so it somehow fit.

---

*August 18, 1994*

“So, I heard you got your form down. That was fast.”

“Yes, well, I’m quite good at transfiguration.”

“Uh-huh... So what are you then?”

Draco remained silent and Blaise slowly brought an eyebrow up.

“Ivy?” Blaise said, turning towards her. “Care to share?”

“Can’t,” Ivy said succinctly.

“You’re a lion, aren’t you,” Neville chimed in.

Draco glared at the wizard who had apparently recently decided to embody Gryffindor courage and not be frightened by anything, including Draco’s most impressive glare.

Blaise outright cackled. “Of course you are. Merlin, we match, don’t we. First my patronus and now your animagus... What’s next, Neville turning into a cobra?”

“I think he’d be more of a python if you ask me,” Ivy interjected.

“That’s not the point,” Draco said in something other than a whine. “Can you *please* try to focus on the problem at hand?”

“Which is?”

“*Me.*”

“Well, you said it, not me,” Blaise muttered.

Draco needed to practice his glare. It was having absolutely no effect on any of them and this was becoming increasingly problematic.

---

*August 25, 1994*

Thomas paced nervously, looking at his watch for what had to be the twentieth time that hour. Not that Percy had been counting or anything.

“When are they going to get here? I thought they would be here by now.”

“You do realize this is my family you’re talking about, right? Everyone besides Mum is coming, plus Granger, who I’m fairly certain Ron has a crush on, plus the Peverells, plus adjacent Peverells, plus the Blacks, plus Luna, plus Burke who insisted on accompanying Luna, plus the Diggorys who somehow got roped into organizing the portkeys for the entire lot.”

“And they couldn’t have just met everyone here?”

“What are you so nervous about, anyway? I thought you’d be more nervous at Adélie coming than Ivy.”

“Adélie isn’t going to give me a look of disappointment while something explodes in the background.”

“Touché.”

---

“Hey, Thomas, right? Are you okay?”

Thomas turned his head to see Percy’s brother. “What? Yes, I’m fine, it’s fine. Nothing is wrong, why would you say that?” He was fairly certain he had kept out at least forty percent of the hysteria from his voice, so kudos to him.

“Right... How about you just sit down for a moment...”

Thomas let Charlie help him onto a stool.

“Are the others with you?”

Charlie shook his head. “Just Bill. The others will be along any moment. Didn’t fancy going by portkey myself.”

Thomas nodded absently.

“Are you sure you’re alright?”

“Salut, Thomas. Ah, qui est ton ami?”

Thomas hopped right back off the stool. “Salut, Adélie. This is Charlie Weasley, one of Percy’s older brothers. Charlie, this is Adélie Fortier, my, er, girlfriend.”

Charlie looked amused but thankfully didn’t say anything. Thomas could only thank Merlin and hope all future meetings between Adélie and everyone-but-most-especially-Ivy would be as painless as this.

“Bonjour, Mlle Fortier. Pardonne-moi, mais mon français n'est pas si bon.”

Adélie let out a slight laugh. “I speak English.”

“Better than I speak French, no doubt,” Charlie said with a grin.

And, well, no one appeared ready to argue that.

“So, when will I meet your *petite soeur*?”

“She means Ivy,” Thomas said quickly at Charlie’s raised eyebrow.

“Oh, I’m sure,” Charlie replied, with a grin that was not discomfiting. Not at all.

Thomas, entirely off his game apparently, and unable to make a suitable reply, chose instead to offer his arm to Adélie and walk in whatever direction might eventually land them in the same place as Ivy. Any direction worked, really. They’d run into her sooner or later. And later might not really be that bad, after all...

---

“Est-ce un bon petit ami? Parce que je peux te venger s’il ne l’est pas.”

Thomas took offense to that. He was a perfectly good fake boyfriend, thank you very much. He resisted the urge to stick out his tongue at Ivy. He was supposed to be an adult now. And also that would probably just fuel Ivy’s teasing further.

“Oui, il est très attentionné.”

Adélie looked far too amused for him to find any comfort in that statement.

“Bien, bien. Alors, quand allez-vous vous marier tous les deux?”

Thomas’s brain came to a halt even as he caught sight of a tiny smirk on Ivy’s face. There wasn’t even a look of innocence on her face to make him think that maybe this wasn’t going to end in disaster. No, she was planning something, and she knew exactly what she was doing.

“Peut-être dans quelques années.”

That was a vague enough answer on Adélie’s part. He could live with that.

“Ah, ça veut dire que vous arrêterez les fausses rencontres, non?”

How Ivy had managed to plaster on a look of perfect innocence on her face just in time for that question he had no idea. He felt his face heating up, and he heard laughter coming from his now least-favorite Weasley. Percy at least had the decency to *attempt* to hide his grin, even if Charlie was doing no such thing.

Adélie laughed because of course she was finding this incredibly amusing. “Penses-tu que je devrais?”

“Tout à fait. Ce serait dommage si tout cela était gaspillé.”

Why had he even bothered?

---

“You do realize you *are* actually dating her, right?”

“What?”

“Well, that seems like a lot of effort to go through just to convince me you had a girlfriend.”

“It wasn’t you I was trying to convince, per se...”

“And obviously you like her, and she likes you, and you’ve been dating for a while now, so all I’m saying is I hope you are aware of that fact.”

“I’m not sure that I...”

“You’re dating.”

“Am I?”

“Yes.”

“Well, alright then.”

Ivy looked rather proud of herself and Thomas acknowledged, (safely within the realm of his own mind), that she had probably masterminded this entire thing. Somehow. He should probably talk to Adélie a bit more on the subject, though...

---

“This place is *incredible*,” Hermione said between gasps of wonder at the vastness of the tent’s interior. “It’s just like the TARDIS.”

“The what?”

“It’s a muggle thing,” Hermione said with a wave.

Ron leaned over to Ginny. “Did you know muggles had that sort of thing?”

Ginny shook her head, eyes slightly wide. “Maybe Dad knows about it? We could ask him later.”

“Yeah, alright.”

---

“Oh, I missed you all.”

“Ivy, you saw me yesterday.”

“I wasn’t talking to you,” Ivy said, sticking her tongue out at Draco.

Neither of them noticed Pansy’s Cheshire grin as she stood behind them. She’d have to thank Hermione for lending her that book. Muggles were terribly boring as a whole, but at least some of their literature was interesting enough.

“Is there anyone else coming?” Finnegan asked.

“Yeah, where’s Longbottom anyway?”

“Letchworth,” Ivy answered promptly.



“Sorry, what?”

“Hertfordshire. He wanted to tour the greenhouses there.”

Pansy ignored the looks of disbelief among her fellow classmates at the thought that Longbottom would rather spend a day looking at experimental magical flowers than attend the largest sporting event in Europe. Well, as far as the magical side of things was concerned. She really had no idea how well attended those muggle games were, but honestly, they couldn't be all that popular, could they? All they did was kick a ball. One, single ball. With their *feet*. But Longbottom? Had no one been paying attention the last few years? Honestly, as if he would voluntarily choose quidditch over plants.

She scoffed at the very idea.

She and Longbottom may not have that much in common, but they could at least agree that quidditch was somewhat overrated. To be completely truthful, she was just here so she wouldn't have to hear about this secondhand for the next year. She was smart like that.

Also, she needed as much time to observe Draco and Ivy as possible before school started back up. Perfect matchmaking schemes took *time*.

---

The game went almost exactly as Harry remembered it. Actually, if he were to focus hard enough on the memory he might not find any major differences in the way the actual game was played. The before and after parts could differ greatly and that would be fine by him, but the game itself went as expected. Krum caught the snitch, Ireland won, cheers all around.

And so maybe he made sure Ludo Bagman didn't get away with giving the twins Leprechaun gold, and perhaps Ivy spent a good twenty minutes speaking the Bulgarian Minister of Magic in rapid Bulgarian while completely ignoring a flustered Cornelius Fudge, and it was quite possible that a couple of witches ended up with some nasty, (if ultimately harmless), jinxes courtesy of Luna, who did not appreciate people flirting with her husband.

He didn't mind that part one bit. He got to see Luna use some of her more creative spellwork and also didn't have to deal with the awkward situation that was being flirted with by another human being. Win-win, in his opinion.

And watching Ivy dance circles around Fudge, who probably hadn't even realized what she was doing, was also amazing. He was so proud.

And the twins hadn't lost their entire savings, which was good. He probably should have focused more on not encouraging gambling as a means of income, but ensuring a favorable outcome was fine too, right?

So really it had been an excellent day.

That, of course, meant that disaster was imminent. Fate really did seem to have it out for him like that.

The first time around had been death eaters, which was why Harry now found himself standing menacingly behind a table.

He had never been the tallest person, so he wasn't sure how to come across as intimidating, but looking out over the number of former death eaters he thought they looked suitably intimidated, so something must be working.

---

“And what is going to happen tonight?”

One brave and/or idiotic soul raised a hand. Lucius resisted the urge to roll his eyes, but if nothing else this proved the Dark Lord had recruited from all houses.

“Nothing?” the wizard said.

“Precisely,” Lord Peverell-Slytherin replied, far too cheerily.

Lucius had to hand it to the man. If he ever wanted a change of occupation, Dark Lord would probably suit him just fine. He was sure as Hades convincing enough.

“And can anyone tell me what ‘nothing’ entails, exactly? Anyone? No? Well then, let me spell it out for you. ‘Nothing,’ means you will restrict your alcohol intake to the mildest levels of intoxication. ‘Nothing,’ means you will not cause trouble or mayhem in any way, shape, or form, particularly outside of your own tents. ‘Nothing,’ means there will be no compromising of the Statute of Secrecy. ‘Nothing,’ means you will not do anything that will cause the lovely Madam Bones or anyone from the Auror’s office any headaches tomorrow. ‘Nothing,’ means that under *no* circumstances am I to hear of *anyone* wearing a hood or a mask on these or any other premises. Understood?”

A few guilty-looking faces.

Hrn.

And here Lucius thought Henry was just being paranoid.

---

*August 26, 1994*

“Let me preface this by saying it wasn’t me.”

Harry hated literally everything about that statement and glared at Barty to properly express that. “Let me guess,” he said dryly, “someone is walking around wearing a Death Eater mask?”

Barty shrugged. Harry groaned. It was a moment that he could have lived without.

“It’s one in the morning. Couldn’t they have at least done this at a respectable time? Now I’m going to be up the rest of the night dealing with this...” Harry glanced around because there was a chance Ivy could hear. A small chance, but that was not a risk he was willing to make. Instead, he mouthed the words, ignoring the roll of Barty’s eyes.

Finished with his diatribe, Harry scowled at the floor for a moment before grumbling out, “Suppose we’d better go deal with this.”

“Have fun with that.”

“*We*, Barty.”

“It wasn’t *my* fault,” Barty complained.

“And I’m supposed to care about that right now, am I?”

“This is why I’m Luna’s minion,” Barty muttered before following Harry out of the tent.

---

“Peverell.”

“Scrimgeour.”

“An interesting end to the evening’s festivities.”

“Indeed.”

Harry hated this; the back and forth, the innocuous pleasantries alongside the ruthless observation meant for catching even the slightest hint of lie or weakness. It was politics, but somehow meatier. Less haughty sniffs and more watching for a twitch of a hand that might mean a wand drawn and a spell to be dodged.

He was not going to get along with everyone, and not everyone would approve of him. He knew that, he had had extensive experience with that (his entire life up to this point, in fact), yet Harry found himself wishing that for once he could just sit contentedly on the sidelines and watch the action play out. Of course, he probably wouldn’t be able to sit idly for long, especially given his lack of practice doing so, but it’d be nice to have the option.

But instead, here he was, six o’clock in the morning, running on no sleep, talking with a clearly suspicious Head Auror.

*Because that’s what he needed in his life right now*, he thought with a mental eye roll.

And also, there had better not have been anyone he spoke to yesterday involved in this little terrorist disaster because Merlin help them if they were. Harry certainly wouldn’t.

---

“Just once couldn’t the person suspicious of my every move be someone whose face I don’t already have less than stellar memories of?”

“Would that really make it better?” Barty asked.

“That’s literally what I just said.”

“Yes, well, just think about it for a second.”

Harry did not want to think about it. He wanted the blood supremacist idiots who had ruined his night to turn themselves in so he could take a nap. Merlin, not even thirty and he was already looking forward to *naps*. Ivy must never know. He was in no way ready to suffer teasing from her on getting *old*.

“If someone was suspicious of you and you had no idea who they were, you lose your advantage,” Barty continued, entirely unaware of Harry’s sudden awareness of his (hopefully) slow yet inevitable progression towards death. “If you know who they are you can formulate a plan to deal with it.”

“Like how I did an excellent job of making sure Dumbledore didn’t get suspicious of me at all?” Harry deadpanned.

“Well...”

Harry sighed. “I understand your point, and it is valid, I just wish this world with stop with the eerily similar events already. Scrimgeour is just the latest. Sure, it’s not the same, but I could have done without any interactions at all.”

“Well, at least you’re dealing with it.”

“I’d rather not.”

“Better you than Ivy.”

“Fair point.”

---

“Hey, Harry, remember when we were both insane?”

“Now is really not the time for this, Barty.”

“But you do remember, right?”

“I remember *you* being insane.”

“Oh no, it was definitely both of us.”

“We remember the past few years very differently.”

“I’m just saying, is this going to cause a relapse for you?”

“I wasn’t insane.”

“...”

“And I’m afraid to ask, but why would you think that?”

Barty handed him a list. A list of names, a few of which were rather *familiar*...

Harry did not have a talent for languages as Ivy did, but when it came to a certain selection of words from various languages he did all right.

---

*August 27, 1994*

“Madam Bones will see you now.”

Harry smiled at the secretary and walked the increasingly familiar path to the office of Amelia Bones.

He was greeted by three suspicious looks. The one from Scrimgeour was unsurprising. The one from the Minister was a tad more surprising, but then again in the thirty-six hours since the disaster at the World Cup there had already been an uptick in whispers about Fudge getting ousted from office. The man was bound to be suspicious of anyone he could possibly conceive of as being a future political hindrance to his own potentially jeopardized career. So yes, not a huge surprise there either. But from Madam Bones? Although hers seemed to be directed more at the plate in his hands and...

“Er, Luna said I was probably stress baking,” he said awkwardly, putting the plate of pastries on the table.

The look on Madam Bones’ face quickly turned to one of amusement, though the two wizards looked like he had just announced that the Ministry atrium was full of stray cats, not that he knew from experience what that looked like or anything.

(It had been pigeons, actually.)

At the continued silence Harry cleared his throat and sat in a chair. That seemed to stir the others back to the present and the awkwardness dissipated slightly.

“So what can I do for you?” he asked, directing his question to Madam Bones. He didn’t particularly care to hear what Fudge or Scrimgeour might want from him.

“Anything more you can tell us about the incident at the World Cup.”

“Right. Well, I don’t know what’s happened since I went home, but if there’s anything I can add to my report from yesterday morning I’d be glad to help.”

“Who led it?”

Harry blinked at Scrimgeour’s sharp question. “I don’t know,” he replied. “Did you not find someone? I thought you already had suspects. I have a list of some names if you need them,” he continued, reaching for his pocket.

Madam Bones held up her hand. “That is unnecessary, but thank you.”

She and Harry both seemed comfortable ignoring the scoff that came from Scrimgeour.

“Corban Yaxley has been arrested for inciting the Neo-Death Eater violence at the World Cup.”

“Isn’t he an actual death eater though?”

“Never convicted, but yes, he was.”

Scrimgeour snorted. “What, he not one of your little ‘friends?’”

Harry did not appreciate that question and leveled a look in Scrimgeour’s direction to convey that sentiment. “No. It’s hard to be friends with someone with whom you fundamentally disagree with.”

“And what sorts of disagreements might those be?” the Minister chimed in.

Harry stared at Fudge because Fudge was an idiot and Harry was quickly losing whatever patience his baking spree had brought back into his life.

“People who think Voldemort was somehow in the right are not people I’m going to ever agree with, are they.” It wasn’t a question, and Harry dared anyone to refute that statement.

No one did.

“Now that we have that settled,” Harry said in a falsely cheerful voice, “you said Yaxley was arrested? Does that mean he led it?”

“It would appear so,” Madam Bones replied with a slight smirk Harry chose to believe was due to the nervousness that seemed to be quickly overtaking Fudge. Even Scrimgeour looked like he’d rather not be here at the moment.

“So what can I help with then?”

“Do you know the location of any of these people?” Bones said, sliding over a list that was nearly identical to Harry’s.

Harry perused the list for a moment. “No; no; no idea who that is; probably in Vienna; no; fairly certain I heard they were headed for Manchester after the World Cup; I’d check Ipswich for that one; no on those three; again, don’t know who that is, or that one either; London; London; London again; probably drunk somewhere in Knockturn; and doesn’t he work in the Ministry a few floors down?”

Scrimgeour nodded, though apparently it was a painful gesture to make. Harry felt no sympathy.

“Right then. Well, you might check, because honestly, he’s probably stupid enough to try and come into work after something like that. Let’s see... No on those; Pretty sure he’s in Tywyn; and... let me check on this one.”

Harry conjured a patronus, letting his inner teenager preen slightly at the begrudgingly impressed look on Scrimgeour’s face. “Go to Lucius,” he instructed the panther. “Do you

know the whereabouts of Ivan Fairclough? If so send it to Madam Bones' office, would you?"

A moment of silence followed the departure of Harry's patronus.

"So, anything else?"

Harry held back a grin at the sight of Scrimgeour, who looked like he was half a second away from having an eye twitch. Harry had much experience with those and enjoyed seeing it on other peoples' faces.

"Thank you for your help, Lord Peverell," Madam Bones said, with a conspiratorial smile. "That is all."

Harry returned her look with a grin, understanding now why she had asked him there. The look of very reluctant respect on Scrimgeour's face coupled with the look of hopeful anxiety on Fudge's helped solidify his opinion that she had some motive or other for wanting to lessen Scrimgeour's suspicion of him, and he wasn't going to get in her way. Her motive for including Fudge in the meeting was less certain, but perhaps she was just annoyed with the Minister. Merlin knows they all were, these days.

---

"I'm not mad, I'm just disappointed."

As the words left Harry's mouth he desperately wished he could take them back. He sounded far too much like a parent or teacher to be standing there talking to a few wizards who were all at least a decade older than him.

"I take it you don't want us recruiting anymore then?"

"I never wanted you to in the first place," Harry said, quite unimpressed with Lucius at the moment. "So yes, please stop."

"Well technically most of those were Alden's recruits," Simon chimed in, probably wary about Harry's reaction due to the previous...issues Harry had had to deal with already this summer when it came to Lord Parkinson's mistakes.

"Don't blame Burke for your own ineptitude," Lucius bit out.

"I'm too old for this," Alden muttered.

Harry sighed. Apparently he needed to play authority figure a little longer.

---

"At least none of them tried bringing Yaxley into the fold."

"What fold? There is no fold."

"There absolutely is a fold," Barty argued, "but Yaxley wasn't part of it."

“And that’s supposed to make me feel better?”

“Means they have some sense, at least,” Barty said with a casual shrug.

Harry refused to let Barty have the satisfaction of drawing another eye twitch from him.

---

*August 29, 1994*

“So... The Triwizard Tournament.”

“Should we make a plan?”

“That would be best, yes.”

“I’ll grab the Book.”

“Is there a chapter for that?”

Luna gave him a fond, indulging sort of look.

---

“So Luna and I have been discussing the Tournament, and how best to deal with it.”

“Oh, so am I entering?”

“No,” Harry and Luna replied simultaneously.

“The idea is to not get entered at all,” Luna said.

“Barty won’t be entering you, so no need to worry about him, and he will also be ensuring the goblet does not get tampered with.”

“Does he know he’ll be doing that?” Ivy asked, amused.

Harry pressed on. “Of course, Fate seems to hate me in particular, and by extension you, so we still ought to prepare for the worst.”

“We have a list of ideas for preventing entry here,” Luna said, handing Ivy the list, “as well as plans in case of forcible entry here,” she finished, handing over a second list.

Ivy perused the lists, making small little sounds of acknowledgement at certain places.

“Well? What do you think?”

“Fine? I think it looks fine. I mean, my plan was sort of to just blow up that bridge if someone forcibly apparates me to it, but this could work too.”

Harry forced himself to take a breath. “I’m happy you approve,” he managed to get out.



Ivy hummed. “Well, I don’t think there is all that much reason to worry. I’ll be fine. I have you two, after all.”

While nice, warm, fuzzy feelings filled Harry’s chest at that display of trust, he still made a mental note to encourage the development of greater self-preservation instincts.

As Ivy left he remembered to call out, “Explosions are for emergencies *only*,” because that was important.

---

“We’re going to have to deal with the Tournament, aren’t we.” It wasn’t even a question, more of a statement of probability at this point.

“It does seem likely, yes,” Luna replied.

“When did we get to be such pessimists?”

Luna shrugged. “Refusing to acknowledge something does not make it any less real.”

They sat in companionable silence for several minutes before Harry spoke again.

“Do you think I could just steal the goblet?”

## Chapter End Notes

« Salut, Thomas. Ah, qui est ton ami? » “Hi Thomas. Ah, who is your friend?”

« Bonjour, Mlle Fortier. Pardonne-moi, mais mon français n'est pas si bon. » “Hello, Miss Fortier. Forgive me, but my French is not that good.”

« Est-ce un bon petit ami? Parce que je peux te venger s'il ne l'est pas. » “Is he a good boyfriend? Because I can take revenge if he isn’t.”

« Oui, il est très attentionné. » “Yes, he is very caring.”

« Bien, bien. Alors, quand allez-vous vous marier tous les deux? » “Good, good. So when are you two going to get married?”

« Peut-être dans quelques années. » “Maybe in a few years.”

« Ah, ça veut dire que vous arrêterez les fausses rencontres, non? » “Ah, that means you'll stop fake dating, right?”

« Penses-tu que je devrais? » “Do you think I should?”

« Tout à fait. Ce serait dommage si tout cela était gaspillé. » “Absolutely. It would be a shame if all of this was wasted.”

## Chapter 52

*September 1, 1994*

Luna had (unfortunately, in his opinion), talked him down from preemptively stealing the Goblet of Fire. He still maintained that it was a perfectly reasonable approach to the situation, but for now, he was willing to keep it a backup plan just in case. Barty at least would most likely be amenable to helping him out if it proved necessary, so long as Harry could convince him to not ask Luna any questions or bring it up to her in the first place.

Alright so maybe the plan needed a bit of work.

But it was all in the name of prevention, right? Disaster aversion?

He ignored the niggling in the back of his mind that said a minor heist wouldn't stop Fate that easily.

Oh, look at him, going on about Fate as if the future was somehow set in stone.

It was not. He had checked. Department of Mysteries for the win.

He waved to Ivy as the train began rolling out of the station. Well, he had a few weeks to sort out the details.

---

Pansy had miscalculated. She had attended the World Cup final match between Bulgaria and Ireland so she wouldn't have to hear about it secondhand, but that was doing nothing for her right now as she was still having to hear all about it. Every single compartment on the train thus far had contained someone or other talking about it. Well, except for the ones with all the firsties, but they didn't really count, did they.

The worst part? She had heard it all so many times in the past three hours she actually had some idea of what they were talking about at this point. Sure, she had been there, but that didn't mean she had bothered to pay attention to the particulars of the game or the different moves players had made.

Draco and Weasley certainly had, though, and why she had thought that compartment would somehow be better than the others was beyond her at the moment. At least she could get away with teasing them about it more than some of the others who seemed intent on discussing the game the entire train ride to Hogwarts.

---

That was it. She was finding her own compartment. Three and a half hours of listening to quidditch talk were more than anyone needed in their life, ever, and she had put up with it with all the patience of a Hufflepuff, which she was most decidedly not.

Now to find others who could be made to talk about something other than that stupid game and Krum's stupid face and...

Ah. Perfect.

"Longbottom," she snapped out, "come on, we're finding another compartment."

The boy in question looked at her blankly for a moment before gathering his things and following her out. He hadn't gone to the game, and she was beginning to have greater respect for his decision-making.

---

"Was that Parkinson and *Longbottom*?"

"What in Merlin's name are they doing together?"

---

"Did you see that?"

"You saw it too then?"

"I suppose there have been stranger couples..."

---

"Do you really think they're in there snogging?"

"Do you really want to find out?"

"..."

---

"Did you hear about Pansy and Neville?"

"Wait, when did that happen?"

---

Most of the time sortings went fairly quickly. There were the occasional ones that took a bit longer for the hat to make its pronouncement, but in general, it was not an overly long process. So of course they were fifteen minutes into the sorting ceremony and still on the very first name.

The boy under the hat sat very still, with excellent poise and a look of absolute determination on his face. Much further down the hall, his sister sat with her face buried in her arms.

"Just tell me when it's over with," Hannah muttered.

"It's not that bad," Susan reassured her. "Michael's hardly the longest sorting to occur."

"Yeah, didn't you tell me someone was under there for almost an hour once?" Justin asked.

Hannah groaned. “You don’t understand. This is never going to end.”

“Well it has to end eventually,” Wayne chimed in. “Right?” he continued, looking around the group.

Most everyone at that section of the Hufflepuff table nodded their heads.

“So, any idea why his sorting is taking so long?” Megan asked.

Hannah just made a frustrated groaning sound while Susan patted her back in a comforting manner.

“He has...*plans*,” Susan explained, not that it was much of an explanation.

“Plans?” Ernie asked.

Another groan from Hannah and a wince from Susan made the entire little group look intently from one to the other.

“SLYTHERIN,” the hat cried out finally, startling them all a little out of their seats.

“Well,” Megan began with a cough, “it’s not that bad, right?”

“Yeah, Slytherin is mostly decent now, right? He should be fine,” Ernie added.

“And Ivy is there. I’m sure she’ll take care of...”

“No,” Hannah very nearly shouted out, cutting off whatever else Justin was about to say. “You don’t understand. He has *plans*.”

“Like, evil plans?” Wayne asked cautiously.

“Not evil,” Susan began before she too was cut off by Hannah.

“No, none of you understand. He’s in Slytherin because he has this stupid ten-year plan to woo Ivy.”

They all, with the exception of Susan, looked at Hannah with some level of incredulity.

“I’m sorry, he what now?” Ernie stated more than asked.

“He has a ten-year plan to woo Ivy Potter. Court her. Whatever. He plans to win her over, he has a ridiculously detailed plan for doing so, and he just spent nearly twenty minutes under the sorting hat because apparently he’s stubborn enough to will himself into the same house she is in.”

“Well, he’s certainly ambitious then,” Megan responded.

“Do you think he would explain some of the details of his plan?” Justin asked. “Just that I’m curious,” he added hastily, seeing the look on Hannah’s face at his question.

---

---

“It’s nice to meet you, Michael,” Draco said, somewhat hesitantly. He wasn’t entirely sure what was up with this kid, but he was clearly in Slytherin for a reason. Why he had latched onto Draco specifically was anyone’s guess, but Draco figured he could play older-student-mentor-figure as well as anyone if he decided Hannah Abbott’s little brother was worth spending time with.

Putting that aside for now, however, he turned towards one of his oldest friends.

“So, Pansy...”

“Hmm?”

“Congratulations on you and Longbottom.” It came out a little quickly and a little forced, but he was doing his part at being the supportive friend, and he actually liked Neville. What he *didn’t* like was hearing about this from some random third-year brat on the way into the feast instead of from one or both of them as it *ought to have been*.

Not that he was mildly put out by that or anything.

“Sorry, what was that?”

“You and Neville? Dating?”

Pansy started choking on something or other, though Tracey helped out by delivering a few swift and forceful pats to the back.

“Who told you that?” Pansy practically hissed out once she had regained her ability to breathe normally.

“Well, I would have *liked* to have heard it from you,” Draco said, “but as it stands I heard it on the way in. Apparently, it’s all over the school.”

So maybe he was mildly irritated at the situation.

Pansy just stared blankly at him. “It’s all over the school that Neville and I are...dating.”

Draco just nodded. “You can tell me these things, you know.”

Pansy moved from staring at him to staring rather contemplatively at some imaginary speck off in the distance. “Right. I’ll do that,” she replied.

---

“How’d you do it?”

Neville had only gotten a short way into his explanation of how he had gotten the Letchworth Greenhouses practically to himself last week when Ron interrupted him, explaining that that was not what he was asking about.

“Er, sorry?”

“I *meant*, how did you get Parkinson to go out with you?”

“Yeah mate, she’s a bit scary if you know what I mean,” Seamus said, shoving a bit of chicken into his mouth.

Dean just nodded along in silent agreement, face too full to properly respond out loud himself.

“What do you mean?” Neville asked, hoping for some kind of explanation for what kind of answer he was supposed to be giving.

“You and Parkinson. Dating. How’d it happen?”

Neville’s mind blanked out for a moment.

“Oh, real funny guys,” he said after a bit, forcing a laugh out as he spoke.

“It’s all over the school,” Dean said, now able to contribute to the conversation.

“Yeah, no need to hide it from us, mate,” Ron said. Or at least, that’s what Neville thought Ron said. Ron had not waited where Dean had.

“I can’t believe Neville’s the first one of us to get a girlfriend,” Seamus said, before sighing dramatically.

Neville’s mind turned off fully at that. This was it. This was the moment his life was going to flash before his eyes because there was no way he was making it out of this alive.

Pansy was going to kill him.

---

Ivy had a vague sense that something was happening over by Pansy and Draco, but it was nothing more than distant noise in the periphery of her notice. No, her attention was fully fixed ahead, where a pair of twinkling eyes were meeting hers. The intrusion was soft and almost imperceptible, but she had caught it and was now pushing it out, doing her best to ease it out without too much force. Let the headmaster think what he will, but if there was a chance she could get away with him thinking it was a mere accident his Legilimens attempt failed, she would take it.

Turning her eyes away as casually as she could muster, her eyes now met the concerned eyes of Blaise sitting across and just a little way down from her. She shook her head that she was fine, and offered a small smile in his direction which seemed to placate him only a little, though he did turn away and reenter whatever conversation was taking place at his part of the table.

She turned once more towards the head table, carefully avoiding the headmaster’s gaze, instead meeting first Professor Snape’s stare, then the equally concerned look of the newly minted Professor Parry, who she was going to have to get out of the habit of simply calling “Barty” all the time.

She tried to be as reassuring as she could be from where she sat, but she would be having a bit of a chat with Professor Snape later this evening if the look on his face was any indication.

---

“Anything you would like to share?”

Ivy winced slightly at the look on Professor Snape’s face. She knew he wasn’t upset at *her*, but she was starting to see why some people were mildly terrified of the man at times.

“Well, the occlumency lessons worked?”

He did not look particularly impressed.

“I mean, I don’t think anything happened, really. And I tried to get out of it without showing I was aware of the intrusion in the first place.”

“Impressive, if done correctly,” Professor Snape replied.

“Thanks.”

The wizard snorted ever so softly before leaning forward slightly in his chair. “Now, at what point did you first notice it?” he asked.

Ivy had to think for a brief moment on that. “It was while the headmaster was talking about the tournament. I think right after he mentioned the fourteen and up age limit.”

“Yes, that was a rather interesting addition that I do not believe any of the staff were made aware of beforehand.”

“Dad’s not going to be happy about that,” she said offhandedly.

“No indeed,” Professor Snape responded. She thought he looked a tad paler than he had a moment before but it could just be the light. The dungeons really didn’t have the *best* lighting in the castle.

“Do you think it’s because Dumbledore wants me to enter?”

“I would venture to suppose that he intends to see you in that tournament one way or another. Tonight’s incident may have been an attempt on his part to gauge your reaction to the announcement. It would certainly work to his benefit if you entered yourself.”

“And when I don’t?”

Professor Snape raised an eyebrow at that, and she was only slightly offended that he seemed to think she had any intention of playing into the scheming headmaster’s plans.

“I’m afraid it is unlikely to matter in the end,” he said carefully after a moment’s consideration.

Ivy shrugged. "I figured as much, but I think Dad has a plan of some kind so it should be fine."

"Do you have any idea what that plan might entail?"

She shrugged again. "This morning he said something about stealing the goblet, but he also said the plan needed a bit more work."

The Professor's eye twitched ever so slightly. "I could have gone my entire life without seeing evidence of his having been a Gryffindor."

Ivy wasn't entirely sure he had meant to say that out loud.

---

*September 2, 1994*

George elbowed Fred, and, when faced with the look of it's-too-early-in-the-morning-for-this-so-explain-now-or-may-Merlin-have-mercy-on-your-soul, nodded in the direction of their head of house, who wore a look on her own face that shouldn't be present on a teacher's face ever. Especially not when directed at them.

It was a look they had perfected themselves.

It was a look that meant a wonderful, glorious prank had just been executed to perfection.

Again, not a look that should be on Professor McGonagall's face, and not a look that should be directed towards them.

There was no room for escape now, however, as she was very rapidly making her way to where they sat.

Fred muttered something under his breath that would have their mother's face as red as her hair, and George made a quick glance around, hoping that no little firsties had overheard. They had a list of acceptable reasons to get detention, but teaching eleven-year-olds curse words was not on the list.

"Good morning, boys," their professor said in a way that did not promise sunshine and biscuits.

Fred, in an apparent effort to distance himself from his previous word choice, called out in an exaggeratedly cheerful manner, "Hello, Professor McGonagall. What a lovely morning it is. Couldn't ask for a better morning to begin the year with, isn't that right, George. What can a pair of your absolute favorite students do for you?"

George could only nod along helplessly. They were neither of them in top form first thing in the morning, generally speaking, but this was such a poor performance that George was sure remedial acting practices would be necessary to ensure they never again reached this level of disaster. It was one thing to act a particular mischievous-yet-completely-innocent way on purpose, but that was an art that was being butchered this morning by his dearest brother, not



that he dared attempt it himself right now since it was highly improbable he could do any better at the moment.

“Well, gentlemen,” McGonagall replied, “I am here to deliver your class schedules for the year, as is generally done the first morning of the year.”

Professor McGonagall was quite literally a cat, but right now George felt very much like the mouse in this situation.

He accepted the schedule with a great deal of trepidation and no small amount of wonder at how Snape ever managed to become the “scary” teacher with McGonagall capable of making a look like *that* appear on her face.

Forget a mouse, he was the bloody canary.

---

Ivy looked at her schedule. Her very first class was with Barty. Er, Professor Parry. Still had to get used to that...

---

“She’s been waiting two and a half years for this moment, I reckon.”

“You think?” George deadpanned. “How’d we make it into those classes anyway?”

Fred shrugged. “Don’t ask me. I got the same letter you did.”

George frowned, and began digging through his bag.

“What is it?” Fred asked.

“I’m looking for the letter. Ah, here it is. Let’s see, E, E, A, D, T, A, O, D. See? By all accounts, I should have only made it into Charms, Care, and Defense.”

“Yes because you are leaving me to face the dungeon bat all by myself. I see how it is, Forge.”

George rolled his eyes. “Well I’m not leaving you anywhere *now*, am I.”

“Except for Arithmancy.”

“Thank Merlin for small mercies,” George mumbled under his breath.

“Hey, at least it’s not as bad as *Runes*,” Fred shot back.

“Agree to disagree, Gred.

“Do you think she actually meant it? The schedule, I mean.”

“Seeing as we’re both on our way to her class right now, I would say yes.”

“I was completely fine with only having three classes now, you know.”

“Me too, Gred, me too.”

---

This was his first class of the day. Of the year. Ever.

Barty was excited.

“Alright everyone, move along. Find a seat, please.”

The group of fourth years traipsed in, many dragging their feet as was to be expected from a bunch of teenagers first thing in the morning on the very first day of school, but quite a few of them looked rather eager. The ones who all knew Barty especially, which made him feel a little proud.

“Right then. Well, let’s jump right into it, shall we? Let’s talk about the Goblin Wars.”

The look of absolute betrayal that crossed Ivy’s face was a thing of beauty that he would cherish forever, and he couldn’t help the guffaw that escaped him. This was going to be brilliant.

---

“Well, gentlemen, I am glad to see you have not forgotten *everything* I have taught you these past few years.”

George cleared his throat. “Right, about that. I thought I, er, failed?”

“Me too,” chimed in Fred.

“Oh?” McGonagall asked, though without any level of surprise. “I see. I suppose there must have been some mix-up or other with the letters. Perhaps you should ask your brother. He works at the Ministry, doesn’t he?”

That blasted look was back on her face and George’s brain froze for a moment as he took in what she had just said.

“*Percy?*” Fred squeaked out a few octaves too high.

Oh, this would not stand.

---

Ivy left history with her eye twitching, still not over the utter betrayal that had been Barty’s first lecture. Sure, they hadn’t *really* talked about the Goblin Wars, but to even *suggest* that after what they had been through already. She ignored the fact that she had only had Binns three years while Barty had endured an entire seven. The thought of Barty’s having willingly subjected himself to *that* N.E.W.T. class was too much to fathom, and it did not in any way make up for the fact that he had scared her like that.

---

September 5, 1994

Sirius was not quite sure what to make of the scene in front of him. On the one hand, Percy Weasley was calmly sipping his tea. On the other hand, there were what appeared to be several thousand pink and yellow feathers dancing on every available surface in the small office, including the young man's head.

"Twins," Percy said by way of explanation. It didn't explain much, but Sirius supposed it explained enough.

"I'm assuming this wasn't because they missed you?"

Percy's grin turned positively feral and Sirius unconsciously took a small step back. Percy looked like Remus did when he alone had concocted a prank that he alone would be able to get away with while the rest of them would end up in detention for an entire week. It had happened enough times for a look to have developed. It was a look to be feared.

"It is entirely possible they received an ever so slightly incorrect summary of their O.W.L. scores. A minor clerical error, I'm sure, but I suppose it must have caught them by surprise when they each managed to end up in six N.E.W.T. level classes. I'm sure they'll cope marvelously well, though. A little extra studying won't hurt them one bit."

"And this is their...revenge?"

"I believe they are spelled to last the entirety of the school year. I thought I'd let them enjoy their victory for a day or so. *I* certainly spent enough time in the library, so these will be gone by Wednesday at the latest."

"Right..."

Percy went back to sipping his tea.

"You know, I just forgot I have a thing... A meeting... Yes, well, have a good day, Percy."

"You too, Lord Black."

Sirius scowled. "I'm *Sirius*, Percy. I..." He scowled again. He had walked right into that one, hadn't he.

He pointedly ignored the small little cackle coming from the closet of a room he was now leaving.

---

"*Harry*, you have to save him."

"What is it that you think he's *done*, exactly?"

"We... I... *Someone* rubbed off on him and now he's going to, I don't know, take over the world or something."

“Someone as in you?” Harry asked sarcastically, but before Sirius could explain that he bore absolutely no responsibility for this situation, Harry was already continuing. “Well, add him to the list. It’s not like he’s the only one capable of it at this point.”

“What *list*?”

“Of people most likely to initiate a world takeover.”

“And just who exactly is on that list?”

“Well, apparently I’m on the list...”

“You don’t count.”

“And Ivy...”

“Ivy will be fine.”

“And Luna...”

“Which one?”

“Both.”

“That’s fair. Anyone else?”

“Minerva.”

Sirius thought about that one for a moment but was forced to concede that yes, she probably could.

“And now Percy. Thomas is probably on there as well, especially if those two joined forces. Blaise might possibly make it there as well at some point, if not already.”

“Excuse you, Blaise is a perfect angel child who will never do anything wrong.”

Harry did not seem to buy it.

“Well, he’d probably just follow Ivy anyway.”

“Well don’t go giving them any ideas,” Harry replied with a small frown.

“I really don’t think they need my help,” Sirius said dryly. “I believe there are already a dozen different plans in various stages of development.”

“Sirius, I love you, but ignorance is bliss, and I’ve been doing so well. Don’t ruin this for me, alright?”

“And when Ivy inevitably takes over the world?”

“How is that in any way inevitable?”

“She’s not going to keep her plans theoretical forever.”

“You don’t *know* that.”

“Besides, she has far too many minions for it to not work out one way or another.”

“There are no minions. I expressly told her *no minions* until after she gradua... Ah yes, I see the problem there.”

“Do you now,” Sirius snarked.

“Hey, wasn’t there something you wanted me to do about Percy?”

“Yes. Fix it.”

“Fix what, exactly?”

“He *cackled* Harry,” Sirius whined.

“That’s not exactly the standard for determining future dictatorship potential.”

“Just deal with this.”

“Why me? Why not you?”

“Because I’m not the one who accidentally took over the world.”

Sirius quite soon found himself running out of Harry’s study. Harry was technically faster than him in their animagus forms, but Sirius had enough of a head start that he might be able to get away...

“You take that back, Sirius!” Harry yelled, indicating that he hadn’t changed forms yet. Perfect. That would give him a few extra minutes to widen the gap...

“And it’s not even the entire world...”

Sirius didn’t even hear the rest of what Harry was shouting, taking the slight time advantage Harry had granted him but shouting and apparating back to his own home.

Sabrina just snorted at his arrival to which he responded with a bark and a wag of his tail.

There. Problem solved. Harry would take care of it and he wouldn’t have to deal with a cackling Weasley ever again. He chose to ignore (for now) the fact that the twins existed. It was better that way.

---

*September 6, 1994*

“Good morning, Percy.”

“Lord Peverell,” Percy said, dipping his head slightly in greeting.

“Harry, please.” Someday he would actually get people to call him that. It was a slow process, but he would get there eventually.

“And what can I do for you today, Lord Peverell?”

Today was not going to be that day, apparently. Also, Harry was at least forty percent sure Percy was doing this just to be a little... Did Percy still count as a child? Percy was eighteen now but Harry wasn't sure at what age he as the more adult adult of the two was allowed to start cursing around the younger wizard. He was certainly not cursing around Ivy until his future grandchildren were in their forties. Well, to be on the safe side...

“Sirius mentioned yesterday that he had talked with you briefly and that he had some... concerns.”

“Oh?”

“About you potentially taking over the world?”

“Oh, of course not. I wouldn't want to step on any toes, after all.”

That... was not what Harry was expecting. He asked what exactly Percy meant by that. Clarification was absolutely needed here.

“Well I'm not about to get in *your* way, obviously, and the best way to delay Ivy's inevitable takeover is to ensure yours goes as smoothly as possible. Get a fully functioning system in place, if you will, so that she can take up management in, oh, I don't know, five or six decades from now? Longer if you're willing to put off retirement.”

“*Decades*... Wait, what makes you say her inevitable takeover? Why does everyone keep saying that?”

Harry did not like the look on Percy's face.

“Well, I suppose it's possible that *you* might be able to prevent it,” Percy said, as if he would need more evidence to fully commit to the idea.

“And how would you suggest I do that?” Harry said wearily.

“I'm sure I can have something worked up by the end of this week.”

“Great. Thanks. I'll just... I'll just see you later then, hmm?”

Harry left, muttering to himself about “inevitability” and “fate” and a few other things that had a few people giving him strange looks as he made his way to the apparition points. Finally he had had enough and spun on the spot, not caring if someone got a little peeved with him for not apparating from the “right” place. He had too many other things to care about right now.

And he had completely forgotten to ask about the situation with the twins.



# Chapter 53

## Chapter Notes

A brief chapter of cracky Hogwarts shenanigans. That's it. That's the chapter.

*September 7, 1994*

Severus stared down the two grinning redheads in front of him. How in Salazar *Bloody Slytherin's* name had they managed to get into this class?

A desire to torment him, probably. Had he not suffered enough?

---

Justin slid into the seat next to Ivy and, as subtly as he could, asked, "So, how is Michael doing in Slytherin?"

If Ivy seemed at all surprised by the question she certainly didn't show it. "Fine, I think. Is Hannah worried about him? Maybe I should talk to her..."

Hannah was certainly worried, though probably not for the reasons Ivy was thinking. Justin chose not to get into all that right now.

"Oh, I'm sure he'll be fine. It's just hard being a first-year, I'm sure."

"We were first-years too," Ivy said, amused.

"Well, yeah, but that was like, forever ago," Justin said most eloquently.

Ivy snorted. "Feels like it sometimes. Were we really that tiny?"

"Are you suggesting you're not still?" a new voice retorted.

Justin looked over to see Draco sliding into the seat on Ivy's other side.

He also saw Draco get a smack on the arm for his troubles.

"You take that back," Ivy protested.

"I just asked a question."

"I'll stick Tiger on you," Ivy threatened.

"Tiger loves me."



“He loves Tracey and Daphne. He tolerates you.”

“Love,” Draco argued, pointing a finger their way.

“Whatever makes you feel better.”

Justin could only watch as Draco and Ivy’s discussion spiraled into a confusing argument detailing the apparent hierarchy that was Tiger the Snake’s love for the members of Slytherin House, past and present.

He was not at all disappointed when Professor McGonagall began the lesson.

---

Justin dragged Ivy by the hand as he hurried towards the Hufflepuff common room.

“Broom closets are that way, you know,” a very unwelcome voice called out when they had almost reached the door.

Justin could feel the tips of his ears getting warm, but he ignored the sensation in favor of scowling at Alex Smedley. Thankfully Ivy either didn’t notice or didn’t care what the fifth year was insinuating. “Oh, piss off, Smedley,” Justin snarked back. “Or come in with us. You’ll want to see this.”

Smedley wrinkled his nose. “I highly doubt that.”

“Just come in,” Justin said, rolling his eyes before giving the password.

“It’s lunchtime. Is there really going to be anyone here?”

“Of course there will be,” Smedley said, answering Ivy before Justin could. “Where else would everyone be?”

“Lunch?” Ivy said, a bit of sarcasm sneaking into her tone.

“Hey, everyone,” Justin said to the room instead of explaining further himself. “You have all got to see this.”

Many pairs of eyes turned their way. The Hufflepuff common room was indeed rather bust during the lunch hour. Justin wasn’t sure what other houses did, but honestly, it was a little too rainy to be outside today, so it’s not like they had any place better to go.

With everyone looking at them expectantly Justin nudged Ivy, who rolled her eyes and transformed suddenly into a honey badger.

Many pairs of eyebrows shot up, including Smedley’s, and a few squeals were heard around the room as several people came rushing forward to get a better look at Ivy’s animagus form.

“I was honestly not expecting that,” Smedley mused.

Justin gave him another scowl in return.

---

“Where *were* you?” Draco hissed when Ivy finally made it to their meeting spot in the library.

“Hufflepuff common room,” Ivy answered immediately. “I’m now their unofficial unofficial mascot.”

“You just said unofficial twice,” Draco pointed out.

“Well, the *official* unofficial mascot is Furball.”

“Who?”

“The pig.”

“Ah. Continue.”

“So I’m the unofficial unofficial mascot.”

“So you, Ivy Potter, the girl who can transform into a literal badger, lost to a *pig*?”

“Well, he was there first.”

“That’s really not how that works.”

“And it’s not like it was a contest.”

“Everything is. Always.”

“You know, that explains so much,” Ivy said fondly, nudging his shoulder.

Draco was just about to make an excellent retort when he caught sight of the two people he was most actively avoiding today.

He stood up abruptly, pulling Ivy along with him.

“What is it with everyone dragging me places today,” Ivy muttered. Draco ignored that.

“Don’t let them see me,” he whispered, still pulling Ivy behind him as he made his way behind a row of shelves.

“Who?” Ivy asked, before glancing around. “Oh, the twins? Why?”

“*Because*, thanks to you the entire school knows I’m a bloody lion, and the moment those two menaces found out they got that look in their eye.”

“Which one?”

“The we-will-exploit-this-knowledge-to-our-full-advantage one. Which you would have *seen* if you had *been there*.”

Ivy just rolled her eyes at him, which he did not appreciate in the face of his suffering.

“I can’t believe you ditched me for a bunch of Hufflepuffs.”

“I ditch you for Hufflepuffs all the time,” Ivy pointed out. “Besides, you like the twins.”

“Liked. Past tense. And also how do you know it wasn’t just my grand master plan to keep my enemies close?”

“Because you can’t hide your facial expressions to save your life.”

“I could too,” Draco protested.

---

“Why are you complaining to me again?” Pansy asked, interrupting his rant.

Draco scowled but didn’t answer.

“Oh, so Ivy already ignored you?”

His scowl grew.

“Poor baby,” Pansy mocked.

“Why are we even friends?” Draco muttered.

“I’m like a beautiful yet deadly fungus. There is no getting rid of me. There will be traces of me left on your corpse but not enough for your death to be tied back to me.”

Draco scrunched up his nose. “So kind of you to presume I will be murdered. Well, Neville *is* mildly obsessed with Herbology.”

Pansy pinched him as she began to walk away from him and his continued trials.

He needed better friends.

---

“You seen Draco anywhere?” George asked Ivy.

Ivy didn’t even look up from her book, just pointed in the direction of the boy they were currently hunting looking for.

George was just about to continue in the direction indicated when he caught a glimpse of the title of Ivy’s book.

“Is that book something dangerous or likely to cause trouble or make Percy prank us again?” he asked. Better to cover all possibilities now.

“This book isn’t dangerous,” Ivy replied simply.

George chose to take that fully at face value, instead of as a likely statement on the safety of the book itself versus its contents.

Duty done, he proceeded to track down their second favorite little Slytherin.

---

Draco had, unfortunately, found himself in this particular situation many times over the past few years. He wasn't quite sure what he had done to deserve this reoccurring nightmare, but here he was, trapped sitting between two identical redheads who wore equally identical smirks.

"So, little lion," George began. And how sad was it that he knew that for certain.

"Seems you have been wearing the wrong color all these years," Fred finished for his brother.

Draco gritted his teeth and replied, "Just because I am capable of transforming myself into a large apex predator does not mean I am in any way a..." Draco could hardly bring himself to say it. "...*Gryffindor*."

"Now, now, there's nothing wrong with being in the wrong house," Fred cooed as if soothing a baby. Draco did *not* appreciate the comparison he was drawing.

"Gred here would have made an excellent Slytherin himself," George continued.

"We both would have," Fred countered.

"Even if he has a slightly better natural talent for making Snape look like he regrets our very existence," George said, not arguing his twin's point.

"It's hurtful, really," Fred said, obviously not all that torn up about it.

Draco huffed. "I am not a Gryffindor, I have never been a Gryffindor, and I will never *be* a Gryffindor. I am a Slytherin through and through. I just so happen to also be able to transform into a majestic and noble creature."

"Whatever you say, little lion."

Draco rolled his eyes at George's new nickname for him, thinking that at least maybe now he wouldn't be called "little dragon" anymore.

Fred's practically feral grin disabused him of that notion, as did his statement of "Don't worry, you're still my little dragon." Both. It was both, really.

---

*§Thiss honey badger sseemss to be a ssuffissiently vissciouss animal.§*

*§It iss,§* Tiger answered proudly on Ivy's behalf.

Ivy transformed back. *§Draco iss a lion,§* she added for Hilda's benefit, seeing as Tiger was already well-acquainted with Draco animagus form.

*§Another impresssive beasst,§* Hilda replied.

---

"Have you seen Ivy anywhere?"

"Last I saw she was headed downstairs. Why?"

Draco was not so desperate to rant that he needed to follow her *there*.

He could wait.

---

"I really don't see why you're making such a fuss."

"They called me a *Gryffindor*, Ivy."

"There are worse things to be."

"You're just waiting for me to say Hufflepuff, aren't you."

"I dare you."

"And I'll continue living, thanks," Draco said, sticking his tongue out. It may be undignified, but he had long since lost all dignity around Ivy, and it wasn't like she expected it from him anyway.

"Didn't you call Fred and George the 'best friends ever?'"

"How dare you suggest I would ever say such a thing?"

"Well, you at least thought it."

Draco eyed her suspiciously. "How did you know that?"

Ivy grinned in triumph. "You just confirmed it for me. Thank you for that."

"But the point still stands that I would never *say* something like that."

"You don't have to. I'm sure they know how much they are loved."

Draco did not enjoy this conversation.

Thankfully Ivy did not appear to feel the need to continue along that particular line of conversation either. She was too busy smiling smugly whilst sitting unaffected by Draco's glare. He needed to go glare at some second years or someone else who would actually be affected by his glares still. The list was steadily dwindling and that was *not* to his liking whatsoever.

Maybe he could transform into a lion and roar in someone's face...

But then the twins would hear about it and...

Unless *they* were the ones he snuck up on...

"Ivy, how do you feel about sneaking into Gryffindor this evening?"

---

"Where are you two going?"

"Gryffindor tower."

Theo looked at them for a moment, contemplating that statement. "Any particular reason why?"

"To terrorize the twins," Draco responded, with far too much glee in his voice.

"Very well then," Theo said, apparently seeing absolutely nothing wrong with that plan.

"Would you mind taking something up to Cali? I forgot to give it to her at dinner."

They both waited, and upon Theo's return, Ivy dutifully took the small package from his hands.

---

"Theo asked me to give this to you," Ivy said, handing the package to Cali.

"Thanks," she replied. "Do you..."

"*Calanthia Nott*, what did you **DO**?"

"Sorry, I've got to go," Cali said, before ducking out of sight.

Draco was far too absorbed with his own attempts at remaining unseen to pay the situation much mind, but Ivy could admit to being mildly curious.

Of course, her curiosity only grew as Dean Thomas ran practically headlong into her.

"Hello, person who doesn't live here," Dean said. "Have you seen Cali anywhere?"

Ivy shook her head.

"Seamus?"

Another shake.

"*Ginny*?" Dean practically pleaded.

"Sorry. No idea." Which was true for the last two, at least. "Why do you need them?"

"They managed to set off a *bomb*."

“Wait, really?”

Dean looked at her skeptically. “It wasn’t a *real* bomb. And you look far too excited about that prospect.”

“It’s like you don’t know her at all,” Ginny said, running past.

“Wait, Ginny...” Then Dean, too, was running.

Gryffindor was such an exciting place.

---

“How much longer do we have to wait here?” Draco whispered from underneath one of the beds.

“Curfew isn’t for another forty minutes. Be patient.”

“I *am* patient,” he snapped.

“*Shush*,” Ivy hissed back. “They’re coming.”

Draco grumbled to himself, but softly, so as to remain unheard by the approaching enemy room’s residents.

They waited for several more minutes for the boys to get in their beds and begin drifting off.

Slowly and silently they crept out from their hiding places, before each transforming into their animal forms.

***RRAAAWWWRRR***

Several heads jolted upwards, and one unfortunate body fell to the floor.

Many exclamations were uttered by boys who had reached a certain stage in their vocabulary that neither teacher nor parent would be likely to approve of. Said exclamations made full use of said vocabulary.

---

Severus looked at the two students he felt the greatest deal of responsibility for with no small amount of suspicion.

“It is three minutes ’til curfew. Dare I ask what you two have been doing?”

He gave them another once-over, taking in their burnt, wet clothes, and their overall disheveled state. At least he was certain they hadn’t been up to the sort of activities he had just caught a Ravenclaw he would be seeing in detention for the foreseeable future and one of his own sixth years engaging in. The devilish grins on Ivy and Draco’s faces were of the wrong sort for *that* particular set of activities, thank Merlin.

“No,” answered Ivy succinctly.

He found himself agreeing with her in every particular.

“Are you positive you haven’t started learning Legilimency?” he heard Draco ask Ivy as they made their way into the common room.

He froze at that.

He really, really, did not want to know.



# Chapter 54

## Chapter Notes

Back to our regularly scheduled (ha) cracky shenanigans\*

\*with plot

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*September 9, 1994*

“Welcome, welcome. Now, before we get started, I of course want to extend another warm welcome to our newest colleagues. I hope these first few days of classes have gone well for the both of you. Now...”

“Yes, about that, Albus,” Minerva said, cutting the headmaster off. “I, for one, would like to know just what possessed you to demonstrate the Unforgivables in front of a class full of *fourth-years*.”

Barty froze at that, just barely, but it was there. Then he saw that her narrowed eyes were not, in fact, directed at him, but towards Moody. The real Moody, whom he was *not* impersonating. The real Moody, who had also demonstrated the Unforgiveables to the fourth years. Say what you will about insane other him, but Merlin he had some bloody brilliant acting skills.

The headmaster opened his mouth, probably to defend the ex-auror’s less than applauded curriculum choices, but Minerva cut him off with a glare.

Barty was liking her more and more by the minute.

“Practical demonstration. Let them know what they’re up against. Can’t fight it if you don’t know it.”

Personally, Barty agreed with Moody’s reasoning, though he was glad *he* wasn’t the one that was going to have to deal with the potential fallout.

“And did it ever cross your mind that these are *children*?” Minerva continued. “They are not fighting anything.”

“Yet,” Moody replied succinctly.

Barty could feel the eye twitch about to appear on Minerva’s face any minute. He had a sharply honed sensor for such things now.

“And what of their own experiences? Or did you forget how many of your students’ lives have been so greatly impacted by those curses?”

“I believe it was rather traumatizing for some of the poor dears,” Pomona added with a small shake of her head.

“Merlin’s bloody beard, I wasn’t demonstrating it *on them*,” Moody grumbled.

Oh. So maybe there was a slight variation to what had transpired.

“And when I do it’s only the Imperius, after all.”

Then again, maybe not.

“No hope of fighting it if you don’t know what it feels like.”

Technically true, though Barty knew from *much* experience how difficult it was to fight off the Imperius at all, ever.

---

Severus didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Internally, of course. His face remained as perfectly impassive as ever.

Yes, Moody had demonstrated the Unforgivables. Yes, it was possible that it had been *slightly* traumatizing for students who had lost parents to one of the curses, but did the discussion really need to go on for this long? Moody’s snort at the implication that some students suffered because their parents had been under the Dark Lord’s Imperius during the war had not helped matters any either.

He was surprised that it was Minerva leading the charge against Moody in the instance, though if the reports of Longbottom’s reaction to the previous day’s lesson were anything to go on, Minerva was feeling a bit protective of her cubs at the moment and only a masochist would fight her now. Though, given Moody’s scars...

Severus shuddered at the thought, banishing them from his subconsciousness forever (hopefully). At least his growing headache gave him something else to focus on.

---

“...that girls and boys are not to be in each others’ dorm rooms for *any reason*.”

“...terrorizing other students with their animagus forms still counts...”

“...everything about that is a no...”

“...I don’t think points were awarded...”

“...impressive skill...”

“...not awarded for stealth...”

“...breaking in...”

“...not a real bomb...”

“...what, precisely, is *confetti*?”

“...get points for well-executed infiltration...”

“...not the bloody *point*, Alastor.”

Severus was now the disgruntled owner of a headache the size of Europe.

A quick glance at a smug, proud-looking Barty did not help matters. He should make Barty be a Head of House for a week and see just how proud he was of students' (read: Ivy's) antics after that.

---

*September 10, 1994*

“Lord Peverell!”

Harry turned to see Percy walking quickly towards him. He made a quick excuse to Lord Deverill, not entirely sorry about leaving their conversation, and turned to the conversation with better prospects.

“Hello, Percy. What can I do for you?”

“I was about to head over to your house, but since you're still here I thought I might as well just give this to you now.”

With that Percy shoved a large folder in front of him.

“Er, thanks,” Harry said, mildly perplexed. “What is this exactly?”

“Just a little packet I put together for you. All the information is listed inside.”

“Well thanks then,” Harry replied, not entirely sure what else to say. “How is the ministry going?”

“Good, good, just fine, yeah. Bromford keeps me busy so there isn't too much time to be bored.”

“And that's a good thing?”

“Oh, very. If I were bored I might do something unwise and I would never live it down if Marchand convinced me to join the Aurors.”

Well, there was plenty to unpack from that sentence, let alone the still mysterious packet.

Percy didn't seem interested in extending their tête-à-tête further, however, so Harry was soon left to his own thoughts and musings on one Percival Ignatius Weasley. Really, they were all probably just lucky that Percy's ambitions lay in the direction of positions such as Minister or Supreme Mugwump rather than tyrannical dictator.

---

Opening Percy's packet upon his arrival home did nothing to dissuade Harry of the notion that should Percy Weasley ever decide taking over the world was a better use of his time, the wizarding world really wouldn't stand a chance.

*Legal Methods and Loopholes for Effectively Completing a Takeover of Magical Britain* was the title he was greeted with on the first page.

---

"The similarities to The Book are eerily... Do you think Percy and Hermione would make a good match here?"

"Which one would run for Minister?" Luna asked in all sincerity.

"That could be problematic," Harry conceded. "Perhaps they could take turns?"

"Hermione might not agree to something like that."

"Percy might though, at least the one here. Not sure older Percy would have."

"He does seem to have turned out a bit different, hasn't he," Luna observed. "He was a bit of a prat before."

Luna was so very Luna even as she said that, that Harry burst out laughing, coughing a few times to regain a normal breathing pattern.

---

*September 14, 1994*

"Welcome, everyone, to the first official meeting of the Hogwarts Fourth-Years Herbology Club."

Their numbers had certainly grown. Neville hadn't minded when it was just the four of them, but last year had turned out to be enjoyable as well as their numbers had started to increase. This was certainly more people than last year, even, but at least he wasn't the only guy now. Not that he minded being around the girls, but, well...

He was happy to see Ernie and Kevin there too.

"Are there any questions before we get started?" Susan asked, finishing up her introduction speech.

A few hands shot in the air.

"Yes, Ernie?"

“Right, well I just had a question for Neville, is all. So, how exactly did you get Parkinson to go out with you?”

Neville glanced around at the others in the room, hoping for someone to provide an excuse for him not to answer that question.

Everyone’s eyes were turned eagerly towards him in ripe anticipation.

The entire House of Hufflepuff was now dead to him.

And yet, despite his best impression of his grandmother, a dozen or so pairs of eyes remained fixed on him.

Neville thought back to the train, to how Pansy had dragged him out of his compartment and then proceeded to inform him that they were now engaging in a fake-dating scheme for the foreseeable future. There was really no way to explain any of that, least of all with maintaining the secrecy Pansy had demanded.

Neville sighed a little sigh. “I’m not sure, to be honest,” he said. “It sort of just happened.”

“That’s so romantic,” Megan said in a quiet exhale.

Girls could be strange sometimes.

---

“Oi, why is Longbottom glaring at us?”

“Oh, Neville disowned all of Hufflepuff today.”

“He *what*?”

“Can you do that?”

“How does that even *work*?”

“What did you lot *do*?”

Everyone turned towards Justin at that last question, who had uttered it with such horror in his voice that everyone at the table felt an immediate need to fix whatever problem had caused such a sound.

Justin continued before anyone could answer, however. “Do you know how many *plans* that will ruin?”

---

Neville gripped his fork a little tighter, scowling slightly at the sight of the Hufflepuffs all whispering amongst themselves. So what if he and Pansy were (fake) dating. Was it really so unbelievable? He wasn’t *that* bad. And why did they all have to keep talking about it, anyway?

“Um, mate, you alright there?”

Neville’s internal rant was cut off by Ron’s question. “What? Oh, yeah. I’m fine.”

“Are you sure? Because, well, you look ready to bite someone’s head off.”

Neville sighed. “I’m just tired of everyone talking about Pansy and me.” Merlin, did that feel weird to say. “It’s not that big of a deal, and what’s all the fuss about, anyway?”

Ron shrugged. “Well, you have to admit it’s a bit strange.”

Neville began to scowl again.

“I mean, I always thought you’d go for Davis or Brocklehurst or something, you know?”

No. Neville did not know. Merlin, this was all so confusing.

---

*September 25, 1994*

Harry put the paper down. “Huh. Not bad,” he said. “You really think this will work then?”

Luna didn’t move her eyes off her very... colorful... project. Harry was going to have to ask what that was after because he honestly had no clue. But Luna did smile, and say, “I know how newspapers work. It will be fine.”

Harry chuckled. “Right, no doubting the amazing writer and editor extraordinaire. Sorry, love.”

“Forgiven.”

“So, er, what is this?”

“Moke research.”

“With, um, paper windmills? What do those do?”

“No idea,” Luna said, “yet.”

“I have no idea what’s going on here, but I’m pretty sure this is why you’re brilliant.”

“You never know what will happen until you try it,” was Luna’s reply.

---

*September 26, 1994*

“I thought we were taking the subtle route for this?” Lucius asked.

“That’s what the first one was for,” Luna replied.

“You do realize there is a tremendous leap from an article outlining various ancient forms of magical protection to a headline reading *LILY POTTER’S ROLE IN THE DEFEAT OF YOU-KNOW-WHO*, right?”

“Yes.”

“Just making sure,” Lucius said, with a sigh.

---

*October 5, 1994*

“Your wife is terrifying and please, I beg of you, never let me get on her bad side.”

“Lucius, are you sure you’re alright?” Harry asked, with a bit of concern. He knew Lucius was somewhat wary of Luna for some unknown reason, but what could have possibly happened to make him say something like *that*?

“Oh, *I* am perfectly fine,” Lucius assured him. “Other people, however, are quite liable to be less than fine at the moment. I do not envy them, and I have no wish to eventually become them.”

“Did...something happen?” Harry ventured.

Lucius looked at him as if he were being particularly dimwitted at the moment. “I can safely assume you read the articles your wife had a hand in publishing, yes?” He continued without waiting for Harry to respond. “Then you undoubtedly have *some* idea of the havoc she has wreaked in the foundational prejudices of our very society?”

Harry quirked an eyebrow at that. “So you admit those are prejudices then? Not simply facts?”

Lucius waved him off. “Yes, yes, we’re all a bunch of bigoted snobs and now I’ve seen the light and been fully converted to your less murderous approach to overcoming the challenges faced by wizarding society. *Please* do try to keep up, *my lord*.”

“Rude.”

“*As* I was saying,” Lucius continued, not acknowledging Harry’s irritation at being thus addressed, “your lovely, brilliant, terrifying wife has managed to confront the very cornerstones of blood purist prejudice and rip them from the structure that is pureblood elitism, without the idiots having been aware she was doing it in the first place.”

“I’m impressed, Lucius,” Harry said with a bit of a smirk. This entire conversation made so much more sense now, and he was enjoying every minute of it. “And how much did all that pain you to say?”

“Your wife is very convincing,” Lucius said, only grinding his teeth a little as he did so.

“Indeed,” Harry said, a full-on grin spreading over his face.

“And she will no doubt accomplish her goal of convincing remaining blood purists to drop their bigoted views in favor of more conciliatory thinking.”

“Oh, that’s not her goal,” Harry explained lightly. “She said she’d help me, of course, but her goal is to convince Dumbledore to leave Ivy alone.”

Lucius sank into a chair, losing whatever pride or adrenaline-filled stamina he had been sporting. “What did I do in a previous life to deserve getting entangled in...*this*?” he said, gesturing vaguely to what could be considered “everything.”

“Well, you did try to kill me.”

“It was a rhetorical question, Peverell.”

“So you don’t want to be part of Luna’s attempt to give Dumbledore a chance?”

“I despise every part of what you just said, but to be clear on how much I shall allow myself to despise it, could you please explain what you mean by *give him a chance*?”

---

“Lucius asked me about your plans for Dumbledore today.”

“I thought he would. He seems to like you better.”

“Only because you terrify him for some reason. Funny how, out of the two of us, you managed to be the scary one in his eyes.”

“I certainly didn’t try to be.”

“Oh, I know. But honestly, I think I love you a bit more for it.”

They both laughed a little at that.

“So, what did you tell him?” Luna asked, settling into bed.

“I said you wanted to give Dumbledore a chance to change.”

“Everyone deserves a chance, don’t you think?”

“I suppose,” Harry answered. “And what if he doesn’t change?”

“Well that’s why it is *a* chance, don’t you think? Not a blank cheque to be allowed to meddle in other peoples’ lives?”

Harry snorted. “Like I’m doing, you mean?” he said with just a touch of bitterness, as he had yet to come to terms with his entire situation even now.

“If you get too caught up in your own hubris I’m sure I can find some way to knock you back down again,” Luna replied as if making a comment about what chores might need doing.



“Sorry to have this conversation over and over.”

“It is a difficult question to find an answer for.”

Harry nodded in agreement. “But for now, at least, I’m doing well enough?”

Luna nodded in turn. “I would say so, yes.”

“And with Dumbledore? If he doesn’t leave Ivy alone?”

“You don’t have to face him if you don’t want to, you know.”

“I can’t just leave Ivy…” Harry caught on quickly enough. “Oh, you mean you. You would confront him?”

“Everyone deserves a chance, so long as they are not permitted to hurt others in the meantime, but those accustomed to power may not be so willingly accustomed to change. Albus Dumbledore has chosen to believe a particular path of fate is certain, forgetting that Fate is the forest, not a single path through the woods. Perhaps he can be made to see that multiple paths can achieve the same outcome, but it is equally as likely, if not more so, that he will not be willing to give up what he has, in his mind, decided to be the only possible course to take. You lived through and suffered the consequences of his unwillingness to do more than try to manipulate what he believed to be Fate to achieve his desired results once already, and you saved Ivy from suffering more of the same.”

“Well just write me a love poem, won’t you?” Harry said, soppy grin firmly affixed. “And so now you’re going to be my knight in shining armor?”

“I’ve never worn armor before.”

“We can change that.”

---

*October 6, 1994*

“You sure you don’t want to come, love?” Lord Peverell asked.

Lady Peverell shook her head. “You can tell me about it later. I promised Buckbeak I’d take him exploring today.”

Lucius just knew that if the rest of Wizarding Britain could see these two, right here, right now, they would feel exactly as he did. Seeing Lord Peverell casually ask his wife if she wanted to join him in striking terror into the hearts of nearly every former Death Eater and acknowledged Dark Lord supporter left outside of Azkaban as if that were a normal post-Wizengamot session activity, or seeing Lady Peverell reply with equal casualness while dressed head to toe in dragonhide armor that she had communicated with a hippogriff to such an extent that they had an arrangement to go *exploring* together, as if, as if...

---

Harry did not know what Lucius's problem was, but the low mumbling coming from the other man's mouth contained every English curse word Harry knew. Mildly impressive, but whatever was going on it couldn't be *that* bad if Lucius hadn't delved into any foreign languages yet.

---

"By a show of hands, who here believes that those of a particular blood status are inherently superior to others not possessing the same? Honesty, if you please."

Some were obviously wary about answering, not that Harry could blame them, but seeing his lack of reaction to the first few hands that went up, others in the room relaxed and raised their hands as well. There were a good number of hands raised, but not nearly as many as Harry had been expecting.

"Thank you. Now, who here feels that blood status determines magical power?"

Some hands went down, others went up, and Harry hummed to himself.

He was under no delusions that anything he might say or do here would fundamentally change anyone's mind. The likelihood of that was extremely small, and he would be far more surprised if it *did* than if it didn't. Voldemort's hold wasn't magically (ha) gone just because Harry was here, and bigoted views weren't going to go away overnight. Voldemort may have exploited prejudices, but he hardly created them.

To be fair, many had changed their views, or at least made an effort to do so. Still, people were hardly going to change their minds and deeply seated prejudices just because Harry, no matter how powerful, told them to. Some of them might respect him, fear him even, but he had learned long ago that fear did little to truly change someone's mind, regardless of how it might affect their course of action.

That being said, he was also firmly aware that many sought to use his perceived power for their own gain, or simply because he was viewed as the strongest wizard currently available to follow. He didn't love it, but he wasn't surprised by it either.

"Alright then. Let's talk about fundamental principles of civility and human decency."

## Chapter End Notes

Definitions of what constitutes plot may vary.

# Chapter 55

## Chapter Notes

ThE gObLeT oF flrE time!!! I've been eagerly anticipating reaching this portion of the story since I started. Eek! So excited. Anyway, hope you enjoy. The bit of dialogue that seems recognizable is from the book. Credit where credit is due (like the existence of this entire world to play with in the first place). Thanks for everyone who reads, leaves kudos, and comments. I read every comment and it's the best. Seriously guys, thanks. Sorry I don't respond to all of them, but anxiety and an honest lack of idea of how to do that most of the time. I try to answer most questions, though I'm sure I miss quite a few still. Anyway, that's it. Thanks for reading.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### ***November 1, 1994***

*“Why is it when something happens, it is always you three?”*

*Lucius raised a singular eyebrow ever so slightly, Sirius leaned back in his chair looking somewhat pleased with himself, and Harry just sat there in relative indifference. It wasn't like any of this truly mattered.*

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### ***October 30, 1994***

“Why am I here again?”

“Stealing the Goblet of Fire. Honestly, Sabrina, I know you married Black, but you're not that much of an idiot.”

Sabrina sent a silent stinging hex Barty's way which only made him yelp once before he was shushed by Harry.

“You didn't want Sirius going,” Harry whispered. “Isn't that why you're here?”

“Breaking into Hogwarts myself was not quite what I had in mind when I suggested Sirius *not* steal an ancient artifact.”

“We're not breaking in,” Harry argued.

“What do you call this then?” Barty said with a snigger.

“Just taking a stroll...”

“Through the wards...”

“The wards love me.”

“No they don’t, you just ignore them, Harry. There’s a difference.”

“Boys,” Sabrina hissed. “Focus.”

“I *am* focusing,” Barty hissed back.

“*Shush.*” Sabrina shot Harry a glare and Barty just rolled his eyes.

They did, however, continue on in silence for several minutes before Harry let out a not-so-silent string of curses.

“I don’t suppose you forgot a dinner appointment or something,” Sabrina offered.

“Hilda.”

“What?”

“The basilisk.”

Sabrina stared at him with all the incredulousness it was possible to display on a single face. It was a lot. “What about a basilisk?”

“I, er, sort of forgot she’s there,” Harry said, somewhat sheepishly.

“You *forgot* about a *basilisk*?”

“In my defense, it was dead the last time I went down there.”

“Down where?”

“Er, the Chamber of Secrets?”

“You didn’t mention we were going through the bloody *Chamber of Secrets*.”

“Well, I didn’t want to run into any students.”

“And that was the *only* way in otherwise?”

“We could have used the floo in my office,” Barty said, shrugging when the other two turned their stares on him.

“Why didn’t you say that before?” Sabrina demanded.

“Well that wouldn’t be much of a heist, now, would it? Besides, it’s so much fun watching Harry tear through wards like they don’t exist. Much more exciting than seeing him stumbling out of a floo.”

Oh yes, Harry's eye was definitely twitching at that. "Barty, why are you even here?"

"Fate was going to involve me somehow. This way I get a say in it."

"That's not how Fate works," Harry said with a sigh, doing his utmost to prevent another twitch.

"You don't know that," Barty countered. "You're the Master of Death, not the Master of Fate."

"Just her favorite chew toy," Harry muttered under his breath. "Fine, look, I'll just go introduce myself, alright? I'm sure it'll be fine."

"You go do that," Sabrina said, staring at him as if he was insane, which he was not, thank you very much. Or at least not anymore. A few years ago was a bit more debatable but honestly, he was doing fine.

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"...And when we gather to greet the other schools we should of course show up together. It might be best if we appear to come from somewhere other than the Great Hall or the library, don't you think?"

"Doesn't that mean we have to time it so people see us together?"

Pansy smiled fondly. "I'm so glad you're catching on."

Neville huffed but grinned just the same. He had learned *many* things over the past two months, and over the past few weeks had even come to terms with this whole "dating" thing, deceptive acting notwithstanding. For one, he was becoming very good at understanding Pansy's plots.

"And of course, we need to make sure Draco and Ivy are by each other."

Most of her plots. "Wait, why?"

"Because we need them to spend as much time together as possible."

"They're already together for the majority of the day. *Every* day, in fact. Why do they need to spend more time together?"

Pansy made some kind of face that Neville didn't even try to decipher, and said, "Because they obviously need *more* time to recognize that they're perfect for each other."

"Draco and Ivy like each other? I mean, as in..."

"Yes, yes, I know what you mean. And of course they do. Or they will, at any rate."

Neville frowned. "Are you sure?"

"They would be *perfect* for each other," Pansy insisted, crossing her arms.

Well, Neville thought, she might make it happen out of sheer will alone. “So your plan is to play matchmaker for them?”

“Well *someone* has to.”

Neville was not convinced, and the feeling must have shown on his face because Pansy dropped her arms and rolled her eyes.

“Look,” she said, “I have known Draco since before he could control his own bowel movements. It is my Magic-given right to meddle with his life and play matchmaker.”

“Thanks for that image,” Neville said entirely insincerely. “Do you think it will work though?”

“Of course it will, why wouldn’t it? Draco and Ivy are absolutely perfect for each other,” she reiterated for what had to be at least the third time. “Why, I’m sure they’re half in love already.”

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“What do you think the other schools will be like?”

“I hope they’re not *too* amazing or I might just take up Dad’s offer to transfer.”

“You *wouldn’t*,” Draco said with a gasp. “How could you do that to me?”

Ivy rolled her eyes. “I’m not *really* going to,” she placated, “but if the other schools are fantastic I might be just a little bit tempted.”

“Well I, for one, am sure they are completely dreadful.”

“Oh, so is that why you wanted to go to Durmstrang when you were little?” Ivy teased.

“Shut up,” Draco said, the blood rushing to his face chasing away any and all eloquence he possessed, which, in his humble opinion, was a lot.

“But what do you think they will be like, really?”

Draco didn’t shrug, being determined to maintain whatever shreds of dignity he still possessed around Ivy Potter, but it was a near thing.

“Well Adélie said she will be coming, and she mentioned a few of her friends will be coming as well. I’m sure it will be lovely to meet all of them.”

“Lovely for *you*,” Draco grumbled. “It’s not like they’ll pay me any attention.”

“What are you talking about?”

“No seventh-year witch is going to want to talk to me. Look at me! I’m younger than them and *lanky*.”

“You’re still beautiful,” Ivy said rolling her eyes, “and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.”

“First of all, I’m offended you would believe for one second I would do such a thing, and second of all, that’s not the *point*. You’re going to have your choice of visiting wizards and no one is even going to look at *me*.”

“Why would I need to choose a wizard?”

“No, I meant... As in a wizard for you... Someone you might like...”

“Oh,” Ivy said, her voice filled with understanding, “you mean like to date.”

“You have realized men exist, right?”

“Of course. But what does that have to do with anything? It’s not like there’s that many here after all.”

“What about *me*?”

“Do you really count though?”

“Rude. Why are we friends?”

“Because you love me,” Ivy replied succinctly.

“Merlin help me, but I do,” Draco sighed. “So what are the chances you’ll start dating any time soon?”

“I’m fairly certain it doesn’t work like that,” Ivy laughed. “Doesn’t someone, you know, have to ask me?”

“You could always ask them,” Draco replied. “It’s not like anyone in this school would say no to you, and if they did it just means they are an idiot, which obviously means they are not worth your time.”

“*Obviously*,” Ivy parroted, still laughing. “Why do you care anyway?”

“*My* dating life is nonexistent and its prospects bleak,” Draco responded dramatically, “thus I must live vicariously through you.”

Ivy snorted. “Good luck with that.”

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“They’re not standing by each other,” Pansy hissed. “*Why are they not standing by each other?*”

Neville shrugged.

Hermione looked at her with unconcealed curiosity.

Ron looked on in confusion.

And then...

“Look, they’re here!” a Gryffindor shouted. Dean. It was Dean.

Pansy had spent far too much time around the entire Gryffindor House if she knew all their given names, let alone referred to them by such. Sweet Morgana but something had gone wrong in her life to have put her in this position. *Mille* was never this loud and rambunctious, and neither were Daphne or Tracey, except for sometimes, but only because they had a really good reason, or... Oh. She was starting to see the issue.

Somehow Ivy had roped her into becoming friends with all these red-wearing fools.

Ivy, who was *not* standing by Draco.

Ivy, who was standing on her tiptoes in an attempt to give herself an extra inch that would only allow her to see over possibly four or five students if that.

Ivy, who was climbing up on one of the twins’ backs to get a better look...

Merlin, how had Ivy not been sorted into Gryffindor, Parseltongue aside. She certainly fit right in, and no matter how much Pansy loved Ivy like a sister slash future overlord she could have lived happily without her own involuntary assimilation into the group of Gryffindors. Really, it...

“It’s *Viktor Krum*,” Ron half-shouted, half-whispered in a tone of greatest awe and reverence.

Pansy exchanged a brief glance first with Neville and then with Hermione, confident that they were groaning internally as much as she was.

Merlin, this was going to be a long year.

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“*Bienvenue en Ecosse.*”

Ivy’s welcome was met with a fluttering of capes and rapid French as half a dozen or so French witches all gathered around her, complimenting her on her French (as if three words were enough to tell anything) and telling her how excited they were to meet her and how adorable she was and how Adélie had told them all so much about her and how much they were looking forward to seeing her school and meeting all of her little friends...

Draco hated this with an immense, burning passion.

He had had the pleasure of meeting Ivy’s future sister-in-law (her words, not his) at the World Cup, but it looked like he was now going to have the misfortune of meeting all of her friends now as well. All her friends who were going to look at him and see nothing but a little boy tagging along after the oh-so-adorable Ivy Potter.



Draco caught sight of one of the witches shivering a bit, and, noticing for the first time the apparent thinness of their cloaks, cast a quick warming charm on the lot of them.

This had the unfortunate consequence of having the attention of each of them turned towards him.

He preened slightly at being called such a gentleman, but he could have done without the other adjectives. He was not *cute* or *sweet* or any other such nonsense. He was a *wizard*, and so what if he was still growing? He knew he was going to be tall, and as for looks, he had that genesis thing (or whatever Granger had called it) on his side. He was going to be a tall, powerful, skilled wizard.

He was not *cute*.

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“...And a very warm welcome to our guests who will be joining us for the remainder of this year. The selection process for the tournament will begin tomorrow, and will be limited to students who are of age.”

This statement was met with murmurings and complaints (some more vocal than others) from all across the room, but Dumbledore raised a hand and got the students to quiet down once more.

“As I was saying, entry will be limited to students who are of age, so I advise each of you to think carefully before entering,” he said, peering over his glasses at the students. “Now, we would have liked to have presented the Goblet this evening, but an unfortunate incident occurred earlier today which resulted in a spontaneous combustion of the Goblet, making it necessary to procure a replacement. Have no fear, however, for a replacement will be here by morning and the selection process will begin after breakfast right here in the Great Hall.”

Ivy was torn between groaning and laughing. Seems *someone* had done something after all. It just... Hadn't quite worked. A *replacement* Goblet? Wasn't that supposed to be some kind of ancient artifact or something? How could you just replace something like that?

Not that it mattered, seeing as she was one step closer to possibly competing in a deadly tournament. At least if she did she'd probably be able to meet a dragon...

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It was only two months into the school year and already Severus was mentally counting the days until it was over.

This bloody tournament...

At least *someone* had managed to get the age limit back up. Not that it was likely to actually, you know, prevent disaster from occurring, but at least it limited the number of students he needed to keep from potentially dying. Like last year. Or the year before that.

Sure, the students may not have been in much *real* danger, but they could have been.

*Salazar's bloody snake in the basement, but this year was almost a holiday in comparison if he only had to worry about the of age students and Ivy Potter*, he thought bitterly to himself.

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Pansy rubbed her forehead a bit, trying to keep track of everyone's voices amidst the growing rabble of mildly peeved fourth-years.

"Why are the schools only sitting at the Ravenclaw and Slytherin tables?" Ron.

"Yeah, why not Gryffindor?" Seamus.

"Do you really need to ask that?" Daphne.

"We're trying to give them a *good* impression, not scare them all off." Tracey.

"Oh sod off." Seamus again. Merlin, she didn't even need to *look* to know who was who.

"Well, it might give us an edge for the tournament." Dean.

"But what about Hufflepuff?" Megan.

"You mean the veritable barnyard?" Daphne again.

"The what?" Terry.

"You have so many animals there." Lisa.

"It's not that bad." Kevin.

"You have *literal* farm animals in your house and you're telling me it's not that bad?" Lisa again. Those two needed to go out or something. Merlin, the tension there.

"Just miniature ones." Wayne, jumping in with the defense.

"Oh like that's so much better." Michael, joining the opposing side. A love triangle in the making? Pansy needed *some* form of entertainment since Ivy and Draco were *not* getting with the program.

She ignored the fact that it had been all of six hours since this particular plan went into motion. Time was irrelevant in matters of the heart.

"*Enough*. Look, just because they sat at certain tables for the feast doesn't mean they will always sit there, or that you can't move as well. *We* move all the time, so why should this be any different? And it's not like they're living in our dorms anyway." Blaise. A lovely voice of reason in this sea of cacophony.

"Just visiting our common rooms." Theo, who was apparently courting war, the berk.

"Spending time with the best houses." Blaise, adding fuel to the fire and abandoning whatever trust Pansy had placed in him but a moment ago.

“Oh *shut up*, would you?”

Everyone blinked at the unexpected outburst, Pansy included. Unexpected due more to its source than its content. If this had gone on much longer she would have probably said it herself. But no, instead they had Fay to thank for this. Well, Pansy supposed, the girl *was* a Gryffindor. It was bound to come out eventually.

“So are we not going to talk about the whole missing Goblet of Fire thing then?”

Lavender was a pleasure to converse with in ordinary situations, but Pansy was *not* in the mood for what was sure to be another rousing round of “discussion” as everyone offered their opinions and speculations, and she felt herself becoming a little irritated that the girl had to go and bring it up.

“Well, what about the fact that *Viktor Krum* is here!”

Oh... Oh, that was way worse. And from *Padma* of all people.

That’s it.

Pansy was out.

Neville too, because she needed *someone* to commiserate with.

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*October 31, 1994*

“It didn’t work. *Why didn’t it work?*”

Ragnok seemed rather amused by Harry’s vexation, which of course only served to exacerbate it further.

“The bloody thing was in *ashes*, and somehow they managed to procure another one? Where did they even *get* another one? Is someone growing ancient artifacts on trees now?”

“Don’t be ridiculous, wizard,” Ragnok said gruffly but with amusement. “Metal is forged, not *grown*.”

Harry huffed petulantly, and only partly because of the (rather explicitly) implied insult. He, in contrast to his companion, was not the least bit amused by the situation, and he couldn’t even think of anything else to do on such short notice beyond instructing Severus and Barty to keep an eye on the replacement Goblet in an effort to prevent its confounding.

“Besides,” Ragnok continued, ignoring or disregarding Harry’s inner turmoil, “it’s not like this is the first Goblet of Fire in need of replacing.”

“What?”

“It’s a cup that spouts out magical fire. What did you think was going to happen to it? Of *course* it burns eventually. Now, if it were a *Goblin-made* vessel, it might have lasted, but

wizards so rarely know how to properly work these sorts of things.”

Harry wasn’t even the least bit offended on behalf of the general wizarding population. “So the Goblet has burned before?”

Ragnok snorted in a way Harry wasn’t sure he could imitate. “Once a century or so when it was in frequent use. Surprised it lasted this long even in storage.”

“And the likelihood of postponing or cancelling the tournament altogether?”

“There are other avenues to achieve your ends,” Ragnok replied with a grin.

“I’m not taking over everything,” Harry replied shortly.

“It was worth a try,” Ragnok said before hopping down from his chair. “Now, on to other matters. What is it going to take to convince your wife to take up the Ravenclaw Lordship?”

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“It’s not going to work,” Granger said, grinning at the twins’ antics.

Draco snorted softly to himself but watched as Fred and George swallowed the potion anyway. Of course it wasn’t going to work, but it was entertaining nonetheless.

He particularly admired the beards.

He watched with somewhat lessened interest as other students continued to put their names in. Only four Slytherins had even bothered to put their names in, so the chances of a Slytherin name coming out that evening were not looking particularly great. He wanted to be annoyed by that fact, but there was also something to be said for self-preservation instincts and a desire to actually pass their NEWTs instead of spending the entire year focused on a tournament that would only land them a thousand galleons. Eternal fame? Ha. No one had even known what the tournament was before this year, much less who had won it before its disbandment.

After several minutes of students placing their names in the cup, Viktor Krum approached and did the same, eliciting a far stronger round of applause than any previous student had.

Draco may or may not have deigned to clap this time as well. It was *Viktor Krum*. What else was he supposed to do?

“I don’t see what the big deal is,” Granger huffed from a few spots over, catching Draco’s attention. “Just because he can do that wonky-faint thing.”

He took personal offense to that statement.

“Granger, it is a *Wronski Feint*. It is difficult, it is impressive, and Krum is a master at it.”

“Honestly, Draco, no one cares,” Pansy cut in.

“How can you *say* that? I am betrayed on all sides.”

At least a few others had the good sense to agree with him.

His indignation was interrupted by a consoling pat on his arm, courtesy of Ivy.

“It’s fine, Draco,” she said, “I’ll teach you how to do one later.”

“Thank you! At least someone here is reasona...” Ivy’s words caught up to his brain. “I’m sorry, did you say *teach me*? You can *do one*?”

Ivy laughed but began wandering over to where some of the Hufflepuffs were gathered.

“Ivy...”

Oh no. She was *not* getting out of this conversation.

With that resolution in mind, Draco stalked after her, grabbing her hand and dragging her out of the Great Hall.

“We need to talk *right now*,” he grumbled.

Ivy just laughed, not resisting his hold in the least bit which was good for him, because if she really didn’t want to go he would probably end up in the hospital wing. She knew that, he knew that, but Quidditch held a higher priority.

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“When did those two start dating?” Terry asked.

“Did they?” Padma asked with a puzzled frown.

“Well it sort of looks like it,” Sue offered. “We all know Malfoy doesn’t care for Zacharias.”

“Yes, but isn’t that because *Ivy* doesn’t care for Zach?” Mandy asked.

“Zach and Ivy haven’t been at each other nearly as much this year,” Anthony noted.

“Yes, but...” Padma hesitated. “I really don’t think Ivy and Draco are *dating*.”

“It certainly looked like they’re headed to a broom closet to me,” Terry responded with a grin.

He got a roll of the eyes and two swats to the arm for his troubles, which only made him and the other boys laugh.

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“I can’t believe they’re *dating*,” Ernie said. “I mean, we all know it was inevitable, really, but I thought for sure it would take longer.”

“Michael will be devastated,” Susan said with a snort.

“He’ll live,” Hannah grumbled. “He probably won’t even need to adjust his plans any either. He’ll just go to one of his contingencies.”

“Your brother is really invested in this,” Wayne said with a bit of concern. “Is this, you know, healthy?”

“Probably not,” Hannah admitted.

“Wait, hold on,” Justin interjected. “What do mean ‘it was inevitable?’”

“Well Draco is pretty much best friends with Ivy and Pansy, right? Except Pansy is dating Neville now, so that leaves Ivy, and they’ve been inseparable since first year. So, inevitable, right?”

“No, no, not right,” Justin said with a bit of conviction. “Their dating is *not* inevitable. And I for one am not convinced they *are* dating.”

Most of the other Hufflepuffs just shrugged, obviously not nearly as invested in this as he was.

But Justin knew. Or, well, he *hoped*, at least.

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“Just look at them all, drooling over him like a bunch of fangirls,” Hermione said, rant not even close to being over.

“Er, what’s that mean?” Ron asked.

“It means they are obsessed with him and are really big fans of his,” Dean explained.

“But, I’m a boy,” Ron replied, slightly confused by the strange terms Hermione was using.

Hermione’s eye twitched.

Ron wasn’t sure what her problem was with Krum. Couldn’t she see how brilliant he was?

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“So,” Barty began conversationally, “how are you holding up?”

Ivy shrugged. “Fine, I guess. I mean, we won’t *really* know until tonight.”

“I suppose not. What do you think will happen?”

“Honestly? I think I’d better start working on my swim strokes.”

Barty snorted. “Not the dragon research?”

Ivy gave him a look. “*That* I’ve been doing since I was nine, thank you very much.”

Barty raised his hands in surrender. “Right, right. Still, though...”

“I think it will be fine,” Ivy said. “I knew it was a possibility, and all of you helped out as best you can, but short of preventing the entire tournament I think there wasn’t anything more that could have been done.”

“I think your dad is probably thinking up ways he can get the tournament cancelled in the next four hours or so.”

“Probably,” Ivy agreed with a laugh. “But it will be fine, really.”

“I guess we’ll find out, won’t we,” Barty said, grinning back at Ivy.

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Despite her gut feeling that everything would be fine in the end, Ivy still felt her stomach clench in nervousness. She hadn’t *wanted* anyone to take too drastic of measures to prevent her entry into the tournament, though she suspected a certain relation of hers had been involved in the “accident” befalling the first Goblet. And the reason for Henry’s entry into the tournament was no longer a factor, so it was possible she had absolutely nothing to worry about. Still, as her Dad had pointed out several times, the lines of Fate connecting his life and hers were eerily similar even when original causes were no longer an option.

In short, there *shouldn’t* be reason to suspect her name would come out tonight, but for whatever reason, she was fairly certain it *would*.

She was in no way the only one to feel so, as evidenced by the efforts made on her behalf.

She felt grateful for the concerned looks Barty and Professor Snape shot her during the feast, and she did her best to give them reassuring looks in return, but she felt she would not truly be able to relax until this night was over, regardless of the result.

Not knowing was somehow far worse than simply being able to prepare for an unfortunate situation.

“*Viktor Krum...*”

Cheers all around. He would be a good champion, she thought. Skilled on the broom, to be sure, but equally skilled with his wand if what she had heard was to be believed.

“*Fleur Delacour...*”

She thought she might really like Fleur. Adélie had talked about her friend a bit, and Henry had mentioned her as well. She would have to pry a little bit and find out what exactly was the connection between Fleur and her Dad in his previous world.

“*Cedric Diggory...*”

A fine choice. Convenient too, that he was not in his final year. He would be able to focus on the tournament without worrying about intensive exams at the end of the year. She liked Cedric and hoped he did as well as he had in Henry’s world. Aside from the dying part, of course, but Henry had promised...

“...congratulate our champions and...”

A pause.

Her stomach clenched even further which she hadn't thought possible.

The pause seemed to last an eternity.

*“Ivy Potter...”*

It took her a moment to regain her composure, but once she did she held her head up high, making sure to give off an air of confusion and alarm. It was perhaps easier than it should have been.

At the headmaster's direction she stood up and walked towards the door the other champions had disappeared through.

It was fine. She was fine. Everything was fine.

She could do this.

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As Ivy made her way to the door, Neville looked around at the room trying to figure out what was going on. Most everyone seemed confused, many seemed upset, and a few appeared... well, concerned didn't quite cover it. Still, as the headmaster instructed everyone to retake their seats and settle down, Neville thought of one person who could sort this out.

Bringing one particularly happy memory to mind, he whispered to the silvery bear and watched as it took off through the window. Most everyone seemed preoccupied with the other events taking place, but he did catch Professor McGonagall's eye and saw her give him a slight nod.

He couldn't quite help but sit a little taller now as he waited for news of Ivy.

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Despite whatever harebrained scheme Barty had gone through with regarding the Goblet, Severus had known something was going to happen tonight. He had felt it and had long since learned to give credence to those sorts of feelings. Seeing his student make her way into the gathering room for the champions, he followed closely behind so as to give what support he could, giving Barty a significant glance on his way out of the Great Hall.

Something was clearly afoot, and Severus couldn't help but speculate as to why Ivy's name had come out of the Goblet as it had for her adoptive father in his own experience. The Dark Lord was no more, Alastor Moody was the real one here in their version of events (Severus has checked multiple times to be sure), and Barty Crouch Jr. was Barty Parry, Professor of History at Hogwarts and loyal follower of Lord Peverell-Slytherin, who was most certainly *not* the party responsible for his younger self... daughter... It was all a bit much to think too closely on at times.



The point was, no one from Peverell's history could be held as reasonable suspects this go around, and in Severus's mind, that really only left one option.

Albus Dumbledore.

Oh, Severus knew exactly why the headmaster would have done it, despite being one of the proponents of the age line.

In fact, that might just serve his purpose more nicely if he could get some space between Ivy and the rest of the students by making it seem like she cheated her way in.

Severus recollected Peverell saying something of that sort had happened to him.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on whose plans you were supporting, Severus did not think that would be likely here. Or at least not among Ivy's own year, the majority of whom he thought would show themselves to be quite loyal to her. A few of the older students, perhaps, might cause a fuss, although among the sixth-years there was some kind of overly-protective hovering over Ivy that he had thought would have left with Harrington and Weasley and the rest of that lot. The younger students looked up to Potter, for the most part, so he didn't foresee any issues there.

Whether or not the headmaster was aware of this was the real question though.

Dumbledore was an incredibly powerful wizard and only a fool would write him off as incompetent, but in recent years he did seem to have a bit of a problem allowing for changes to what he viewed as fact. His repeated denial of the Dark Lord's end came to Severus's mind.

So it was entirely possible that Dumbledore sincerely thought he could get some of Ivy's friends to distance themselves from her, opening up the way to push his own agenda on the girl in the guise of caring help.

Severus hoped, for the sake of everyone here, that Dumbledore was not that delusional, but then again, Dark Lord, no Dark Lord, repeated denial of fact.

Severus had never been an overly optimistic person, and he wasn't about to start giving into such foolishness now.

Could the headmaster have other motives?

Apart from the obvious, which was the testing of Ivy's magical prowess (as if her report cards were not enough. Honestly...), there was the matter of the purported return of the Dark Lord. Could Dumbledore really be so deeply entrenched in his delusions that he believed he could somehow draw out the Dark Lord or force his return?

Sadly, for Severus's sanity and overall well-being, the answer was yes. It was entirely possible.

"Did you put your name into the Goblet of Fire, Ivy?"

Dumbledore's question drew Severus out of his musings.

"No," Ivy answered calmly.

"Did you ask an older student to put it into the Goblet of Fire for you?"

"No," Ivy replied again, calmness never wavering.

She maintained eye contact with Dumbledore for a moment, and Severus could just barely catch a moment of annoyance on the man's face. Well, at least her shields were holding up then by the looks of it.

Severus tuned out the following squabbling in favor of locking eyes with Ivy. He silently asked if she was alright, and she responded in the affirmative by the same nonverbal signs.

"...all got to compete. Binding magical contract, like Dumbledore said. Convenient, eh?"

Severus was once again drawn from his thoughts, this time by Moody who had come limping in, making a ruckus with that leg of his. Severus got the distinct impression that the former Auror was doing it quite on purpose.

"Convenient?" said Karkaroff. "I'm afraid I don't understand you, Moody."

"Don't you? It's very simple, Karkaroff. Someone put Potter's name in that goblet knowing she'd have to compete if it came out."

Severus paid very close attention to the conversation now, knowing that Peverell would want to review this memory as soon as possible. He also made note of the way Moody's eye narrowed slightly as the wizard looked at Dumbledore, and the way Dumbledore's face showed one more, yet equally brief, moment of annoyance.

It seems he was not alone in his conclusions of tonight's culprit.

---

Barty sat nervously in the Great Hall, doing his best to not show his current state. He had no *reason* to be in the Champion's room, and even being a known friend of Lord Peverell-Slytherin, well... At least Severus was in there with Ivy. Still, he couldn't help but feel that he ought to be doing *something*...

BOOM!

The loud thunder-like clap visibly shook the windows, startling everyone (himself included) from their whisperings and mutterings.

Only a brief moment later the main doors to the Great Hall flew open, revealing an exceptionally irate Master of Death, for that was the only way to describe what Harry looked like right at that moment. Barty wasn't sure what everyone else saw when they looked at him, but he for one saw a wizard that might just send Death shuffling back for daring to oppose him. It was not an image he would be forgetting. Ever.

Ignoring the startled exclamations and general tension in the air, Lord Henry Peverell-Slytherin walked forward, calm pace belying the powerful magic that practically oozed out of him.

Approaching the head table Barty watched as Harry made a slight bow to McGonagall.

“Excuse me, Deputy Headmistress,” he began formally, “if you would be so kind as to tell me where my daughter is?” His tone matched his previous pace in its calmness. If it weren’t for the palpable feeling of Harry’s magic, Barty might almost be convinced that the man was here for some light conversation.

Circumstances being what they were, however...

“Right this way, Lord Peverell-Slytherin,” McGonagall replied, voice loud enough to carry throughout the room.

Harry quirked an eyebrow but made no response to the response, though Barty knew she had done it on purpose, for sure enough students began whispering and gaping and overall not being subtle in their least at their interest in the scene before them. Barty couldn’t exactly blame them either.

Before exiting the Great Hall, Harry turned towards the Gryffindor table and nodded towards Neville, saying, “Thank you, Mr. Longbottom, for your timely correspondence.”

Neville visibly blushed, even from that distance, and gave a short nod in return.

Clever boy.

---

The various non-students in the room were just discussing (loudly and with great emotion) why someone would want Ivy *dead* when they all heard a loud boom and felt the castle shake. Severus desperately hoped that meant what he thought it meant, and a quick glance at Ivy showed her relaxing ever so slightly giving his theory greater weight.

Sure enough, a moment or two later Minerva came into the room following closely by Lord Peverell-Slytherin, who looked every inch the powerful Lord everyone knew he was and the destroyer of the Dark Lord that most were ignorant he was.

“Good evening,” Harry said politely, before going around the room and addressing everyone by name, even (or perhaps especially) those he would not have been expected to know.

That tactic was deliberate, Severus thought. Harry knew what was going on.

“What a timely arrival,” Dumbledore began. “Why, we were just discussing the evening’s most interesting turn of events.”

“Indeed,” Harry replied stoically.

“Yes, well, Ivy here has been entered into the Triwizard Tournament under what appear to be rather mysterious circumstances.”

“Is that so.”

“Yes. And as I was saying...”

“Well, I’m certain a full investigation will be conducted then?” Harry interrupted with a question that was much more a demand or statement of fact than polite enquiry. “To show *exactly* how my underage daughter’s name came out of a powerful magical artifact that was supposedly warded against tampering?”

“Yes, of course. I...”

“And as to her removal from the tournament...” Harry said, not giving the headmaster any time to continue.

“Can’t,” Moody replied. “Binding magical contract.”

“Is that so,” Harry said again, eyes never leaving those of Dumbledore.

Severus glanced at Moody now, but the man seemed rather amused if anything. It was all a bit intriguing, to be honest.

The two players of this battle of wills remained locked in silent combat for a moment, before Harry broke eye contact, conceding absolutely nothing by doing so.

“Ivy,” he said, “did you put your name into the Goblet?”

“No,” she replied, much more relaxed now that her adoptive parent was here and clearly in charge of the situation.

Harry nodded at her response and turned towards Bagman and Wragge, the two Ministry officials involved in this debacle.

“Gentlemen?” Harry said, managing to look taller despite being rather well-matched in height. “Care to expound on how my daughter is magically bound to a contract she did not put her name to?”

Both men flushed a bit. This disaster of an evening was turning out to have some amusements after all.

“Well, you see...”

“The rules clearly state...”

“Her name *did* come out...”

“It was recognized by the Goblet...”

Harry raised an eyebrow and stopped them both with a hand. “Perhaps one of you could be so kind as to procure a copy of the tournament rules for me? Wouldn’t want to miss anything.” Harry said it cheerfully enough but the demand was clear.

“Yes sir,” Wragge said with a sharp nod, Bagman giving a similar nod immediately following.

“Good. Now,” Harry said, turning towards Dumbledore, “if that will be all, I would like a word with my daughter if you please.”

And, without waiting for a response, Harry turned towards the door gesturing for Ivy to exit and following her close behind.

---

“So, what do you think?” Harry asked when they were firmly out of hearing range of any living or sentient thing capable of spying on them.

“Oh, I’m fine.”

Harry laughed at that and pulled Ivy in for a hug. “Sorry I couldn’t stop it, Ives,” he said softly.

“It’s alright,” she said. “No, really,” she continued at his disbelieving look, “I will be fine. *Really.*”

Harry looked at her for a moment before huffing and pulling her back in for another hug. “I know you will be,” he said. “But it’s still my job to look after you, and this feels like a rather big failure in that regard.”

“Well, we can blow up that bridge now?”

Harry chuckled. “Fred and George would probably help you there. Seamus too, if he’s anything like the one I knew.”

Ivy nodded. “Ginny and Cali too. They’re quite proficient. I think there is still glitter in the Gryffindor common room.”

“I don’t think I want to know,” Harry said lightly. “But at least the explosion will look nice. Get Colin to take pictures, will you?”

They laughed together for a minute, taking the moment to forget about what awaited them back in reality.

“So how’d you find out so fast anyway?” Ivy asked.

“Oh, Neville sent a patronus to me. Quick thinking on his part.”

Ivy beamed. “Oh, that’s fantastic. Did he really?”

“Great big bear lumbering through my window and everything. Can’t say the voice matches the image just yet though,” Harry said with a grin.

“He’ll grow into it?” Ivy offered.

“I’m sure he will,” Harry replied.

---

“Did you put your name into the Goblet?” was the first thing Ivy was met with as she entered the Slytherin common room.

She looked up to see an agitated Draco looking down at her, forehead furrowed and fingers twitching against his leg.

“No,” she said. She really hoped he believed her...

“Alright,” he said, relaxing. “Do you know who did?”

She relaxed in turn at the show of trust from one of her best friends. “No, but Dad is taking care of it.”

“Good,” Draco replied with a sharp nod. “So you don’t have to compete?”

“Well...”

“Ivy...”

“It’s a magical contract. *I* didn’t put my name in but I’m still bound by it. Dad is looking into it, he said, but I think... Well, there’s a good chance I will still have to compete.”

Draco groaned. “But that’s ridiculous. If you didn’t put your name in you shouldn’t be able to be bound to the contract.”

Ivy shrugged. “There’s nothing I can do about it right now, at least.”

“Just... Promise me you’ll be careful?”

Ivy forwent an answer in favor of hugging Draco tightly.

She wasn’t sure how well she could truly promise that.

---

*November 1, 1994*

“Why is it when something happens, it is always you three?” Madam Bones asked wearily.

Lucius raised a singular eyebrow ever so slightly, Sirius leaned back in his chair looking somewhat pleased with himself, and Harry just sat there in relative indifference. It wasn’t like any of this truly mattered.

His efforts had been in vain and Ivy was still being forced to compete, though this time it looked to be Dumbledore’s doing rather the Voldemort’s, and if that wasn’t a bitter irony...

Still, just because Ivy was stuck doing the bloody tournament didn’t mean Harry couldn’t raise a fuss. And oh, what a fuss he would raise. Lucius and Sirius were, of course, happy to

aid in that endeavor.

And, despite the circumstances, Harry couldn't help but be amused by their efforts.

Lucius sat there with that aggressively neutral expression that can be universally understood to mean he had something to do with it, but good luck to the poor fool who is searching for proof.

Sirius, on the other hand, despite having not been directly involved in any part of this until this exact meeting, wore his apparent sin like a badge of honor on his face.

Bones, meanwhile, looked like she'd do anything to just wash her hands of the entire matter, but she was to her core a professional and greatly admired by all three wizards present for that quality. And it was possible that Harry felt a *little* guilty for making her be the one to deal with Dumbledore and the investigation and the general mess this was turning out to be.

Still, he was glad *he* wasn't in her position.

## Chapter End Notes

edit: It's been a while since I updated, I know. Sorry about that. Real life, a couple fun rounds with anxiety, etc. I think enough of you know how that goes. Anyway, I haven't been keeping an eye on this much, but I did see a couple comments about the age for the tournament, and I saw where I made that mistake, so hopefully I got it fixed sufficiently now. Basic gist = Dumbledore wanted age at fourteen, an unspecified someone or someones managed to overrule that, now it's back up to seventeen, or of age, and Ivy's name still comes out. I added a little section in this chapter that *\*hopefully\** bridges that inconsistency well enough. This is the problem with taking too long in between chapters haha. I start missing far too many things. Anyway, I'm going to be reading through a bunch of this story again to get back into it, and I have a bit more written already, so hopefully (fingers crossed) I can get back on track with this soon. And also school starts up again in a few weeks and honestly that will make my life so much easier haha. That's all. Carry on my beautiful people.

# Chapter 56

## Chapter Notes

I'm baaaaaacck. Sorry if this chapter seems a little disjointed. I've been writing it here and there over the past two months. Sorry it took so long and hopefully the next chapter will not take another five months haha.

*November 1, 1994*

For yet one more time in Hogwarts' illustrious history the owlery was entirely devoid of owls.

A certain British Lord was the subject of most of the letters, particularly those headed towards destinations of greater distance, and while the details contained in each letter varied *greatly* the result was largely the same.

Lord Peverell-Slytherin was impressive, and everyone was going to know it.

---

Of secondary importance to the students seated in the Great Hall that morning was that matter of Ivy Potter's entry into the Triwizard Tournament. Questions such as "Who put Ivy's name in?" or "Can it still be called the *Triwizard* Tournament" were whispered throughout the hall along with other questions such as "Is someone trying to get Ivy killed?" or "Do you think her dad killed anyone over this yet?"

The collective capacity for imagination held by the assembled student body that morning was admirable, to say the least, and it wasn't long before questions turned to speculations, which turned rapidly into rumors. Thus, the *second* round of letters that went out that day (after a few of the owls returned from their much shorter journeys) contained an even more varied account of the previous night's events.

It was a bit of a wonder, really, that the wizarding world as a whole didn't produce more great novelists, given the way stories could be told in such...*creative* fashion.

---

*November 4, 1994*

Harry allowed himself a single shudder before he placed the latest copy of the Daily Prophet on the table. He was about to ignite it, but feeling that the table had done nothing to deserve such treatment, made a mental note to take the newspaper outside later for a bit of pyrotechnic therapy.

It was a thing.



Remus had said so.

Harry had, of course, been the subject of *many* a newspaper article in his lifetime, but somehow none of them had ever reached this level of ridiculousness before. Although actually, the theory of him being James Potter reincarnated was closer than anyone had ever gotten to figuring out where he had suddenly sprung up from, since there was at least a biological relation there, but every other theory was ridiculous and he honestly didn't want to know where they were all coming from.

Surprisingly, Rita Skeeter was not a contributor to the ongoing journalism circus that was currently taking place regarding Harry and his minor little appearance at Hogwarts. Although to be fair, he would have been more surprised if he hadn't seen the triple looks on Luna, Narcissa, and Sabrina's faces when the reporter was mentioned. He took those looks to mean it wasn't a problem he needed to deal with, and let all thoughts regarding Skeeter fade blissfully into the background.

---

*November 8, 1994*

Exactly one week following his previous meeting in Amelia Bones' office, Harry found himself seated across from the director once more.

The gist of the meeting was as follows:

It was almost certainly Dumbledore, but it was unlikely it would ever be proven.

Needless to say, Harry was not thrilled with the results of the investigation, since he would have much preferred something along the lines of *actionable evidence*, but at least his suspicions were confirmed. It was a hollow victory, but Madam Bones was now keeping a *very* close eye on the headmaster so maybe something would come of it yet. If she had been irritated with Dumbledore in the past, now she was one eye twitch away from a warpath.

---

"It's a sign," Harry insisted through the enchanted mirror.

"It's really not."

"Your name came out under Castelobrujo. It is absolutely a sign."

"I'm not transferring."

"I'm just saying..."

Ivy rolled her eyes, knowing her dad wasn't going to truly push it, though she doubted he would forget this coincidence any time soon either.

Because yes, it was a coincidence. Nothing more. And Henry Peverell had been too vocally skeptical of divination to convince her he put much store in it now.

---

*November 9, 1994*

Oliver groaned at the persistent banging on the front door.

“Make it go away,” he whined into his pillow.

Marcus just grunted a noncommittal sort of grunt, and only grunted a bit harder when Oliver kicked him in the shin.

Oliver groaned again (louder this time), in an effort to sufficiently express the fact that he was *not* going to get up and see who was behaving so barbarically outside their flat. It was nine in the morning, for Merlin’s sake. Hardly a decent hour for civilized company.

At last the banging stopped, and Oliver thought he heard a few mumbled curses on the other side of the door before it swung open to reveal none other than Percy Weasley, who stood there looking not at all impressed.

Really it was a toss-up as to who looked the least impressed at the moment; Percy, who had spent the last forty (or maybe three) minutes banging on the door, Oliver, who did not appreciate either being woken up *or* the look on his friend’s face, or Marcus, who looked like he was attempting to create a mentally transmitted version of the killing curse.

“Well?” Percy began.

Oliver just looked at him. He had no idea what was going on and this was the time of day to expect the mental leaps needed to keep up with Percy.

“Are you going to help or what?”

Oliver still didn’t have any idea what Percy was saying, or what he was doing here for that matter.

“You had better have a very good reason for being here, Weasley,” Marcus ground out, voice even lower than normal from just having woken up.

“Ivy. Tournament. Honestly,” Percy said with a huff.

“Is it happening today?” Marcus grumbled.

“Fifteen days until the first task, which is hardly enough time for us to prepare...”

“Then come back in the afternoon like a reasonable human being.”

Percy didn’t even react to Marcus’s disagreeable tone, and Oliver wondered if he could just slide back under the covers and let the two of them duel it out or whatever was about to happen.

“There is hardly enough time for pointless dilly-dallying, Flint,” Percy said sharply. “Ivy has two weeks to prepare and we have work to do.”

Oliver sighed, resigning himself to dealing with Percy's latest concern regarding Ivy Potter. "Isn't her dad dealing with it?" he asked. "It's been all over the paper."

"Lord Peverell-Slytherin is undoubtedly working to prepare Ivy for the tournament," Percy said primly, "but as he has yet to follow *any* of my suggestions for a more complete takeover of even the British portion of the wizarding world, I fear he might be rather bogged down at the moment. In any case, we can certainly aid him in his endeavors, and the sixth years we trained before are simply not prepared to handle something of this magnitude."

"So many problems with..." Marcus began to mutter, but Oliver cut him off.

"Of course we want to help Ivy," Oliver said, "but you have to know that Peverell isn't going to let anything happen to her. We all heard about what he did on Halloween."

Percy just rolled his eyes. "Yes, yes, he is very intimidating. But this is an all wands at the ready situation. Peverell is impressive, to be sure, but he only has a few associates within Hogwarts and the professors can hardly be expected to keep an eye on one student at all hours."

"And what, you want us to go back to Hogwarts and follow Ivy around?" Oliver asked with as much sarcasm as could be mustered at this unholy hour.

"Fine, we'll do it," Marcus said.

"We will?" Oliver asked, just to make sure he was hearing correctly.

"Now leave," Marcus said to Percy.

"Now that's not exactly what I meant..." Percy began, but apparently Marcus had decided the discussion was over because he physically picked Percy up and set him down on the other side of the threshold, not even bothering with his wand.

Oliver waited until Percy had left, taking his muttered comments about "coups" and "next year at least" with him, before he turned to Marcus with a tired yet inquisitive look on his face. "So what did you sign us up for, exactly?"

"We're headed back to Hogwarts."

"Why in Merlin's bloody name would we do that?"

"You heard the man," Marcus said with a grin.

"Part of it," Oliver corrected. "But aren't you forgetting something? We can't just drop practices and head off to Scotland."

"Well, when do you finish tomorrow?"

"Half five I think."

"So we leave at half six. Problem solved."

“No, problem *not* solved, Marcus. Marcus?”

That’s it. Somehow Percy Weasley had corrupted Marcus Flint and Oliver was the one who was going to be suffering the consequences.

---

“You know, I distinctly remember the both of you *graduating*.”

Oliver was exceptionally happy to let Marcus deal with his former head of house.

“We’re here about Ivy.”

“Of course you are,” came Snape’s muttered reply. “And you thought showing up at Hogwarts would accomplish what, exactly?”

“Weasley told us to,” Marcus said by way of response as if that explained the situation well enough.

Though apparently it did, because before he knew it Oliver was swirling through the floo with only the briefest bit of forewarning. Despite the abruptness of his trip through the system, he managed to exit the floo in a mostly respectable manner, landing on his feet at least and not making an utter fool of himself when he realized just where they had landed.

“Hello, boys,” came Lady Peverell’s greeting. “What can I do for you this evening?”

“We’re here about Ivy?” Oliver said. Well, asked more like, but he had meant to say it more as a statement than he did.

“For the tournament or because something happened?”

“Tournament,” Marcus replied.

“Percy told us to,” Oliver added, since apparently Marcus couldn’t be bothered to use actual sentences to explain why they were here interrupting Lady Peverell’s evening.

“I’m sure Ivy will be thrilled with the moral support,” Lady Peverell said delightedly, “and it will be nice to have a few more pairs of eyes on the lookout during the first task.”

Well, Oliver supposed, they had their marching orders now.

---

*November 12, 1994*

“No, no no,” Draco protested. You don’t get it. I need to redeem myself, and I can’t redeem myself if I go up to them and start talking to them like a complete and utter *idiot*.”

“They’re all very nice,” Ivy insisted. “And you’re not an idiot.”

“I *know* I’m not an idiot, which is why I’m not going to go up to them without a proper introduction.”

“But you already met them.”

“Yes but that doesn’t count. I need another one.”

Ivy rolled her eyes but agreed to reintroduce Draco to all of her Beauxbatons friends.

---

Justin watched Draco and Ivy like a hawk. The rumors surrounding the two had skyrocketed over the past couple of weeks since apparently having two visiting schools wasn’t *quite* enough gossip material to work with, but he still didn’t buy it. He couldn’t see any difference between the two of them now versus any point in time last year, or the year before... Really they simply appeared to be carrying as normal.

Cataloging every movement as best he could, he amused himself with the fact that Draco appeared to be just as affected by Delacour’s allure as any of the other boys were. *Theo* didn’t appear to be nearly as affected, though. Good for him.

---

*November 13, 1994*

The two Slytherins looked down their table to where Ivy was chatting animatedly with a much more stoic Viktor Krum.

“That counts as quidditch related activity, right?” Adrian asked, mostly rhetorically.

“Yeah,” Terence responded. “I think that’s enough to satisfy Marcus and Wood.”

“Ivy is about to go flying with one of the most famous seekers in the world right now. It had better satisfy them,” Adrian grumbled.

“Honestly I don’t think either of them will be completely satisfied until she is single-handedly responsible for winning the World Cup.”

“You don’t win the Cup single-handedly,” Adrian argued. “If you could, Krum would have down it in August.”

“Well don’t bother trying to explain that to Marcus or Wood anytime soon. They’ll try to stick a new training regimen on us or something.”

They both shuddered slightly at the prospect.

---

“They’ve all seen me fly before, I don’t see what the big fuss is about now,” Ivy said jokingly.

Viktor snorted under his breath, not bothering to turn towards the rather large crowd of students following behind them.

Ivy paused for a moment, causing Viktor to stop as well and turn towards her.

“You know,” she said, “if we’re really boring they’ll go away.”

“And vat do you propose ve do, hmm?”

---

“Good?” Ivy asked.

“Good,” Viktor responded.

The people below them were hardly even tiny ants anymore, given how high up in the air they were.

“And you vill not get in trouble for zis?”

Ivy shrugged. “Only if I get hurt, I guess.”

Viktor nodded, before pulling out his wand and waving it in Ivy’s direction to indicate he wanted to cast something.

Ivy nodded her assent and Viktor mumbled a few spells that Ivy wasn’t exactly familiar with, but could guess the general idea of.

“Now if you fall you von’t get hurt.”

“So I guess you’re kind of my older brother now too?”

“Is zat vat happened before?”

Ivy shrugged. “Sort of. I mean, Thomas was trying to protect me, even if I didn’t actually need that, but looking back I suppose he didn’t *know* I didn’t need protecting, so it was sweet of him to care.”

“Better safe...” Viktor said, trailing off with a wave of his hand.

“You’re probably right. I think everyone else just, happened?”

“And everyone is your sibling now?”

Ivy laughed. “Okay but, when I was eleven I thought that’s just sort of how it worked? I mean my Dad and I pretty much just picked each other and that was that. So I just kept picking out my family, and it’s too late to back out now. They’re stuck with me,” Ivy finished with a mischievous grin.

“Vell in zat case I vould be honored.”

Ivy’s grin grew wider.

---

“Did I mention the First Task is dragons?”

“No. No, you did not.”

---

*November 17, 1994*

The First Task was in one week and there were so many things Harry could be doing instead of sitting here listening to the endless, pointless prattle of the *esteemed* Wizengamot.

To be fair those two facts had very little to do with each other. The First Task was one week away, true, but none of the things Harry could be doing at the moment actually had anything to do with the First Task directly. It was more the principle of the matter.

Ivy had insisted she had things under control.

Harry had absolute faith in her, as well as in the collective ability of Barty, Severus, Filius, Minerva, Sirius, Sabrina, Remus, Lucius, Narcissa, Percy, and Moody, along with himself and Luna, of course, to prevent anything exceptionally disastrous from occurring.

It was fine, really.

It would all be *more fine* if he could just get out of this blasted meeting.

---

“How can you spend every day in this building?” Harry asked, collapsing onto an uncomfortable chair by Percy’s desk.

“Bad session today?” Percy asked sympathetically.

Harry nodded. “And it’s not even over. I don’t know how some of them can keep talking for so long about something that no one cares about.”

“Well, I’m sure *someone* cares about it,” Percy began.

“Yes, yes, I’m sure it’s all important,” Harry said, remembering who exactly he was talking to. “But does it have to take so long?”

“Well, I suppose you could always bring up something else instead.”

“Yes, great plan. Any ideas?”

Percy’s face lit up and Harry could see why Ivy might refer to him as her brother. The similarities at this particular moment were rather striking. And worrisome.

Percy’s wand waved a bit and a hundred or so files came shooting out of various drawers and stacks from around the room.

Percy began muttering as he sorted through them all.

“No, no, not until July *at least*...”

“Perhaps...”

“Well that one won’t work until after that other...”

“Too much for one day...”

Harry was growing concerned.

“Ah, here we go,” Percy said finally. “Here’s the perfect one. A perfect test.”

“A test? What kind of test?”

“A test of your influence, of course. We all know you’re powerful, and you’ve gotten quite a few things passed in the Wizengamot already, but this will let you know just far your influence reaches.”

“I don’t think I want that,” Harry began.

Percy continued on, completely ignoring him. “It’s simple, really. All you have to do is introduce a change to the scheduling. Move the regularly scheduled Wizengamot sessions to another day. Perhaps Tuesday or something.”

“Why in Merlin’s decrepit name would I do that?”

“Well because it’s tradition, of course. The Wizengamot has met on Thursdays for centuries. Longer than any of those old bats have been on it at least. It takes a lot to change a tradition.”

Harry couldn’t argue with that part at least.

“So you try to change it. Everyone agrees? You have clear skies ahead and can race as fast as you want to your inevitable victory. A few holdouts? Promising, but may take a bit more time. Widespread disagreement? Then clearly something went wrong and I severely underestimated parts of my ten-year plan for you.”

Harry was rubbing his eyes by this point. “Look, Percy,” he said, “I appreciate the effort, but I truly am not aiming to take over the world. Not even a part of it. I am trying to keep Ivy safe, everyone else safe, stop people from killing each other, and from generally being idiots if such a thing is possible, but I don’t want to take over the world.”

Percy moved to speak but Harry held up a hand.

“And I don’t particularly want Ivy taking over the world either. If she chooses to, at some point in the *very* distant future, she can, so long as she can be nice about it. But I’m not going to do it for her, and I’m also not going to do it for me.” And, okay, so there were still a few things wrong with that statement, but for now it would have to do.

“You actually could stop Ivy from taking over too soon,” Percy half-whispered in a semi-awed tone.



“Thanks for the vote of confidence, but I’m not sure that’s the part we ought to be focusing on.”

“But what if she does it on accident like you have?”

“Well apparently I’ve already done it, so…” Harry hated admitting to any part of that, but that’s what people kept telling him so perhaps there was a *tiny* sliver of truth to a minuscule part of that.

“Yeah, I suppose that makes sense.” Percy looked relieved.

Harry did not share that sentiment.

---

*November 18, 1994*

Ivy sat calmly outside the classroom where the wand weighing ceremony was to take place on a transfigured chair courtesy of Cedric who was pacing lightly in front of her.

“I’m sure it’s all going to be fine,” Ivy said.

Cedric snorted. “You hardly have any self-preservation instincts. I’m not sure if your version of fine ought to feel like a relief or not.”

Viktor and Fleur both nodded as if Cedric was making an entirely reasonable point, which, rude. She did too have self-preservation instincts. She had recently begun referring to him as Dad and he was going to be here any moment.

Still, it was getting rather boring. Their plan had been to come early so they could meet up and all go in together, but they had been sitting here for forty minutes already and maybe that was a tad unnecessary.

“Hey, watch what I can do,” Ivy said suddenly, looking at Viktor and Fleur.

She promptly stood up and transformed into a honey badger, hardly believing she hadn’t even done that yet for all the time she had been spending with the two.

Both foreign champions looked at her in silence as she ran around a bit. This was a much better way of passing the time.

“Zat makes a lot of sense, no?” Fleur said.

Viktor just snorted. “Da.”

---

Ollivander looked pleased as punch to see Ivy, Dumbledore looked like he had accidentally sucked on a lemon, and Rita Skeeter looked like she was trying to be anywhere but in his general vicinity.

Harry was feeling great.

---

*November 19, 1994*

“Who is *that*?”

The rest of the girls barely managed to stop themselves before running into Pansy who had abruptly stopped in the middle of the path.

“That’s Charlie Weasley,” Daphne said, puzzled at the question. “You’ve seen him before.”

Pansy hardly acknowledged the response. “I’m certainly seeing him now,” she said.

It took Millie and Hannah a full minute to get Pansy moving again. Tracey and Susan were absolutely no help at all, seeing as they were far too busy laughing to do more than keep up with the others.

---

Neville was confused about the seemingly sympathetic pats on the back he was receiving. Hopefully nothing bad had happened. Surely someone would tell him, right?

---

Pansy grabbed Neville by the arm, though he was almost used to it at this point and didn’t drop a single thing.

“I need you to tell me all about the Weasleys,” she said, as she pulled him away from the other students.

“What do you want to know? Aren’t the twins around you a lot anyway?”

“No, not them,” Pansy huffed. “Other Weasleys.”

“Like Ron?”

“What? No, of course not. *Charlie* Weasley, if you please.”

“Well why didn’t you just say so,” Neville grumbled.

“I did,” Pansy replied.

“Er, well, he’s the one that works with dragons?” Neville offered. “And I’m pretty sure Ivy has adoption papers she’s waiting for him to sign.”

Pansy’s face lit up with a grin that had Neville subconsciously taking a half-step back.

“Perfect.”

# Chapter 57

## Chapter Notes

The previous chapter took me a couple months of writing and I did this one in one sitting so hopefully it's okay. It's a little shorter, but it fit nicely like this so that's what I'm going with. Thank you everyone for reading, and for all the lovely comments. Sorry that I don't respond most of the time, but know that I do love reading them all. It's super motivating, not gonna lie.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*November 24, 1994*

“You have a plan?”

“You know I do.”

“But you’re not going to tell me.”

“Nope,” Ivy said with a grin. “It’s a surprise.”

“I trust you,” Harry replied. “I hate it, but I trust you.”

“It’ll be fine.”

“Just try not to traumatize anyone?”

Ivy just grinned wider as she scampered off to wherever she was meeting her friends.

Harry sighed. Time to watch some dragons, he supposed.

---

Cedric paced back and forth in the tent, not quite being able to help himself. He felt he had a right to feel at least a little nervous, and sitting still was doing absolutely nothing to help with that.

He mentally rehearsed the steps he was planning on taking in his confrontation with the dragon. And a dragon? Really? It all seemed a bit unnecessary, but whatever. He would live. Ivy would hardly let him do otherwise.

So caught up was he in his thoughts that he nearly walked right into Marcus Flint.

“What are you doing here?” he asked, once his brain processed the fact that it was a little strange for Flint to be in the Champions’ Tent.

“Security,” Flint deadpanned.

Strangely, or perhaps not, Cedric felt a little better.

---

Marcus locked eyes with Viktor Krum. Ordinarily, he’d be pleased to talk with such a talented Quidditch star, but he was on a mission right now.

They continued staring at each other for some time, before Krum finally asked, “Are you one of Ivy’s?”

Marcus huffed a small laugh under his breath and nodded.

“I zink I also am?” Krum said.

Marcus couldn’t help but chuckle a bit at that. “She has that effect on people, yeah.”

Krum snorted. “Da.”

“You’re acceptable,” Marcus said after a moment.

Krum nodded in acknowledgement, forming their alliance with silent confirmation.

“Am I late?” Oliver said, bursting in through the doorway.

---

“You know, I don’t remember there being this many adults here last time,” Harry mused as he watched the stands fill up.

“Let’s just assume anything different from your own experience is most likely for the best,” Lucius said with a drawl.

Harry snorted.

“I mean, he’s not wrong,” Remus said, gazing down at the pit that was soon to play host to both dragons and students. What a terrible combination.

---

Thankfully they didn’t have to wait long. In a notable difference from Harry’s own experience, Ivy had drawn the Chinese Fireball and was, therefore, the second Champion to face their dragon.

Watching her walk calmly out into the pit, Harry couldn’t help but think she was probably more excited about meeting a dragon than anything. She certainly didn’t appear nervous. Harry supposed he was nervous enough for the both of them.

---

A nesting mother dragon is a fearsome thing indeed. Every sense is finely tuned and engaged in the noble task of protecting their young, both eggs and newly hatched dragons.

A small, squishy human was therefore initially taken as a potential threat. But then the small, squishy human began speaking, and the babble was, quite frankly, adorable.

The mother dragon sniffed the adorable little hatchling, and, finding no noticeable parental scent, decided that that simply wouldn't do. This cute little babbling human obviously needed protecting. She would be a good mother for this little hatchling.

---

Charlie watched Ivy with a mix of awe and horror. Of course she would try *speaking to a dragon*. Never mind the fact that it was unknown whether or not dragons could even understand Parseltongue.

Unbelievable.

Well, actually no. It was believable, but that somehow made it worse.

"Is she *cooing*?" Chad asked, sounding about as horrified as Charlie felt.

It didn't look like Ivy was cooing, but honestly, he had no idea what she was saying. Parseltongue and all that.

"It sure looks like it," Matt replied. Wait...

Charlie looked at where they were pointing.

"What do you mean *the dragon is cooing*?" he asked, but once he saw it he couldn't unsee it.

Sure enough, there was a nesting Chinese Fireball looking at Ivy like she was an adorable baby.

"Uh, I think your little sister just got adopted by a dragon," Chad said, eyes not leaving the dragon. It really was nearly impossible to look away...

"Well, I think she's always wanted a dragon," Charlie mused.

"So what, she imprinted on the dragon or something?" Matt asked, also unable to tear his gaze away from the scene unfolding in front of them.

"Who imprinted on who though?" Chad mumbled.

There was a pained whine that Charlie could just barely make out.

Oh. That was coming from him.

"Well, uh, it could be worse?" Chad added, entirely unhelpfully.

"Yeah, the dragon could've decided Ivy's her new baby and whisk her back to Romania," Charlie said sarcastically before paling and uttering a string of curses in Russian since those were far superior to the English ones.

“You okay there?” Matt asked.

“Peverell’s going to kill me,” Charlie replied.

---

“I can’t believe she’s speaking to the dragon,” Harry mumbled, head going to his hands.

Luna patted him sympathetically on the back.

“It seems to be going well enough,” Barty interjected.

“Dragons don’t speak Parseltongue,” Luna said.

“Then what is happening down there?” Sirius asked.

“And how do you know that?” Remus added.

“Oh, Harry tried to speak to dragons. It didn’t work.”

“We really don’t need to revisit that particular memory,” Harry muttered. He could feel the questioning gazes and just knew that Luna was mouthing “later” to them. Which was fine. A problem for later. The problem *right now* was that Ivy, sweet, chaotic Ivy, was trying to talk to a dragon, who seemed to be not at all bothered by it, which made this at least superior to Harry’s own ill-advised attempts a universe ago, but Ivy was talking to a dragon and there was no way this was going to end well...

Ivy’d be fine.

But this was not going to end well for Harry.

“Do you think we have room for a dragon?” he muttered to Luna.

Luna laughed.

He was entirely serious.

And Luna definitely knew that.

---

*§And really it’s jusst sso nisce to ssee a dragon thiss closse because Dad doessn’t let me becuasse out housse doessn’t have sspace but I think there’ss enough room if you wanted to come by for a vissit. And you can bring your babiess. I’ve never sseen a baby dragon before but I’m ssure they’ll be beautiful. I’m ssupossed to get the golden egg from your nesst though. It’ss not a real egg, don’t worry. It’ss just a fake egg they put in there. I’ll be very careful though, I promisse.§*

---

Oh look at that, the cute little human hatchling is climbing into the nest. What a good little hatchling. Oh, and she is being so careful with the others. What a good sibling she’ll make. And pulling out an egg... No, the smell is wrong. What is that? That’s not an egg.

Oh, what a clever tiny squishy human, finding the false egg. And she seems to like it. It's shiny. It's good for little hatchlings to play with shiny things. Helps develop good instincts.

Why are the other humans coming?

Oh, little squishy human is leaving the nest.

Better scent the little hatchling. So squishy, and not a single scale.

*\*huff\**

Well, small little human hatchling wasn't alone anymore. She had a good mother dragon now, and soon she would have siblings. She would have someone to watch out for her and make up for her lack of scales. And wings. And fire.

---

Harry wanted nothing more than to slip down in his seat and hide forever. Harry might not be the expert on dragons that Charlie was, or even that Ivy probably was at this point, but he knew mothering behavior when he saw it.

His child was being adopted by a dragon.

And had already been adopted by a basilisk.

And had herself adopted a hippogriff, a wolf, a snake...

People were giving cautious, curious looks his way, but Harry didn't care. Somehow, somehow, he was going to have to deal with a dragon, he just knew it.

"Well, she didn't use a broom," Luna mused.

Harry couldn't help but snort.

No, Ivy had definitely not done that.

---

"Well?" Cedric asked. "How did it go?"

"I think she liked me," Ivy said, beaming.

"What do you mean she liked you? The *dragon*?" Cedric was mildly horrified both at Ivy's statement and the fact that it didn't surprise him nearly as much as it probably should have.

"Well done," Flint said.

"Thanks," Ivy replied.

---

"And all the eggs are okay?"

“Da, da. I cast charm like you said.”

Ivy nodded. “That’s good.”

Viktor chuckled. “All eggs are safe. Happy?”

“Very,” Ivy said with a grin.

“So what is this about you talking to a dragon?”

“I think she liked me. She sniffed me and kind of nuzzled me right before I left. Kind of like a dragon hug, I guess.”

“Only you, I think, would get hug from dragon.”

Ivy sighed. “Best. Day. Ever.”

---

“Could you maybe *not* scare me like that next time?” Draco demanded.

“What? I said I had a plan. And it worked. You saw that it worked.”

“I didn’t know your plan was to try and sweet talk a dragon before climbing into its nest with it *right there*.”

“Well, I thought it went well.”

“This is going to be like the basilisk, isn’t it.”

“I told her she could come visit.”

“Please tell me you didn’t…”

“And bring her babies.”

“No…”

“I think they’ll be adorable.”

“Ivy…”

Ivy snorted. “It’s far too easy to rile you up, I hope you know that.”

Draco let out a sigh of relief. “Oh good. I thought you were serious.”

“Oh, I was.”

“No…”

---



“Well personally I thought your score should have been higher, but you did score higher than Cedric and Delacour, so there’s that, I guess,” Pansy said.

“I did?”

Pansy gave Ivy a disbelieving look. “Of course you didn’t even pay attention to the score. You were too busy giving us all heart attacks by *talking to a bloody dragon*.”

Ivy rolled her eyes. “It worked, didn’t it?”

“Did you know it was going to work?” Tracey asked skeptically.

“So, er, fun fact,” Ivy began.

The other girls groaned.

“Dragons don’t actually understand Parseltongue.”

“I can’t take much more of this,” Millie said, throwing herself face-first onto her pillow.

“Which, of course, I didn’t know, but it’s close enough to the sounds dragons make, so I guess their language or whatever, that it definitely recognized that I was *trying* to speak, so...”

“So what, a dragon just looks at you attempting to speak and goes, oh what a cute little baby dragon that looks nothing like a dragon,” Pansy said, gesturing wildly with her hands the entire time.

“Probably,” came the surprise response from Daphne.

“What?” she asked when the others all turned towards her. “It makes sense, doesn’t it? A nesting dragon, a small little thing trying to speak, all those protective mothering instincts? She probably determined that Ivy wasn’t a threat and then decided she needed protecting.”

Pansy groaned.

“So I got adopted by a dragon?” Ivy asked with an awed tone.

“Not sure you need to look so gleeful about it,” Tracey said with a snort.

---

“What are the chances I’m going to have a dragon show up at my house in the near future?”

“Do you want the pleasant answer or the truthful one?” Charlie asked in way of reply.

Peeverell sighed. Deeply, and at great length. Charlie could only commiserate.

“Just lay it out for me,” Peeverell said finally.

“Well, the theory so far is that they sort of, er, imprinted on each other, I guess you could say? Or at least, a certain Chinese Fireball dragon is now a proud mother of one small human?”

“And showing up at my house?”

“I’d say there’s a good chance.”

“Any idea as to when?”

“Well, uh, this isn’t exactly something that’s happened before. Dragons have been known, on very rare occasions, to take in other species as their own, in a way. Protect the young, up to a point. But never with a person. So…”

“Uncharted territory here?”

“Basically, yeah.”

“And if I do have dragons show up at my house?”

“Well, I’d say your backyard is big enough, if you can direct them to an appropriate hunting ground.”

By the look on Peverell’s face, that wasn’t quite the response he was looking for.

“Or, you know, you could try to move them?”

Peverell mumbled something about riding dragons and Charlie wasn’t entirely sure if he wanted to know or not.

At least he didn’t appear to be facing his imminent death. Peverell looked more resigned than angry, which was good.

A few days later he would receive a short letter from Percy, the contents of which would read:

*Dear Charlie,*

*If the dragon becomes a persistent issue, please deal with it. And try to get Ivy to name it something other than another animal’s name. I’ll begin outlining plans for a dragon sanctuary in Britain for Peverell should that be the route he chooses to take.*

*Sincerely,*

*Percy*

You can come say hi on Tumblr [here](#) or [here](#) if you feel so inclined. There's pretty much no Harry Potter stuff on there haha, but you can come say hi anyway if you'd like.

# Chapter 58

## Chapter Notes

Ah, first task complete. Now on to the obviously more pressing matter: The Yule Ball. This is 3,000 words of Hogwarts students stressing over the nuances of asking someone out. Matchmaking attempts and schemes included. Substantial plot much less so.

*November 28, 1994*

Ivy hurried into the classroom. She may have overslept slightly, which was not at all a common occurrence with her. She had been up rather late reading about dragon care and habitats though. Best to be prepared for anything, after all.

As interesting as that had been, however, it had contributed to her current predicament of finding a seat before class officially started.

She found an open seat next to Justin and sat down quickly.

“Good morning,” she said cheerfully.

Justin did not appear to be a morning person on this particular day.

It wasn’t until halfway through the class that Justin finally seemed aware of her presence.

“Oh, hi Ivy,” he said.

She laughed.

“You’ve been here the entire time, haven’t you,” he said with a sigh.

Ivy nodded. “Rough morning?”

Justin groaned. “Our room was up half the night talking about the Yule Ball.”

“Really?” Ivy was surprised. She didn’t think any of the boys were *that* invested in it.

“I think I might as well ask Theo to come share battle strategies with them at the rate they were going.”

“Who exactly?”

“Zach, Kevin, and Ernie were the worst. But anytime I thought it was almost over Stephen chimed in and all of a sudden everyone got going. You’d think this ball was the end of the world or something.”

Ivy looked around the classroom. All the other Hufflepuff boys did look a bit tired, now that she was looking at them closely.

“What on earth were they talking about then?”

“Who they could ask to the ball and how they could ask, but it turned into who likes who and who might say yes, or who might say yes but not actually want to go with them, or who might say no because they were asked too early and were hoping for someone else, or who might say no because they secretly hate the other person’s guts. It was an entire thing.”

Ivy snorted. Quietly of course. They were still in class.

“Our room talked about it for exactly six minutes. We’re debriefing again Friday after classes.”

“See? Everyone is doing it. What’s the big deal, anyway? The task was just four days ago. You know, the one with the *dragons*?”

“I know, I was there,” Ivy said with a grin.

“Oh, er, right,” Justin said sheepishly. “But still, how did the topic shift that fast?”

Ivy shrugged. “Beats me.”

---

Care of Magical Creatures was almost a *deja vu* experience, except instead of Justin complaining it was Ron.

“I’m never going to find someone to ask to the ball,” he said.

“Why not?” Ivy asked. It’s not like *anyone* had been asked yet as far as she knew.

“Seamus made a chart, and it lists everyone in the castle and who he thinks they like and who might like them back. We were up half the night looking it over.”

“So because Seamus thinks some people *might* like some other people there’s no one for you to ask?”

“I can’t ask someone who likes someone else. They’ll hate me!”

“I really don’t think they will. Besides, if someone didn’t want to go with you wouldn’t they just say no?”

Ron gasped. “That’s even *worse*,” he said. “That would mean I did so badly that I asked someone who wasn’t even going to yes.”

“I really don’t see what is so difficult about it.”

“That’s because you don’t have to ask anyone,” Ron grumbled.

“Why not?”

“Well, because you’re a girl, right? So won’t someone ask you?”

Ivy stopped in her tracks. “You’re right. Wait, but what if someone asks me and I don’t want to go with them?”

“See,” Ron said, gesturing broadly, “this is why we have to plan it out.”

“Merlin, I need to find someone fast,” Ivy said. “I can’t get asked by someone and then have to spend the entire time with just them. That’d be terrible.”

“Wait, really?”

“Of course it would be. Then I wouldn’t get to dance with everyone else.”

“Yeah, but what if...” Ron trailed off. “Oh, I don’t know. This is all so stressful.”

“Tell me about it,” Ivy said sympathetically.

Ron continued to tell her all about it.

---

The last block of the day found Ivy seated between Hermione and Daphne in Arithmancy.

“The boys are really stressed about the Yule Ball,” Ivy commented idly.

“Why are *they* stressed?” Hermione asked in a hushed tone.

“They are all trying to make sure they can find someone who will actually say yes to them if they ask.”

“It can’t possibly be that hard, can it?” Daphne asked.

Ivy shrugged. “They have charts.”

“For the love of...” Hermione began in her rant tone. “I doubt it would be all that terrible if they just *asked* someone.”

“Some of them are concerned about asking someone that might like someone else,” Ivy explained.

“That’s...strangely considerate,” Hermione acquiesced.

“How would they know who likes who,” Daphne interjected.

Hermione and Ivy spent the rest of the lesson contemplating that question, unable to find a satisfactory answer.

“Who are you going to ask then?”

George shrugged. “Haven’t thought about it yet.”

*Liar*, Fred thought to himself.

---

*November 30, 1994*

Neville paused for a moment before entering the classroom that served as the meeting place for the Herbology Club. He could do this. All anyone wanted to talk about was the ball, and it was fine. It was all fine. He and Pansy were “broken up” or whatever, but the sympathetic glances had only increased with the growing fervor over the ball.

Oh, who was he kidding. They wouldn’t be getting to much Herbology today.

Neville entered the room, feeling the weight of a dozen pairs of eyes on him as he made his way calmly to an empty seat.

He wondered if he should have placed a bet with himself for how long it would take for someone to ask him about the ball.

Thirty seconds, as it turned out.

“So, er, do you have anyone in mind that you’re going to ask to the ball? Now that you and Pansy aren’t, you know...” Ernie looked a little sheepish.

“I already asked someone,” Neville said.

The room burst into commotion.

Neville sighed. May as well get this over with.

---

“I can’t believe *you* were the first person to ask someone,” Draco said. “No offense.”

Slight offense taken, but only slight, Neville thought as he prepared himself for the twenty-third explanation of the evening. He was keeping track.

“It’s not that big of a deal, really. I asked someone, she said yes, and we’re going together to the Yule Ball.”

“Merlin, I need to find someone to ask *fast* then,” Draco said. “If you’ve already asked someone then I’m sure everyone else is going to start asking soon.”

Neville shook his head. Maybe he’d be able to get more than two bites in before the next person came up and started asking questions. He glanced down the table a bit to where Ginny sat, but she just grinned at him and gave him a thumbs up.

---

*December 1, 1994*

“What do you mean do I want to go with you to the Yule Ball?”

Draco scowled. “You could just say yes or no, you know.”

Pansy huffed. “But why *me*?”

“*Because* I thought we were friends. And you’re clearly not going with Neville.”

“And you’re *sure* you don’t have anyone else to ask?” Pansy pushed.

“Yes, thank you for throwing my complete lack of a dating life in my face like that.”

“Oh come off it, I didn’t mean it like that. Just, isn’t there someone you might want to ask? Someone, perhaps, that you’re interested in?”

“Not someone that would say yes,” Draco muttered.

Pansy latched onto that statement immediately. Well. She could work with that.

“Well then, yes, I’d love to go to the ball with you.”

Draco rolled his eyes at her. “Thanks, Pans.”

“You’re welcome,” she replied imperiously.

---

*December 2, 1994*

Justin only startled a little bit when Pansy practically flopped into the seat next to him.

“Good morning,” he said cautiously.

“A *certain* someone is apparently too much of a puffskein to ask Ivy to the ball.”

“Okay... and?”

Pansy huffed. “*So*, obviously something needs to be done about that. They’d be *perfect* together.”

Justin nodded. “Yeah, they really would. But you can’t just make them like each other.”

Pansy did not seem to agree with that sentiment. “Well, we can at least encourage.”

“What do you think I’ve been doing?” Justin said, then seeing the eyes starting to look their way, lowered his voice to a whisper. “It takes *time*.”

Pansy looked almost impressed. “I didn’t even realize you were doing anything about it.”



“Well, why did you come to me then?” Justin asked, perplexed what else could have brought Pansy here. Well, not here history, but here to the seat next to him.

“Shh, we’ll talk about it later. Class is about to start.”

Justin had questions. It was also probably the only moment he had missed Binns teaching history. Professor Parry was great, and now they were actually learning something, but it also meant he was going to have to wait until the end of class to get answers, if not later.

It truly never occurred to him that he and Pansy might have somehow been talking about different people.

---

Tracey burst into the dorm room and slammed the door behind her.

“What happened?” Daphne asked immediately.

“I just got asked to the Yule Ball.” Tracey blurted out.

“You look... horrified,” Millie said bemusedly.

“Did something happen?” Ivy asked.

Pansy pulled Tracey over to Daphne’s bed, which was the one closest to the door.

“*Linus Claridge* asked me,” Tracey said in a loud whisper, almost as if she couldn’t quite believe it herself.

“He *what*?” Daphne practically shrieked. “How could he do that? He wasn’t being serious, was he?”

“I think he was,” Tracey said. “It was awful.”

“Well, what did you say?” Millie asked, her voice gaining the same tone of horror that Tracey’s had.

“I, er, well...” Tracey cleared her throat. “I didn’t exactly... *say* anything.”

“Alright then, what did you do?” Pansy asked.

Tracey leaned forward until she was facedown on the bed. She said something but it was lost in the bedding.

“Can’t hear you,” Daphne said.

Tracey turned her head so she could speak clearly. “I punched him in the nose and ran off.”

Pansy immediately started cackling and Daphne soon joined her.

“I guess that’s why the boys all have charts,” Ivy mused, making Pansy and Daphne both laugh harder.

Tracey groaned. “It was terrible. He’s terrible. Why in Merlin’s name did he ask *me*? He hates me.”

“Well...” Millie said contemplatively, “maybe he doesn’t *hate* you...”

The other girls all caught on immediately.

“No,” Pansy gasped. “He can’t possibly *like* Tracey.”

“Thanks,” Tracey mumbled.

“That would mean he had *taste*,” Pansy continued. “I’m not ready to give him that much credit.

Tracey snorted at Pansy’s attempts to make her feel better.

“So, boy likes girl, boy is mean to girl for three and a half years, boy thinks girl will like him back?” Ivy questioned.

Tracey just screamed into the bed.

---

“Is Ivy alright?”

Adrian turned to the person asking. “Yes? As far as I know. Why?”

Bridget shrugged. “Saw Claridge on his way to the hospital wing. Looks like someone punched him right in the nose.”

“And your first assumption was Ivy?”

“Your point?”

“No point,” Adrian said, shaking his head. “I’ll check on her though.”

---

“Oh, Elizabeth, do you know if Ivy is in her room?”

“Yeah, I think so. Why?”

“I’m just supposed to check if she’s alright. Something about Claridge?”

Elizabeth snorted. “Yeah, she’s fine. Wasn’t her that got him though.”

“Would you mind asking her to come down for a minute though?” Adrian asked.

“Sure.”

Adrian Pucey was many things, but Thomas Harrington he was not. He would wait for Ivy here in the common room like a normal wizard.

---

“So then Tracey punched him in the face.”

“That’s... wow. Alright then. Is she okay?”

Ivy nodded and Adrian relaxed a bit in utter relief. He was somehow committed to protecting Ivy (he was still not sure what from, given the fact that she was as competent as any of the rest of them), but he was in no way prepared to offer comfort to other fourth-year girls. He was not qualified for this.

As Ivy left, presumably to go back to her room and continue talking about whatever girls talked about when they were by themselves, his mind drifted to the situation of Linus Claridge. He’d almost pity the wizard if he didn’t know how much he was loathed by the fourth-year girls. Honestly, what was Claridge *thinking*? Had he really thought Tracey would say yes to going out with him after everything he had done? Granted, it hadn’t been so bad recently. Adrian figured that anyone with a brain would wise up after having Tiger sicced on them enough times. So maybe the presentation had just been really poorly done? Somehow Adrian didn’t think so, but he couldn’t help but feel a bit more nervous about asking someone himself. As long as he didn’t do as badly as Claridge... No, he doubted *anyone* could do as poorly as Claridge.

---

*December 3, 1994*

“I have come to the conclusion that you would be the best person to ask to the Yule Ball.”

Justin choked on his juice and tried very much to hide it so he could hear what in Merlin’s name Ivy was doing.

“Why would you think that?” Zach asked.

Justin couldn’t believe his ears. Or his eyes. Or anything else for that matter. Was this a dream? A nightmare? Was he in a coma and hadn’t realized it?

“You don’t particularly like me, I don’t particularly like you, you’re not terrible at dancing, I have to dance in the opening dance, then we would be able to part ways as unlikely allies and enjoy the rest of our evening without having to worry about staying focused on a date.”

Ivy was really doing this. Merlin.

“What if I had someone else I wanted to ask?”

“You don’t.”

“You don’t know-“

“I saw the charts.”

Justin took the opportunity to look very invested in something happening at the other end of the table. No need to give Zach ideas when he was already most likely glowering.

“Alright, first of all-“

“If you go with me I can guarantee that Megan and Lisa will both dance at least once with you.”

Wow, Ivy was good.

“How can you guarantee that?” Zach asked suspiciously.

“Because they said, and I quote, ‘if you and Zach go together we’ll dance with him so you don’t have to.’”

Justin wanted to feel offended on his friend’s behalf, but he had seen the charts. Not only did both of those girls have dates already, but Zach had the world’s worst secret crush on Lisa, and Megan had flat out refused to go with any of the fourth-year Hufflepuff boys, saying she saw too much of them already, so... Ivy and Zach could stand each other for that long unsupervised. It’d be fine, really.

“Deal,” Zach said, shaking Ivy’s hand.

That had to be the least romantic Yule Ball-date proposal so far but... Wait, no, Claridge had gone to the hospital wing yesterday...

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*December 4, 1994*

“Has he asked her yet?”

Fred huffed at Lee’s question. “No, he hasn’t. What’s taking him so long?”

Lee shrugged. “No idea. He’d better hurry though. Someone else will ask her soon if he doesn’t.”

Fred’s face lit up.

“Oh no, whatever it is you’re thinking, don’t do it.”

“But if he’s not going to ask her?”

“You’re seriously going to ask Angelina, the girl your brother has been silently pining over for *two years*, to the ball because, what, you think he’ll get jealous and do something?”

“Like cut in and dance with her instead? Absolutely.”

“Well then who is he going to ask?”

“Beats me.”

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*December 5, 1994*

“I need your help.”

George looked up in surprise. “With what?” he said cautiously.

“Well Draco asked me to the ball, but he was supposed to ask Ivy, and then Ivy went and asked *Zacharias Smith* of all people, and now everything is a disaster.”

George stared at Pansy for a second. “Well, why did you say yes then? Also, did our dear Draco *know* he was supposed to ask Ivy?”

“Well, no, but he said he didn’t have the courage to ask her.”

“Did he say Ivy specifically?”

Pansy thought about it. “Well, no, but-”

“Believe me, if he wanted to ask Ivy, he would have asked Ivy.”

Pansy huffed. “But they’d be so good together.”

“And alas, but wishing does not make it so.”

“As you found out.”

“Thanks for pointing that out, hadn’t realized that,” George said sarcastically.

“You’re welcome.”

“You also realize Charlie is eight years older than you?”

“Touché.”

George and Pansy exchanged a look of understanding. Neither would speak of this again, to each other or to anyone else.

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*December 6, 1994*

“I just can’t believe Ivy and Zach are going together out of all people. They might not be the mortal enemies that Tracey and Claridge are, but they have never claimed to like each other, and they only seem to get along when they’re ignoring each other’s existence.”

Luna nodded sympathetically. “I know you had hoped Theo would ask her.”

Justin groaned. “They’d be perfect. I don’t get why Pansy and I are the only ones to see that.”

“Pansy thinks Ivy should date *Draco*.”

“Wait, what?”

Luna hummed. “So who are you going to ask?”

“Oh, right. Er, I meant to ask you? I got a little sidetracked, didn’t I.”

“It’s alright. I’d love to go with you.”

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*December 7, 1994*

“I just don’t know what to do. What if it goes horribly? Would it be rude to find someone else to be around if it does?”

Neville did not know why *he* was being asked these questions. What in Merlin’s lengthy history gave any of them the idea that he knew what to do in these sorts of situations? He said just as much.

“I know you and Pansy are over, but your love will shine like a star in our memories.”

Neville couldn’t help but think the rest of the Herbology Club was *far* too invested in his and Pansy’s dating... thing. They hadn’t even been dating for real, for Merlin’s sake.

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