

Intimacy

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/37714300) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/37714300>.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Categories:	F/M , M/M , Multi
Fandom:	Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling
Relationships:	Harry Potter/Tom Riddle Voldemort , Harry Potter/Tom Riddle , James Potter/Lily Evans Potter , Sirius Black/Remus Lupin
Characters:	Harry Potter , Tom Riddle Voldemort , Bellatrix Black Lestrangle , Original Female Character(s) , Penny Haywood , Alecto Carrow , Regulus Black , Felix Rosier , Patricia Rakepick , Pippa Macmillan , Cedric Diggory , Daphne Greengrass , Luna Lovegood , Theodore Nott , Hermione Granger , James Potter , Lily Evans Potter , Delphi (Harry Potter) , Original Male Character(s) , Sirius Black , Remus Lupin
Additional Tags:	Imperial China , But in Britain with British royalty themes , Alternate Universe - Harem , Alternate Universe - Voldemort Wins , Emperor Tom Riddle , Possessive Tom Riddle , Sane Tom Riddle , Manipulative Tom Riddle , Mpreg , Pregnancy , Harems , Concubine Harry Potter , Harem Intrigue , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Alternate Universe - Royalty , Alternate Universe , James Potter Lives , Lily Evans Potter Lives , Gryffindor Harry Potter , Harry Potter is the Heir to the House of Black , Harry Potter is the Heir to the House of Potter , Nobility , Implied/Referenced miscarriage , Bullying , Can't have a harem without annoying Concubines , Happy Ending , Power Imbalance , but it gets better , Smitten Tom Riddle , Powerful Harry Potter , Slow Burn , I've been told but I thought it was moving quickly , BAMF Harry Potter , eventually , Magically Powerful Harry Potter , Children
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of The Imperial Harem
Stats:	Published: 2022-03-13 Updated: 2024-02-11 Words: 165,500 Chapters: 40/67

Intimacy

by [xStrawberry_Jams](#)

Summary

Ever since he was young, Harry had been fascinated with the Emperor, the founder of the Slytherin Dynasty and ruler of the world. When the chance appeared to become a part of his Harem, Harry jumped at it, eager to figure out the elusive man. He did not, however, predict the mutual obsession he would receive from the world's most powerful being.

As a concubine of the Emperor, Harry struggles to accept how his new status changes everything, from relationships with his dearest friends, to how he is viewed by society at large. And as the Emperor's favour grows, so does the danger. And now, he has more to protect than just himself.

-More scenes in: 'Intimacy- Additions'

- Translation into Español available: [Intimidación - Intimacy](#) by [Lexibellife](#)

Prologue: [Deviation]

Chapter Notes

Last Edited: 31/07/22- +120 words

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

31st December 1926- Aged 0

In the year 1926, on New Year's Eve, a miraculous being was born in the most unworthy of conditions, pulled screaming and crying into a world that was not ready for his presence, and perhaps, it never would be. The snowstorm outside battered the windows of the rundown orphanage with careless brutality, unwavering in the face of the new life taking its first breath inside that very moment.

The caretakers stared out of the windows with worry, flinching at every sharp whistle of wind that rattled the windowpanes, shivering as the frigid breeze crept through the cracks. They bustled on, however, feeling an almost compulsive need to help the babe survive the night, which they were sure the mother would not, with how sickly pale she was becoming.

" I will.-will name him... Tom..." Her lips were chapped, skin sunken, eyes hollow, and the young matron near her could not help but jerk back at the sound of her raspy voice.

" Tom?" She repeated, taking a single step closer so that she could take a peek down at the newly named boy. He looked sweet, all ten fingers, all ten toes- unlike his mother- and she couldn't help but wonder who would have decided to father a child with a woman like this one. She wasn't attractive whatsoever and held no appeal that she would even call her the ugliest woman she had ever laid eyes on. She snapped out of those thoughts at the sound of the woman's throaty cough, grimacing as she clutched the child closer to her chest.

" Tom... after-after his father. Marvolo, after..." There was a pause. "Riddle." The woman- and that was all they knew her as, as she had not deigned to give them a name before she began labour- was beginning to slump, her words slow and slurred, like a drunk.

" Ma'am?" The matron shook her shoulder jarringly as her head began to droop.

" Yes, yes... Tom...Marvolo Riddle. My sweet child." She gazed adoringly down at the bundle within her arms, breathing growing more and more ragged by the second. She began to worry, fretting over the loosening hold she had on the child, who was beginning to slip from his blanket. " I wish... I had...a little more..." Her voice cut off with a sudden sharp rasp, eyes bulging as she slowly turned a grotesque shade of blue, choked noises gargling from her throat. Watching was all Miss Cole could do, as the woman ducked her head to stare at the child once more before her chest stopped moving, and that fondness in her eyes dimmed.

The wails of the newly orphaned infant rang throughout the orphanage like church bells, echoed by distant cheers of the people welcoming the beginning of the new year.

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April 1932- Aged 5

Tom Riddle- or freak, as the children of the orphanage frequently liked to chant at him- sat alone in a small clearing in the woods, staring at the levitating leaf above his palm with intense concentration. It jerked unnaturally in the air, swaying as if it was attached to a piece of string, before beginning to turn slowly.

He had recently discovered this fascinating ability of his, to be able to influence things around him without touching them. Such as the leaf, which was slowly beginning to crumble under his attention. Soon, all that was left was a small pile of dust on his palm, and he let it fall to the floor, tipping his hand and watching the dust sparkle slightly.

Magic.

Tom allowed a grin to appear on his face at the realisation of just what this power meant, to be able to do things he had heard no other outside of fairytales could. He had always known that he was special and, having this ability just proved that. Staring up at the bleak visage of

the orphanage that he could spot peeking out from the top of the trees, he swore that he'd achieve greatness no matter what if only to leave this place behind.

" Oi, Tommy boy! Come an' do tha dishes will yer! Stop sittin' there lookin' gormless, we ain't got all day!" The shrill cry of one of the few caretakers, wiped the smile off of his face, replacing it with a frown. Tom allowed his hands to curl, face scrunching up, his magic singeing the grass around him. He hated them, the pathetic creatures that thought they could order him around like a dog! One day, when he learnt to control his magic, he'd get them back, and show everyone just how powerful he was!

" Tommy, Hurry up!"

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November 1938- Aged 11

Tom was walking towards the library when it happened. A group of Purebloods from his own house had cornered him and purposefully walked into him so that they would have an excuse to belittle him. Not as if they always waited for an excuse, but they decided to today.

"Mudblood, watch where you're walking! What if you infect us with your diseases!" One of the boys taunted, the group gathered around him snickering. " I don't even know why they allow your kind in here, your obviously not worthy of being taught where Purebloods such as us learn." Another round of giggles.

Tom simply glared at them, his nose upturned as he stared down at them.

"My apologies, I didn't realise this was the school for pureblooded dimwits. Is there somewhere else I could transfer to, somewhere that has a bit more... competition."

"How dare you, Riddle! When my father hears about this, you won't be acting so snarky then!"

" But your father won't actually hear about it, will he Malfoy? After all, isn't he oh so busy in the Wizengamot? Surely he doesn't have the time to spare on his son's school squabbles." He turned, heading into the library to return his books and pick up some new ones.

" Riddle! Riddle, don't turn your back on me! Hey!"

" I'm busy at the moment, Malfoy. Maybe I'll have some time to chat later."

" Riddle!"

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June 1944- Aged 17

Tom Marvolo Riddle stumbled down the slippery steps of the Chamber of Secrets, cursing as he clung to the moss-ridden walls. He looked around with disgust as he finally reached the bottom, coming to a stop before the door that had caught his eye the last time around.

It was smaller than most, almost unnoticeable to the eye with how it blended into the walls on either side. But that's why it had caught his. He knew that something must be hiding behind it: otherwise, the creator wouldn't have put any thought into trying to hide it, even from other descendants.

Inching closer- he was *not* scared, just wary, was all -Tom rested his palm against the wood and began to hiss. " *Open for me, the last descendent of the Slytherin line .*" It didn't budge, and for a few moments, he stood there in silence, frowning murderously at the wood as if it had committed the world's worst crime. Then, it began to descend into the floor slowly, opening up to reveal a grand library.

Tom was in awe, stepping forward into the cavernous hall that had no right being this *big* , not whist existing under Hogwarts. The carpet under his feet still felt plush and soft, and for a

moment, he felt self-conscious about how dirty he was in a place of such grandeur.

He brushed that thought away immediately, scowling to himself. He had the right to be here more than anyone, as the descendent of Slytherin, dirty or not.

Marching forwards with purpose, he browsed the shelves, picking out books that peaked his fancy. And there were a lot of them. ' *Who knew that Merlin himself had written a book on Necromancy?*' He cackled internally at the thought of Dumbledore's face if he ever got his hands on this book written by the supposed figurehead of 'all things good and light', as he had been coined by the Transfiguration Professor only a few lessons ago.

The conveniently placed chairs and tables dotted around the room were a blessing for his ever-growing thirst for knowledge, stopping every so often to crack open a book that had been distracting him for too long. One such book was about magical compulsions that could go undetected by most wixen, which he stashed within his robes for later reading.

It was hours before he finally reached the end of the library, and he knew that it was soon approaching the time he'd have to leave. Before he could turn around to make his way back, a book sitting innocently on the desk caught his eye, still opened on a page. Tom curiously made his way to it, reading the contents with growing hunger, the books once cradled carefully in his arms laying forgotten at the edge of the desk.

This was it. This was the goal he would strive for.

Tom Riddle smiled down at the pages and erased the name that blemished the parchment with relish, writing in its space one that filled him with satisfaction.

Thomas Marvolo Slytherin.

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June 1945- Aged 18

" My apologies, my boy, but you are simply much too young for this position. My, you'll only have just graduated! No, no, much too young, you'd be better off going and getting a mastery beforehand. I'm positive that you'd gain it easily, within a couple of years at most, and I'd be happy to have you join the staff in a few years if you're still interested?" Dippet was fluttering again, waving his hands about in an attempt to placate him, who did not need the man's apologies and promises.

" That is reasonable, Headmaster. It was quite silly of me to think that such a prestigious school would accept staff straight out of education, with nothing to back them up." He smiled genially down at the old wizard, making sure to not show the man too many teeth in the process. Some of them had begun to sharpen in the past few weeks, a side effect of the rituals he had performed. It was a small price to pay for greatness, and he knew that one day, nobody would dare comment on his appearance.

" My boy, don't downplay your abilities! You are one of the finest Wizards to ever grace Hogwarts' walls, and I'm sure the founders are mightily proud of you. My only concern is your age."

And wasn't that what it always was? Age. Such a constraint, one that he was glad to finally have gotten rid of once he'd entered his adult years, that had kept him locked in that muggle hovel for eighteen years and counting.

He would have that filthy place torn to the ground when he ruled one day and have a grand palace built in its place, so lavish that it would be a sickening display of wealth that he'd equally loathe and covet its existence.

" Of course, sir, I understand." And he'd rebuilt Hogwarts from the inside out, too. Starting with the staff who'd gotten much too complacent in their cushy jobs, the teaching standards no longer what they used to be. There was a ghost teaching History of Magic, for Merlin's sake!

" Why, teaching might not even be your calling! I'd always pinned you as a politician, you know. Minister, perhaps, one day in the future. And I'd be cheering you on the whole way, do not doubt that, Tom."

A glint entered his eyes. " Oh, and what would you say makes me a politician, sir?"

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1948- Aged 21

" You could have been a great politician, my boy, with that mind of yours. It's a shame to see it wasted on such destruction." Dumbledore shook his head in mocking sadness, eyes twinkling maddeningly and his wand pointed towards his opponent despite his innocent expression. They had been in a standoff for the past few minutes, the gathered crowds around them holding their breaths as arguably the two most powerful wizards in the world duked it out.

" Oh, shut it you old coot! You're just as morally reprehensible as I am, I just don't hide it behind the grandfatherly facade you've worked so hard to perfect!" Lord Slytherin shouted, gritting his teeth. His Knights shifted protectively behind him as Dumbledore took a step forward, a concerned expression marring his features.

" Oh, no, dear boy, what I am doing is for the greater good!"

" You deluded fool! You don't see it, do you? You're destroying this world and the culture that we have developed and protected over millennia to appease those prejudiced *muggles!* "

" They are muggle-borns, Tom, people with magic, just like you. They deserve as much of a say in the way our world heads as we do, raised by muggles as they were. *Just like you were.*"

" No. No, they do not. Our culture shouldn't have to be stripped from us just because they were raised in a different one that deems our practices barbaric! I accepted our culture, one that I had never heard of but still made an effort to integrate into, but they- those *mudbloods* only want to replace it with Christian equivalents-" He was getting too emotional, he needed to rein it in, but the man just wasn't *listening* and never listened to *him* -

Dumbledore took his moment of distraction as an opportunity and shot a spell at him lightning quick. He blocked it, barely, staring wide-eyed at the other. His usually grandfatherly features had twisted into something recognisable, a sneer curling his lips.

"You are wrong, Tom. Unfortunately, for the greater good, you and those who share your opinions must be eradicated." His eyes no longer twinkled and were instead stony with indifference.

Drawing himself up to his full height, Tom- Lord Slytherin drew in a deep breath and released it slowly. "So be it, if you can. However, I assure you, whilst you were once the world's most powerful man, I now hold that claim. I will not be allowing you to harm me nor my followers, not today, and certainly not any time in the future." He lifted his wand and hissed. "*Avada Kedavra!*"

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June 1950- Aged 23

"My Lord." Lord Slytherin looked to the side to see one of his most loyal followers, Abraxas Malfoy, kneeling respectfully, head bowed. His silver hair glinted in the sunlight, and it wasn't for the first time that Tom took a few moments to admire his follower's unique features. His lip quirked smugly at seeing the boy who had once been the bane of his existence in his early years at Hogwarts turned into a subservient, loyal dog.

"Abraxas, what news do you bring?" He drawled, delighting in the flinch he received, amused at the shiver.

"The Order of the Phoenix has been suppressed, My Lord. Their leader, Albus Dumbledore, has fled the country in fear of your power and left the rebels behind with no forewarning. They are currently scrambling about without his instruction, and many have been captured."

Lord Slytherin smiled gleefully, stroking the white chess piece on the board in front of him with a single finger, before flicking it off of the table. "Yes, just as I had planned." His voice was a pleased hiss, sending shudders down the spines of those within earshot. "Abraxas, send

out the word: Britain has been conquered, and other countries are soon to follow. Remind them that it would be best for them to surrender now than face inevitable, unneeded losses."

" Yes, My Lord."

"Hm, no." Abraxas looked up in confusion, recoiling as he saw the cheery expression on his childhood friend's face. "Call me...Emperor. It is more fitting now, yes? Seeing as how I will soon be the ruler of my own Empire."

Abraxas swallowed and croaked out a hesitant "Yes, my Emperor."

Tom cackled, delighting in the way those around him flinched away in fright as he stood, magic roiling off him in dense ways. " Yesss, It does have a nice ring to it. My ancestor was correct in that. His majesty, Emperor Slytherin~"

Chapter End Notes

Hello! Once again, I'm posting a Harry Potter fanfiction. ^-^

This one will be very different to my previous one. This is a -Voldemort Wins AU- and is semi-inspired by Arabella_McGrath's 'Sighs of the Palace Walls' on AO3 [Very much recommend], And many other Imperial Harem fanfics that I can't remember right now.

It's kind of based on the Chinese Imperial Harem [Mostly Qing Dynasty] but also contains elements of British and Japanese Royalty. Forewarning- There will be Mpreg. This is also heavily AU, although I will stick to canon things in the weirdest ways. Lots of people are alive that shouldn't be, Muggles know of the wizarding world and live under the reign of Emperor Slytherin, and Bellatrix is weirdly docile [to start].

This is only the prologue- expect longer chapters- and I already have a couple of chapters written up. I just wanted to see people's opinions of this premise before I post it on any other platform. That said, please comment what you think, anything at all :)

Thank you for reading this chapter, and I hope you stick around for the ones to come
~Jam

Twitter: xStrawberryJam_

Chapter 1: [A Choice]

Chapter Notes

I didn't expect so many people would read this so quickly, so here's another chapter that I have written up ^-^
Edited 25/06/22- Hit 3k words :)

When Emperor Slytherin, then Lord Thomas Slytherin, declared war against Britain, the public scoffed in contempt, assured that the ministry would put him down like they had the other Grindelwald aspirants. It took them over a hundred magical deaths and many more muggle ones before they began to treat him as a threat, but by then, it was already too late.

Dumbledore's abandonment of Britain and the group he had cultivated solely to bring down the Dark Lord was the final nail in the coffin. No longer than a week later, the Lord became an Emperor, Britain his Empire.

When he declared war against the world, four years after the beginning of the first, the people of the world feared his plausible victory but hid it behind false bravado and dishonest claims of resilience. These would not last long, however, as the nations began to crumble under his power, the Emperor claiming the countries surrounding his, the Empire seeping outwards at an alarming rate.

And when he completed his takeover of the world in 1975, the earth itself ground to a halt to bow down to him, such was the absurdity of his strength.

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July 1988

" Announcing his Imperial Majesty, The High Emperor of the Slytherin Dynasty!" Cheers rang through the city as the man draped in robes of mesmerising black and dazzling silver stepped forward into view, a firm expression on his face. The Emperor, the man whole held

the utmost power in the Empire, rarely showed himself to the public, so even a glimpse of him far in the distance was worth the wait.

Tom, from his place on the balcony, observed the adoring crowd below with satisfaction, dragging his eyes slowly across it, basking in his accomplishment. It had been a long time coming, but now, after over a decade of secure ruling over the entirety of the world, Tom could finally feel content with his power.

The clicking of footsteps behind him drew him out of his pleasure, and he watched, out of the corner of his eye, as the members of his Harem slowly surrounded him, bowing deeply.

He paid them no mind, eyes flicking back to the people before him, clamouring and clambering, trying to get as close as they could to the being they saw as their god. He let out a small chuckle, lips twisting into a gleeful sneer. " Delightful, aren't they? Such simple things, muggles are, wouldn't you agree?" There was no response, but that was to be expected. What was his would never dare to speak out of turn in his presence. " I can even sense some wixen down there, but they seem to at least have the decorum not to push and shove like a bunch of animals. I would expect no less from those blessed by magic, but the people just keep on surprising me these days." He let out a sigh before turning around with an elegant twirl of his robe, facing them. " I have had enough for today. Let us retire. Evangeline, with me."

A blonde woman with elaborate hair decorations stepped forward at his beckoning, holding out her hand to Tom, who took it gently. She smiled at him, blue eyes twinkling in a way that made him shiver slightly in remembrance of an enemy he hadn't heard a peep from in nearly forty years." Yes, your majesty."

He quirked his lips, sending one last glance at the crowd, then led his entourage back inside.

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Somewhere below, in the midst of the crowd, stood a young Harry Potter, surrounded by his scowling parents and their friends, who were twittering angrily to one another, the comments directed at the Emperor. Harry listened halfheartedly as his parents echoed the insults, his focus elsewhere. He took one look at the man, standing upon his gilded balcony, draped in such lavish robes he had only ever seen on a few wizards, and *wanted* with deep fervour.

It was yet to be known whether he wanted what the Emperor had, or the Emperor himself.

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July 1991

Harry bowed deeply, hands shaking slightly, even though he was willing them to stop, as he greeted the Emperor softly, a far cry from his father's confident attitude. His mother didn't speak, her presence not noted by the Emperor, remaining silent but steadfast by his side. "Greetings to his Majesty, Emperor Slytherin. I thank you for inviting us."

The man shifted upon his throne, leaning forward ever so slightly. Harry twitched in fear. "Heir Potter-Black, it is a pleasure to finally meet you. I have heard such lavish praises about your abilities from my daughter, as well as the news that you have been accepted into Hogwarts. I congratulate you on your achievement. May your time at the Empire's greatest school be a prosperous one."

"Thank you, Your Majesty." He felt proud that his voice didn't shake as much as it wanted to: the merciless Emperor had punished people for less than a simple trembling voice.

"Lord Potter, it seems that your blood is strong within your son. Let it be a blessing to you, who has not yet produced a Pureblood spawn, nor taken a Pureblooded Concubine." The Emperor's tone was condescending, intending to embarrass Harry's Father in front of the court gathered around them, silent observers of their torment. He thanked the stars that Lord Malfoy wasn't present, as, despite his friendship with his children, the man had never really gotten along with the Potter Family, even less after their status was practically ripped from them.

His father seemed to puff up a little at the barely hidden insult towards his wife. "I am happy with the child I have fathered, and the wife that I have taken, Your Majesty. I feel no need to add to them in the near future." He felt proud of his father for his strong tone, so unlike what he would muster under the pressure of such a being's disapproving gaze. He could only hope that his years at Hogwarts would bring him out of his shell and allow him to be the person he wished without cowering in fear.

" Impudence of the highest order, Lord Potter. You will one day see the error of your ways. How lucky it is that your son turned out to be so magically powerful, despite his mother's blood. I hope that you, Heir Potter-Black, will choose your own spouse wisely in the future if your father won't do that himself."

Harry simply nodded, his eyes still downturned. He didn't want to meet the eyes of the Emperor, having heard tales all his childhood of the horrors that befell those who did. He heard the Emperor sigh slightly and flinched, taking an involuntary step backwards. There was a pause, the air beginning to suffocate him as the seconds passed by with no response.

" I grow tired of this meeting. Leave." The Emperor commanded, staring down at the Potters with mixed contempt and fascination. Contempt for the parents who had wronged him many times before, and fascination at the little boy they had created who outshone his peers in all aspects, from magic to intelligence. He was a curiosity, but he was much too young to have any sort of insightful conversation with. Therefore, he had no further need of the Potter's presence. Besides, Tom was unsure if too much fear would make the boy release some accidental magic, and he'd dislike punishing him for a display of power.

The trio rushed out of his lavish greeting hall, the adults herding the boy along, sheltering him from the Emperor's gaze. And wasn't it a shame that the young boy had already been ensnared? He watched as the boy- and wasn't he just that, merely ten years old- snuck a glance over his shoulder, a curious little creature. Their eyes met, green clashing with red, and that was all Tom needed to dive gently into the boy's mind, merely reading his surface thoughts.

'He's really pretty. I want him, I want to be like him.' Before it was cut off as Harry snapped his head back around, flushing at being caught looking at him. Tom felt, deep down, that he was most definitely going to meet Harry once again.

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May 1997

" Harry, you can't be serious! Applying to join the Emperor's Harem? Have you gone mad? You're going to get yourself killed. Do you know how ruthless it is in there? Just listening to

the stories makes me glad that I have virtually no chance of even stepping foot inside of the grand city, let alone the Emperor's personal court where those spineless bitches reside!" Hermione berated Harry as they walked through the busy hallway, attracting the attention of many.

It wasn't often that you saw a Muggle-born at the world's most prestigious school, after all. Let alone walking the hallways with their head held high, arm in arm with a Potter, still one of the Noble Families, no matter how disgraced they were.

" I'll be fine, Hermione." He sighed, eyes rolling when she stopped to glare, yanking on the sleeve of his robe to halt him.

" Oh, will you now? And how do you know that, hm?" The witch didn't budge from her spot, ignoring the malicious stares sent her way from the milling students.

Harry groaned, tugging at her sleeve slightly in an attempt to keep them moving, wincing at the angry muttering he could hear. " Okay, I don't know for certain, but Hermione-"

" What is such a good reason that you are willing to risk your life for it!" She whisper-shouted, teeth slightly gritted in frustration.

" If you had let me finish, you would already know. So, you know how my family holds not even a fraction of its former prestige?"

" Because your great-grandfather liked muggles."

" Exactly. And the fact that my father married a muggle-born didn't help win it back at all, it seems to have declined it further-" Hermione snorted, she'd heard all about the Potter's sudden decline from power before, and she had made her thoughts know about how she didn't agree with the reason why at all. " So, I had a thought. What if I join the Emperor's Harem? That would surely bring some power back to my family."

" Harry, no. Did you not listen to what I said? The Harem is-"

" The Harem is exceedingly dangerous, yes, yes, I know. But, it'd be worth it. My family... father and mother are both ridiculed in society. And with the baby on the way... I just thought that..."

" You want them to grow up without the scorn you received." Her voice was soft and understanding. " Alright, I understand. But! This does not mean that I accept it. Until the day you head off to the selection, I will be reciting everything that could go wrong in the Harem. Number one, Bellatrix Lestrange is the highest-ranking member of the Emperor's Harem, and a crazy, deranged bitch. Do you know how ruthless that woman was back when the harem came out more?"

Harry drew in a sharp breath through his teeth, yanking more insistently." Hermione! Quiet!"

" What, am I wrong?"

" Watch what you say!" He snapped at her, frowning slightly at the heads turned their way. "We're in the middle of the hallway! You could be accused of trying to start a rebellion against the monarchy if someone reports you!" Harry grabbed ahold of her arm and began to pull her towards the old Transfiguration classroom. " The Emperor is even more ruthless than Consort Bellatrix. He wouldn't give mercy to a Pureblood for such comments, let alone a Muggleborn!" He shut the door behind them, leaning against it, looking slightly flushed.

" Do you want to hear number two?"

"...yeah, go on then."

" Number two, Draco Malfoy's little sister is aiming to join the Harem. Draco Malfoy who is obsessed with you-"

" Well, I wouldn't say he's obsessed." He met Hermione's dead-eyed stare head-on.

" Oh yes, I forgot that attempted child marriage was common in Wizarding society. Didn't he say he'd make you his Consort? That's quite a high position for that bigotted prick to give you."

" He said that he'd wait until we'd graduated Hogwarts, actually. Besides, his dad rejected the proposal immediately. Apparently, I'm too 'Muggle' for his precious heir. It's not like the Emperor accepts even Muggleborns into his Harem or anything." He tittered sarcastically, and she ignored him.

" Anyway, Draco Malfoy's little sister is attempting to join, and I know for sure that she will probably get in. From what I've heard, she isn't any better than her brother- if anything, she's worse!" Hermione threw her hands out, looking slightly wild-eyed.

" Dahlia is a sweetheart, and you know it." And she was, if you were one of her friends, that is. Anything less, and she was beyond spiteful. Just the other week, she had publicly rejected a courtship proposal from a Ravenclaw boy, stating that anything less than the Emperor wasn't worth her time. She cruelly tore the letter the boy had asked her to hand to her father before his eyes, and under the watch of the entire student population, told him that he wasn't worthy of her.

" No, she isn't! I can't believe it, you've also been blinded by her, that conniving-"

" I'm riding in the Malfoy family carriage to the city with her."

"...What? Why- Harry!"

" Got to go, History starts soon!" He called back as he escaped from the room.

" You don't even take History!"

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Harry fidgeted with the sleeves of the pure white robe that had been draped over him, anxiously staring out of the window of the thestral-drawn carriage. The streets were lined with people eager to take a peep at this year's concubine candidates, which, unfortunately, he was one of.

" Harrison, stop fiddling with your sleeves. You're going to wrinkle them." The girl opposite him snapped, wrinkly her perfectly aristocratic nose. Her grey eyes stared back at him expectantly when he snapped his head up.

Harry sheepishly lowered his head, releasing the sleeves and trying his best to smooth them out. " Sorry, Dahlia."

She huffed as if he was causing all of her problems. " You need to look your best if you're trying to gain the Emperor's attention. I have a sure way in, daddy has his Majesty's favour, but you... your parents aren't exactly on his good side."

" I know." He sighed softly. "That's why I'm here." Harry turned his head to continue observing the road ahead, watching as the grand castle grew ever closer. It was much bigger than Hogwarts, more extravagant too, made of white stone that gleamed in the sunlight and decorated with marble statues, smattered with golden details. It was not, however, where the Emperor lived with his Harem. The castle was simply a show of power, situated in the City of Honour, formerly London, and acted as the base for the selection process. No one other than the Emperor, his Harem, his children and those employed in his service were allowed to enter the Emperor's court, aptly named the Court of Beauty and Passion.

Dahlia's scoff brought his attention back into the carriage. " If only you're father hadn't diluted his bloodline, then his only son wouldn't have to grovel to his majesty for even a hint of respect." She crossed her arms, leaning back on the plush purple seats with an air of superiority.

" If dad hadn't married my mum, I wouldn't exist. And what would you do without your greatest friend, hm?" He smiled sharkishly, feeling offended at the veiled insult towards his mother's ancestry.

" As if you're the greatest! Daphne and I have such intellectual conversations when you aren't around."

" Notice how you didn't mention Pansy?"

" Pansy is a well-bred pureblood-"

" And a bigoted, spineless bitch!"

"-who I can hold insightful conversations with."

" What is with you and conversations? Isn't us racing around your manor grounds with a house-elf chasing after us so much more fun?"

" I nearly died that day!"

" I told you that there was a tree up ahead. It's not my fault you have selective hearing."

" I-" The carriage came to a halt, and Dahlia straightened herself up, looking sharply at Harry to mimic her. The door was pulled open to reveal that they had stopped in front of a grand gate, looking as if it was made out of pure gold. Harry supposed that it was, knowing who had ordered its construction.

Dahlia stood gracefully, gingerly taking the hand of one of the men at the door, who bowed his head, trying not to make eye contact. She glided down the steps and onto the white path, looking back at Harry to urge him on.

He hurried after her, ignoring the disappointed stare sent his way as he clambered down the steps on his own. Coming to a halt by her side, he grinned, huffing at the eye roll he received.

The pair elegantly made their way to the gate, which was opened as the guard confirmed their identities, and they were ushered through the gates that closed behind them with a resounding bang as their last servant scampered in.

It made the whole affair feel suddenly more real to Harry. There was no going back now, not unless he was rejected by the Emperor, a scary possibility that made him shiver. He eyed his friend's back. He might never get to see her again if one passed and the other didn't.

Dahlia, who was a few steps ahead of him, drew in a deep breath and squared her shoulders. "Come along Harrison, we need to go and greet the other candidates before the selection begins. It wouldn't do to appear rude in front of our possibly soon-to-be fellow Concubines, we must greet them cordially." Harry fell into step with her and breathed in deeply, calming his nerves as best he could.

"Yeah, let's go face the competition."

Chapter 2: [Harry's Selection]

Chapter Notes

I have a little written up for the next chapter since I split this one up :) But I am currently ill, so it may be delayed. I edited this whilst barely lucid, so please comment on any mistakes, or any ideas on how I can expand any of the shorter scenes without adding too much ^-^ -Jam

Last Edited: 26/06/22- +700 words

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

1st July 1997

" Yeah, let's go face the competition. "

The inside of the palace was a beautiful place, obviously created and decorated to impress, a display of wealth so outstanding that he felt like turning tail and running out of the golden gates. The ceilings were high, scenes of wixen and creatures carved into them with stunning intricacy that could only have been done by hand, with pillars of marble holding it up that glittered with embedded gold. Harry was sure that he was gaping as they joined up with the ever-growing crowd gathered near a platform.

Their competition appeared to be an underwhelming bunch, less intimidating than he had assumed they were going to be. Sure, the Harem hopefuls gathered within the castle were all beautiful beyond the norm, which was a great boost for their chances, but none seemed to hold anything beyond that at first glance. Most of them held only an average amount of magic, some none at all [Harry had to wonder what they were thinking- didn't they know that one of the first tests was determining magic power?], when one of the requirements was to have more magic than the average wixen. So, that automatically more than halved the competition.

He had also spotted a group of witches in the back of the hall falling over each other, trying to steady themselves on shoes they had never worn before. One of the tests happened to be about elegance, so he could only assume that they wouldn't pass that round.

The only test Harry was truly worried about was the final one, where those who had passed were judged by the Emperor himself, taking into account all of their previous scores. He had no idea whether the Emperor would dismiss him outright, only having heard his name. That would disgrace his family further, but he held out hope. When they had met all those years back, Harry merely ten years old, the Emperor hadn't looked down on him with any malicious intent.

He could only hope that the years passed hadn't allowed any negative feelings to grow.

His observations were cut short when an over-the-top noise of disgust echoed through the hall, drawing all eyes over to the scene. "I can't believe they would allow anyone, but Purebloods here, why would the court let the Emperor's undiluted blood be tainted in such a way? There are even Mudbloods here, feeling entitled to our esteemed Emperor!" The voice was girlish, sounding immature even in a room filled mostly with teenagers and young adults. Harry felt compelled to turn around and felt his lips twitch up at the sight of the girl.

She had long blonde hair and startlingly sharp blue eyes that looked too frosty to be natural, obviously charmed to enhance their colour. The clothes she was wearing were of obviously fine quality, the previously simple white robe bedazzled with gems that made it look garish compared to its elegant surroundings. She looked to be younger than him: perhaps fifteen, as that was the youngest age permitted to participate. Although, he wouldn't put it past some of the participants being younger than was allowed.

The girl seemed to be having a conversation with her friends, a crowd of them tittering around her with words of agreeance. She looked smug, eyes sparkling when they landed on Dahlia, who was standing beside him.

"Miss Dahlia, it is wonderful to see you here!"

"Miss Macnair." Dahlia's tone was once again frosty, a singular, pale eyebrow raised. Harry couldn't help but chuckle, which drew the eyes of 'Miss Macnair' onto him.

"And who may you be?"

"I'm Har-"

"This is Harrison Potter-Black, heir to the Noble houses of Potter and Black. A close friend of mine. Harrison, this is Eden Macnair, a member of the House of Macnair. "

Macnair's eyes grew greedy as she took him in, eyes darting from the heirship rings on his fingers to his eyes." Heir Potter-Black, it's a pleasure to greet you." She held out one small, pale hand, adorned with rings much too big for such slender fingers. They suited her, though, her personality shining in their gemstones.

Harry stared down at it for a moment, eyes darting to Dahlia's face to watch it morph into one of horror. It was all he needed. He reached out with his own, grabbing her hand and shaking it. " I get that a lot. Having two heirships gains me a lot of unwanted attention."

He could feel the icy daggers Dahlia was sending to the side of his head and barely heard her soft swear. " *Oh, for fuck's sake, Harry.* "

Macnair's smile dropped, and she tugged her hand from his with a look of disgust. "What are you doing?! You don't shake a Lady's hand; you are supposed to kiss it! Dahlia, what planet does this boy come from? Does he not know how to treat a Lady?" She huffed haughtily, turning her nose up. " Daddy will surely be hearing of this. He's one of our Majesty's Knights, so he'll warn his majesty of what sort you are before you attempt to invade his Harem."

" A Lady? I don't see a Lady in front of me. All I see is a girl who prides herself too much on her blood when her magic is little more than a Squibs'. Have you forgotten that all of his majesties' children are powerful, ones born from muggle-born mothers alike? Do his majesties' children taint his image due to their Halfblood status?" She paled, stepping back, stuttering that she hadn't meant anything of the sort, that his Majesty's blood was 'so pure that it would wash all of the tainted blood away'. He couldn't help himself but add to her horror out of spite, despite Dahlia tugging on his sleeve. " And for the record, *why would I need to know how to treat a Lady, I'm going to be bedding a man, aren't I?* "

Now, that was the sort of confrontation he had been expecting, and he didn't even mind it when Dahlia clipped his ear, feeling too smug with himself.

When his name was called by the Eunuch a little while later, Harry made his way onto the platform, robes fluttering behind him dramatically. He had learnt the move from his Mum's closest friend, Severus Snape, a master potioneer and high-ranking Knight. The man, throughout his childhood, had spent many hours patrolling their halls, Harry following behind him happily. Snape didn't like children at all, but he'd always held some fondness for his friend's only child. Hence, Harry had picked up on a few of his mannerisms over the years.

He placed his hand upon the orb and began to slowly push his magic into it, the magical glass heating up beneath his palm. It began to glow, first softly, then with greater luminescence that grew with every passing second. Out of the corner of his eye, he could spot some of the contenders gaping at him, wide-eyed at his display of magical prowess. Even the examiner standing to the side of the orb stepped forward slightly, pushing up the glasses that obscured his eyes.

" Harrison Potter-Black has scored a total of 92 in the Magic Power Test. He passes into the next round." The examiner announced after reading off the monitor he held in his hand, writing down the score onto the sheet of those who had passed. Harry accepted the hand of a maid waiting beside the steps, and stepped off the podium, following her into the next room where the second stage of the first test would occur.

The general health check was a simple procedure, simply a diagnostic spell that printed any current ailments into a book and would be updated by the royal healer if they became a member of the Harem. The fewer pages the ailments took up, the better the chance of passing.

Luckily for Harry, as his mother was a healer, he already knew that he had no current ailments unless he had caught a cold on the way here. And, as expected, only his name and medical information appeared, taking up the first page.

The fertility test, however, was much more invasive. The procedure consisted of multiple spells, one to determine the state of his womb, another to determine his cycle, a spell that discovered how likely he was to conceive at all, and one that even deduced the likelihood that he would conceive multiples. There were more, but they were done in such quick succession

that he couldn't recognise them. Harry stood uncomfortably as the information gathered was added to the book, taking up the next two pages.

The healer gave a sharp nod to the Eunuch, who cleared his throat, and loudly proclaimed: "Harrison Potter-Black has Above Average Fertility and is in perfect health. He passes into the next round." He accepted the key handed to him by said Eunuch, feeling the magic ooze from it. It was relatively heavy, and a solid black colour that didn't glint even under the harsh light of the chandeliers.

It was the key to his private rooms in the castle, only given to those who passed the first round, and therefore needed a place to stay for their duration at the castle. Harry bowed, shallowly, and made his way out of the hall, having finished the tests for today. Only the ones that he couldn't predetermine the outcome remained.

3rd July 1997

The intelligence test was not unlike the one he would be given if or when he takes his NEWTs, catered towards those who've graduated Hogwarts already. Most of the questions were aimed at the sixth- and seventh-year's entire curriculum, meaning that one had to be an avid reader to know the answers to the ones that weren't on their course.

65: In what year was the Wizard's Council dissolved, and what reason was this for?

In the year 1707. Upon the signature of the International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy in 1692, the wizarding community needed a more highly structured, organised, and complex government structure to support and regulate the community in hiding. Thus, it was dissolved in favour of the Ministry of Magic.

Harry felt his hand cramp, and hissed slightly, rolling his wrist. A glance at the next question only made him sigh. The test was about endurance and mental fortitude as much as it was about intelligence, for no average person could sit for a quarter of the day answering questions, and the Emperor certainly wouldn't accept average concubines.

66: Write a short essay on the uses of the potion 'Veritaserum'.

Veritaserum is a potion of the-

Three long, arduous hours later, Harry was back in his rooms, an ache in his back and fingers almost locked in place. He winced as he stretched them out, gratefully seating himself upon the settee. His head maid, Anya, was quick to begin massaging his shoulders, and he grinned tiredly up at her. She winked back playfully, hazel eyes twinkling proudly.

" I think it went well. I answered most of them, although a few of the Arithmancy and Ancient Runes questions had me stumped. At least the next test doesn't require much, I just need to get some nice clothes sorted out."

" Well done, young master." Anya smiled down at him softly, carding her fingers through his hair. " Rest for now, don't worry about your outfit. Her Ladyship had robes sent along with Tabitha, who is putting the finishing touches on them. They are stunning. The same shape and make as the robes you wear now, but they are patterned delicately to add a little personal touch."

" Good, I wouldn't want to offend..." He let his eyes blink closed, breathing out tiredly as he sunk into the feeling of his muscles loosening, and drifted off to sleep to the sound of Anya humming.

A Eunuch visited his rooms later in the day with his score, a scroll decorated with runes placed on a pillow in his hands. The man cleared his throat: "Harrison Potter-Black has scored 84 on the Intelligence test. He passes into the next round."

Harry let out a small sigh of relief, shallowly bowing before the Eunuch to take the scroll, not allowing his face to twist into a grin until he was safely hidden within his room. " Anya, I passed! An 84, better than I had expected. I thought I'd score somewhere in the seventies."

" Congratulations, young master. All of your studying paid off." She beamed, placing down a tray of teas on the table. " Which tea would you like?"

"Mint, please."

5th July 1997

Harry felt bare under the assessing eyes of the examiner, who was stalking around him like a predator eyeing prey, looking him up and down with intense scrutiny. She had been silent for a while now, only stopping occasionally to note something down in the little notebook she held in her hand.

"The Emperor will be most pleased with your eyes. Such a vibrant colour will surely catch his attention." The examiner continued her prowling around him. " And if they are passed onto your children, I'm sure that they will be able to easily acquire beneficial matches themselves, benefitting his Majesty. I suppose your mother's genes should be thanked for such a gift." Her fan snapped closed, and it took him all not to flinch. She smiled at him sharkishly. " You pass. Eunuch Varns."

Said Eunuch stepped forward, a bolt of fabric within his arms." Harrison Potter-Black passes into the next round, with comments to his green eyes. His Majesty has graciously ordered for those who pass this exam to receive a bolt of fine fabric to do with what they wish." Harry allowed Anya to receive the fabric for him, nodding his head.

" I thank his Majesty for his benevolence."

6th July 1997

The final exam before the Emperor's choice was one that tested the contestants' elegance. For a few days, a small handful of contestants were each assigned to a Second-Class Attendant, the lowest rank of concubines in the harem. They would perform the duties of the Attendants' maids whilst they and a Eunuch judged them on their performance. The Attendants had been brought to the palace specifically for monitoring the selection process, so usually, there was some sort of ill will felt between the parties.

Everything, from how they talked, dressed, spoke, and slept was closely examined for flaws. After all, it wouldn't do for the Emperor to have an unsightly spouse. It was the exam he was dreading.

He'd had a House Elf watch over him whilst he slept for a few weeks, waking him whenever he made a sound or turned abruptly. It had led to many sleepless nights and crankiness in the mornings, but now he could sleep through most nights without a peep.

" We greet her ladyship, Second-Class Attendant Clearwater." He, along with the four others bowed in unison, the lady in front of them barely glancing at them. She hummed, beckoning forward one of her maids.

" Lucy, give them something to do. Nothing too strenuous, one of them may become a fellow sister or brother one day, and it wouldn't do to invoke any animosity." She pointedly looked toward him with a slight frown. " You, come and brush my hair. I'd like to have a look at your eyes."

" Yes, my lady." Harry straightened from his bow and approached the Attendant cautiously. She pointed to a set of brushes on the table next to her, and with no further comments, relaxed back into her chair with scrutinising eyes.

He held in the sigh that wished to escape him, although just barely.

11th July 1997

Finally, the last day of his service arrived, and he robotically shifted through the motions of the morning routine, acquiescing to Second-Class Attendant Clearwater's every demand. Brushing her hair until it was glossy and smooth, fiddling it up into elaborate buns and pinning it into place with various ornaments. Spraying her with a sweet-smelling perfume that made his throat tickle and powdering her face until it was clear of any natural imperfections. He was lucky that she wasn't as outlandish as some, taking little pleasure in

tormenting him and instead, for the most part, preferred to ignore him as best as she could. Although, she frequently asked for him to sit with her, which she did for none of the others, who were instead regaled to menial jobs such as cleaning and preparing the food. It was clear to all that he was the most likely to pass.

The Eunuch observing them pulled him aside before lunchtime and handed him the scroll he had been waiting for, which dismissed him from his job and sealed his meeting with the Emperor.

" Harrison Potter-Black has pleased the Second-Class Attendant with his skills, and she sends him her compliments. He passes onto the next round."

Harry felt an equal mixture of glee and panic at the sight of the scroll, which was made of finer parchment than the previous ones. Soon, he'd be meeting with the Emperor once more, this time with the objective of becoming the man's concubine.

14th July 1997

The final test was held in the same opulent hall as the first one, the platform having been decorated with a luxurious throne and additional seats for the Emperor and the higher ranked of his harem to sit on. Those lower in the rankings, Noble's and below, as unofficial spouses, had no say in who joined the harem, so their presence wasn't required. Although, it wasn't as if those in higher positions had much power over his choice either.

Emperor Slytherin was sat upon his throne, boredly staring down at the scrolls that contained their results as Harry and six others entered the hall, the third out of five groups. The only one in his group that he recognised was Zacharias Smith, a boy in his year that had a peculiar aversion for Harry despite having them barely having interacted with each other.

That didn't matter anymore. He was up first.

Harry fiddled with the sleeves of his robe, anxiously rubbing the fabric between his thumb and his finger and stepped forward to offer the Emperor a low bow. " Harrison James Potter-Black, son and heir to Lord James Fleamont Potter, Lord of the Noble House of Potter. Godson and adopted heir to Lord Sirius Orion Black, Lord of the Noble and Ancient House

of Black. Halfblood. Aged sixteen." The Head Eunuch, who stood to the side of the Emperor and his gathered higher Harem, announced him unemotionally, his eyes closed.

" This one bows in respect before his Majesty, the Supreme Emperor, and your highnesses, the royal concubines. May blessings and peace be with you." He bowed deeper, knees bending slightly, hands clasped together in the sleeves of his robe, the epitome of politeness. Harry hoped that the Emperor wouldn't disgrace him by sending him away after he had put so much effort into being accepted.

Tom watched as the boy bowed lowly, hiding his pretty green eyes. He let a satisfied smile grow on his face, staring down at the boy whose mere presence intrigued him so. He had grown in the years since he had last seen him, turning from a shivering child into the beautiful adolescent that stood in front of him, no longer shaking, but still looking as demure in his presence as before. His magic had also developed, rolling off him in such heavy waves that he didn't even need to glance at the scroll in front of him to know that he was the most powerful candidate yet. None of those in his Harem had ever scored over ninety, a feat only his most powerful followers had achieved. In fact, since his core was still developing, his results wouldn't be accurate until a few years' time, and with such a large amount at only sixteen...

Out of the corner of his eye, he watched as his concubines read through the boy's profile, and the subsequent scowls the information placed upon some of their faces. Bellatrix, who sat in the nearest seat, cleared her throat pointedly to gain his attention. She didn't look happy about his promising potential for joining, most likely due to his parentage and the matter of his family's reputation.

The Emperor nodded his head, smirking slightly. He couldn't allow somebody with such potential to be snatched up by someone else. It was for the best that the boy was in his harem, even if there ended up being no chemistry between them.

" Harrison James Potter-Black is selected by his Majesty to become a member of his Harem. Bestow the Ranking Jewel."

A white gem was placed within his hands and glowed briefly as it sucked his magic in, turning a light blue colour. Tom watched as the boy's shoulders slightly sagged in relief and knew that he had made the right choice. The title would probably be the best rank bestowed today, high enough that it would be graciously accepted by his family, but not high enough to incite many protests from the current members of his Harem.

" Congratulations to Noble Potter-Black on being bestowed the rank of Noble by his Imperial Majesty. Thank him for his benevolence."

" I thank his Majesty and will do my utmost to meet his every want." The boy bowed lower, and they locked eyes when he glanced briefly upwards. Harry quickly turned his head, breaking off contact, and the Emperor huffed in amusement. It seemed he had learnt about the art of Legilimancy since their last meeting. He stepped backwards, joining the line of candidates, the gem clutched in his fist being eyes enviously.

" Talina Amra Rervell, daughter of Sir Lancelot Rervell, head of the Rervell family. Halfblood-"

Chapter End Notes

I think it's a good idea to put the ranks here, so If you don't know them already, this is important to read (They aren't entirely historically accurate to the Qing Dynasty, but oh well):

Empress/Emperor Consort- Only second to the Emperor, and highest ranked in the harem. An official Spouse. Emperor Consort is the male version of an Empress, as there can't be two Emperors. I took inspiration from the Queen's [UK] husband being named Prince Consort and the Queen of a king being named Queen Consort. 16 Palace given maids + 8 Personal maids= 24. Their stone is a Purple Tanzanite. If one isn't chosen at the beginning of the Emperor's reign, only a Concubine who has served him for more than 15 years, or has 2 or more sons, has the right family background and has a high rank can become it. There can only be one at a time.

Imperial Noble Consort- Historically, these were typically the Emperor's favoured concubines, since most Empress' were politically chosen. 2nd highest. An official Spouse. 14 Palace given maids- 7 Personal maids= 21. Their stone is a Ruby. There can be 2 at a time.

Noble Consort- 3rd highest. An official Spouse. 12 Palace given maids- 6 Personal maids= 18. Their stone is Imperial Topaz. There can be 4 at a time.

Consort- 4th highest. An official Spouse. 10 Palace given maids- 5 Personal maids=15. Their stone is Citrine. There can be 8 at a time.

Concubine- 5th highest. An official Spouse. 8 Palace given maids- 4 Personal maids= 12. Their stone is Emerald. There can be 16 at a time.

Noble- 6th highest. Not a Spouse. 6 Palace given Maids- 3 Personal maids= 9. Their stone is blue swiss topaz. There is no limit to how many there can be. Historically, they are called Noble Ladies, but as there are males in this story, I needed a more neutral term.

First-Class Attendant- 7th highest. Not a Spouse. 4 Palace given maids- 2 Personal maids= 6. Their stone is blue spinel. There is no limit. Will be called simply 'Attendant --'

Second-Class Attendant- 8th. Not a Spouse. 2 Palace given maids- 1 Personal maid= 3. Their stone is Kyanite. There is no limit. Will be called 'Attendant ---'

As the translation for these two titles contains the word 'lady', I couldn't use the Chinese word since I wished for it to be neutral. It would have made things a lot less wordy, but oh well. Here's the Wiki link if anyone is interested in reading more.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qing_dynasty

Also, those at the top of their rank are named 'Primary ---', and second is called 'Secondary ---'

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Birthdays: [HM= Harem Member, RC= Royal Child, O=Other]

10th July- Aurelia-RC [4]

Chapter 3: [First Impressions]

Chapter Notes

This took much longer than I was expecting, and it was supposed to contain much more as well. However, once I got to 2k words and only had 3/8 planned scenes written, I knew I was going to have to split it. The word count still surpassed my usual goal, but that's fine. [4k]

Note: Roses, when presented in the number thirteen can either symbolise eternal friendship or a secret admirer. :)

Last Edited: 30/06/22- +430 words

14th July 1997

After the selection was over, in which the Emperor chose six new concubines in total, Harry was ushered into yet another carriage. This one was far grander than the one he had ridden in with Dahlia to the palace and much larger on the inside too. Its decor clearly established the difference between the money the Malfoy's had obtained through centuries of deceit and the wealth the Emperor had acquired by conquering the world.

It was coloured black and silver, with the crest of the Imperial Slytherin family etched onto its sides. The black carpet was soft under his feet, and the seats even plusher, with small pillows dotted around for added comfort. Drawn by hippogriffs, it was no surprise that the whole journey included people gawking at the carriage, who he shied away from, drawing the curtains for privacy. Harry shared it with no one else, being the only Noble appointed that day.

And wasn't that a shock? Even Dahlia, whose family had such close connections with the Emperor himself, had only been appointed as a First-Class Attendant. She, along with the other four chosen, was riding in a singular carriage behind him that looked smaller, but he knew that outside looks were deceiving in the wizarding world.

'Noble' was a title that had only been bestowed to a new member a couple of times before, and Harry was grateful for the privilege, for a rank that made it easier to prove himself. His

position would bring his family a certain amount of prestige, and he hoped that he'd only rise in the harem ranks from now on. For his family to regain its prior status in society, he'd have to be named at least a concubine, which would designate him as a legal spouse to the Emperor. He doubted that anyone would wish to go against a Concubine's family, who had the ears of the ruler of the world.

The carriage stopped after around an hour of journeying, having travelled from the City of Honour, through the Grand City of Everlasting Sovereignty, and into the Court of Beauty and Passion. The door opened after a sharp rap, flooding the space with light. A Eunuch stood at the bottom of the carriage's steps, bowed with a hand held out. "Your Lordship, Noble Potter-Black, we have arrived at the Hall of Worship." The Eunuch was older than one's he had seen previously, but the sharp glint in his eyes betrayed that he was not one to be underestimated. "Please, allow this one to escort you to your chambers for the evening." Harry took his outstretched arm gently, wary of placing so much strain on his seemingly delicate frame. His own maids were entering the Court by means of the servants' gate, so they weren't there to do this job as they usually would have.

"May I ask for your name?" Harry asked, as polite as he dared to someone who was now deemed much lesser than himself. He had to get used to it quickly- he supposed- if he was going to stand a chance in this deadly palace, but he wouldn't like it one bit. Facing the scorn of the other members, however, would be too detrimental to his family to try and go against such rules. Not until he was highly ranked and had garnered his Majesty's favour. It would be a few years yet until he could truly speak how he wanted. Hopefully.

The old man grinned, his smile kind and grandfatherly, a contrast to his stony eyes. "I am Elder Evern, your Lordship, a Eunuch who has been in his majesty's service for fifty years now." Meaning the Emperor had been collecting Eunuchs long before he officially became Emperor. It was whispered amongst the Noble houses that the Emperor believed his rule to have begun many years before Britain was taken, back when he still carried the title 'Lord'. He had planned his takeover thoroughly indeed if he was so prepared for an eventual harem.

"Elder Evern, you must know the Court rather well then, yes?" Harry glanced at the Eunuch, whose face was void of emotion.

"Of course, this one even helped to build a small section of the Court, and is now in charge of the Halls of Worship, where the new members of the Harem must stay until their rooms are ready." Harry made the appropriate noise, a delicate mix of disinterest and curiosity, still holding on to the old man's arm as he led him up the grand steps and into a cavernous hall.

He was ushered through a doorway to the right, which led to an oaken door. "These are to be his Lordship's quarters for the time being. I hope they are satisfactory."

"Thank you for escorting me, Elder Evern." Harry slipped some Galleons into the man's palm, and his brown eyes glistened with barely suppressed glee.

"Your Lordship's benevolence knows no bounds. Noble Potter-Black is a gracious master. This one will serve your every need faithfully." Harry nodded, and the Eunuch scampered away, glancing backwards as he went.

He settled into the room, which was less luxurious than the ones back in the previous castle, but he supposed that was to be expected for temporary accommodation. He wondered what his rooms would be like in the Court, whether they'd be as lavish as he was expecting for the Imperial family, or if his status as a Noble wasn't as grand as he thought. The layout of the Court was unknown to the public, the Emperor protected himself and his family from assassination attempts as much as possible.

Not that anyone would dare to try and kill the Emperor. That would be idiotic.

The room- and it was only a singular one- was coloured with whites and golds, appropriate for a place such as the Hall of Worship. It was blank, devoid of any other shades of colour, with the exception of a vase of beautiful, red roses, their thorns clipped short. They drew him in, the shade reminding him of the Emperor's own ruby-red eyes, and plucked a singular one out to bring it to his face. It was scentless, a disappointment for such a thing of beauty, so he placed it back into the vase.

The chaise, situated next to the arched window, was covered by soft pillows and sunk when he sat on it, sighing lightly. Harry watched as maids brought in his belongings, itching to get up and help them but refraining. He contented himself with examining the ceiling, staring up at its hypnotizing carvings, snakes twisting around themselves in a never-ending mass. It was reminiscent of the Dark Mark, a magical brand only bestowed to his majesty's most powerful and loyal Knights, and he couldn't help but gaze up at it longingly.

To wear the Dark Mark would be the greatest honour, and it would save his family from harm for an indefinite amount of time. He wondered what price he'd have to pay for such a luxury?

15th July 1997

Harry, alongside the other new concubines, bowed lowly to the woman sitting in front of them on a lavish-looking chaise, her stomach unmistakably rounded with pregnancy. Surrounding them, all in similar states of recline, were the other members of the harem, looking down at their kneeling forms with a mixture of expressions. "We greet her highness, Primary Consort Slytherin-Black. May her highness' prosperity ever flourish, and her child be blessed by Magic's benevolent touch." The greeting was a formal one, expected from members who did not yet have any real connections in the harem, rehearsed to not contain a single slight. Unless, of course, the Consort wished for her child to be a Squib. Strange, yes, but not unheard of. The Emperor's harem was filled to the brim with odd personalities.

Consort Slytherin-Black, also known as Bellatrix, stroked her distended stomach lightly, a satisfied glint in her eyes. "Yes, my child will surely be a blessed existence." She remained silent for a few more moments, sweeping her dark, assessing eyes across them. "You may rise, sisters and brothers."

"We thank her highness."

She took a moment, breathing in deeply and squaring her shoulders proudly. "I welcome you all into his majesty's harem. Being a part of the Emperor's harem is an esteemed position in society, and it is an opportunity to be grateful for. Be thankful that the Emperor has deemed each of you worthy to bear his royal children." She sat up straighter, regally staring down at them. "Noble Harrison Potter-Black." Harry rose swiftly, taking a few steps forward, before kneeling with his hands clasped.

"Your highness."

Consort Slytherin-Black stared down at him, looking miffed, but a smile stole upon her face when she stroked her belly soothingly. "The Emperor has seen fit to award you the rank 'Seventh Noble', accept it graciously. It is an honour to receive such a rank directly out of the selection."

"I thank his majesty, the Emperor, for his benevolence, and vow to fulfil his expectations." Harry bowed deeply, head briefly meeting the floor, before moving back to his place in the group.

"First-Class Attendant Dahlia Malfoy." Harry watched as his friend stepped forward, confident and poised even under the stares of such powerful people. She lowered herself gracefully to the ground, her white robes cushioning her like the most expensive cloud.

"Your highness, Consort Slytherin-Black."

Bellatrix's smile was warmer than before, Dahlia being Draco's half-sister through their shared father and therefore considered a niece to her. "The Emperor has awarded you the title of 'Primary First-Class Attendant'. Accept it graciously, as it is a position that comes with a greater sense of responsibility. With this rank, you are responsible for the other concubines sharing the rank of First-Class Attendant."

"I thank his majesty for his trust in me and his benevolence, and vow to satisfy his every demand to my utmost ability." She bowed, forehead meeting the marble flooring for a calculated amount of time, and moved back to the group, smiling softly in triumph.

The next formalities passed in a blur, Harry only taking note of the order of the rankings. Himself, Dahlia, then Daphne Greengrass- another of Dahlia's close friends- who became Secondary First-Class Attendant Greengrass. Luna Lovegood was next, an absentminded Ravenclaw in the year below himself that had become one of his closest friends in the past few years, and became Third First-Class Attendant Lovegood. Theodore Nott, a Slytherin who hung around with Draco, became the Fourth. Zacharias Smith- a Hufflepuff whose family claimed to be the descendants of that house- was given the rank of Fifth First Class Attendant, the last ranking of the selection.

Harry could see the rest of the Harem around him beginning to get visibly restless as the minutes passed, and he couldn't help but scorn them in his mind. They were seated upon comfortable lounges, maids with trays filled with refreshments surrounding them, and they were getting restless? His knees gave a painful twinge as if reminding him of his own position, knelt on the marble floor.

"There is no need for any of you to greet me in the mornings for the next few days. Focus on settling yourselves into the Harem beforehand. A Eunuch will now lead you and your personal maids to your rooms. I hope that you will find your accommodation... satisfactory. Each was selected by the Emperor himself. Now, you are dismissed."

"We thank her highness." She waved a bedazzled hand, shooing them out, and turned to begin a conversation with the Concubine on her left. Harry mustered enough courage to lead the group, as was expected of the highest-ranking person, with Dahlia following close behind, her presence intimidating as much as it was reassuring. She did everything so perfectly, that he couldn't help but feel inadequate compared to her, that she should be the one in his place.

However, Anya's smile soothed his feeling of inferiority as their maids merged with them outside of the Gathering Hall, each encircling their master. "Anya, Kia, Tabitha." The three maids had practically grown up with him, being the daughters of his father's maids, so it was in their presence that he felt he could finally relax for the first time within the Courts walls.

"Master." "Your Lordship." "...". He beamed back at them, turning his head at Tabitha's indication to watch as a sextet of Elder Eunuchs approached, followed by a group of young Eunuchs carrying a sedan. One of the Elder Eunuchs was dressed slightly more finely than the others, and if Harry had to guess, he assumed that was the one sent for him. The finer Eunuch spoke.

"Your Lord and Ladyships." They bowed, hands folded behind their backs. "We are those sent to escort you to your accommodations." With a flick of his hand, five stepped forward and ushered the others to follow them, leaving Harry and his maids alone with him and those carrying the Sedan. "The Emperor has kindly sent a Sedan for his Lordship to ride in. The walk is a lengthy one to the Palace of Noble Handsomeness, and the Emperor does not wish for Noble Potter-Black to be in any pain." He held out his hand, face blank with professionalism. Harry took in the sight of the beautifully carved wood, painted a light blue that matched the colour of his rank, and stepped in.



"Noble Potter-Black, we have arrived at the Palace of Noble Handsomeness." He stepped out, a hand wrapped in Anya's own, and his eyes widened. The Palace was a beautiful sight to see, coloured with light blues, shades of white and decorated with marble and silver. It was two floors high, towers standing on each corner of its surrounding walls, and topped with a tiled

light-blue roof. The stone battlements that lined the walls gave the Palace a more royal feel than he was expecting for the Noble's palace.

"How many others live inside here?" Harry asked, counting the windows he could see from his position. Surely, this palace could fit the entirety of the current harem within it, so why was it so large?

"Only Noble Diggory, along with your Lordship reside within this Palace, as the only male Nobles of his Majesty's harem. Noble Diggory lives within one of the Easternmost rooms of the Palace. There are fourteen in total, each having two floors and a private garden."

"And which ones am I to be in?"

"The gate we stand in front of now leads to your Lordship's rooms. It is a side entrance that takes much less time than the front gate."

It was a surprise to him. The gate led to one of the outermost rooms, which possessed a much larger garden than the others did. Diggory was in a similar one, but he couldn't help but think that he'd probably had to earn those rooms. Or at least, he could hope, as it made believing he held the Emperor's attention more conceivable.

The Eunuch opened the gate for him, and Harry walked into the garden that was to be his for his time as a Noble. Which would hopefully not be for much more than a couple of years. It was a beautiful sight, the grass trimmed neatly, plants pruned to perfection, and even the small pond in the corner looked stunning, filled with a cluster of Koi Karp. However, it was rather plain.

The Eunuch carried on with his explanations, full of professionalism. "Among the six maids assigned by the Imperial Household Department to his Lordship, three hold the qualifications necessary to take care of the garden. One also holds the qualifications necessary to care for magical creatures up to XXX classification."

"One of my personal maids also holds qualifications in Advanced Herbology, so my garden shall be a very beautiful one." The Eunuch (and Harry should really get his name at some

point) chuckled politely, holding out a hand once they arrived at the steps. He looked up at the building, noting its balcony draped in vines full of blooming flowers, and strode onto the patio.

The carved door opened then, a maid dressed in light blue bowing politely. "Welcome, your Lordship." She had dark hair, not quite black like his own, and warm brown eyes that stared back at him in slight curiosity. Stepping back, she ushered them in, the Eunuch departing as he was no longer needed. Harry noted that the entrance led straight into the main room of the quarters, a spacious area set out for gatherings. It looked impersonal and lavish, just as he'd expected. But what drew his attention the most, however, were the other palace-assigned maids.

"We greet his Lordship, Noble Potter-Black." They bowed, two rows of women dressed identically in pale blue robes with the Potter and Black Family insignia stitched meticulously into their lapels, a sign of his ownership of them. He nearly winced at the sight. The maid who had led them in had merged herself into the small group, looking as if she'd never moved from that spot. He wondered how long they had been waiting there for him like that.

"Please, rise." Their heads still lowered, the maids straightened up with a programmed movement, synchronised with one another. They stayed silent and still, waiting for another command. Harry swallowed a painful lump that was growing in his throat. " Anya, please show them what to do. I am tired from the journey and the meeting and would like to rest. Tabitha, Kia, please help me."

"Yes, master." The two maids moved fluidly around him, gently leading him up the stairs and into his bedroom. Tabitha began to prepare the quarters, opening the patio doors that led to the balcony and placing little ornaments of his own around the room to make the atmosphere more comfortable. Kia started untying his robes, sending them off to the wardrobe with a swish of her wand, and wrapped a less formal one over his shoulders. She then removed all the accessories he was decorated in, beginning with the light-blue clasp within his hair.

"Is master going to be sleeping?"

"No, just resting. I would like to begin reading that book Sirius gave me, the one about the Great War." She hummed, turning to place his earrings in their box.

"Tabitha will set it on the bedside table for you." She undid the elegant twists of gold in his hair, hanging them up so they'd stay in their shape. Harry hummed, patiently waiting for her to finish before climbing onto the soft canopy bed on the far wall. He sighed, sinking into the pillows.

"Please, could you direct any of the maids where my things will go when they come up here? I'd prefer to be left to read in peace."

"Yes, Master." Tabitha wandered over with the book in her hands, passing it to him silently with a bow. He smiled at her in thanks, opening it to the first page.

'The Great War of The World- 1946-1975'

□□□□□□

A few hours later...

His reading was interrupted by a Eunuch from the Imperial Household Department arriving with his weekly stipend, the man dressed in the distinctive black and white all members of the department wore.

"The Emperor sends his blessings and welcomes Noble Potter-Black into his harem." The light blue, intricately decorated pouch of Galleons was received by Anya who stepped forward, and her eyes slightly widened at its weight. Harry sent her a glance, turning to nod his head at the Eunuch.

"I thank his majesty for his courteous welcoming."

Once the man left after bowing, Harry motioned his head maid forwards, sending her a quizzical look. "What is it, Anya? Is something wrong with the pouch?" It would be just his luck that he could already be receiving some sort of negative attention from the occupants of the Court, be it from pureblood fanatics in the department grudging about his 'unpure' blood

status, or a member of the harem that was jealous of his already high ranking. Despite officially being in the harem for less than a day, Harry was already the fourteenth most powerful, higher than eleven others. He supposed it served him right to get fewer Galleons than was expected.

Anya's next words, therefore, surprised him greatly. "Master, I believe you to be very blessed. His Majesty has granted you more money than is normal, a fifth more than is expected for a Noble."

And he had. The pouch should have contained five hundred Galleons, but after recounting them a few times, there were six hundred in total. It was merely twenty-five Galleons short of a Concubines weekly allowance.

"Please notify one of the Royal chancellors. I'm sure there must have been a mistake. And even if there hasn't been, it is better to notify in case this is an attempt of sabotage."

"Yes, Master." Anya hurried off, eager to do her master's bidding.

16th July 1997

The bed he had slept in for the night, while more comfortable than any he had ever been in, felt cold and sterile in the early morning. The sheets were too silky, made from acromantula silk, slipping over his skin and sending shivers up his spine. The pillows, whilst soft, sunk more than he was used to, stuffed with soft feathers and probably worth more than some of his jewellery.

Surrounding Harry were the light blue, slightly transparent drapes that hung from the overhead canopy. Everything in the room, in his whole part of the palace- was some shade of light blue. The settee's opposite, overlooking the balcony, the bookshelves that held novels clad in muted colours, the wardrobe to his left that contained his sleepwear, the carpet that covered the floor, the sky he could see through the patio doors.

The red roses that had not been there when he had fallen asleep were a blinding sight in his very blue room.

He sat up slowly, yawning as his muscles stretched, sighing in satisfaction. The nightgown Kia had wrestled him into the night before slipped slightly off of his shoulder, and he yanked it up with a huff, swinging his legs off of the bed and going light-headed with the sudden movement. Harry yawned once more, yanking the drapes to the side and standing up, appreciating the plush carpet as he made his way to the vase of roses.

They were pretty, seemingly freshly picked from one of the many gardens in the Court. Harry wondered which of his maids had placed them there as it seemed an unlikely thing for Anya to do, and the other two disliked doing anything without being asked. There were thirteen in total, each perfectly formed, their thorns once again clipped.

A creak from behind him sent him spinning around, wand sliding out of its holster to land in his palm. It was one of the palace-assigned maids, expression blank even whilst faced with a wand. He reholstered it, standing up straighter and clearing his throat, slightly embarrassed at his impulsive reaction.

"Good morning."

Her voice was sweet and soft, reminiscent of Luna's, although a bit less airy. "Good morning, your Lordship." She bowed, her blonde hair shining in the early morning sunlight. They stood in silence for a moment.

"I was just observing these roses. They must have arrived whilst I was still asleep. Who brought them here?"

"The Eunuch refused to say who they were from, master. He said their sender ordered his silence. I apologise for not having the answer." Harry turned to stare at the roses once more, eyebrows furrowed in suspicion.

"What is your name, and what is your position here?" He questioned her, not turning away from the roses despite feeling her stare boring into his back

"Aoife, your Lordship. My assignment is something for my master to decide."

"Then Aoife, please send for these to be tested for any foul play. I would prefer not to die within my first week here."

"Yes, your Lordship."

Chapter 4: [The Beginning]

Chapter Notes

Before writing this chapter, I read <https://archiveofourown.org/works/32551186> and It made me sob. The ending is so bittersweet, and every time I expected it to get better, It just got sadder. Have a box of tissues with you if you read it :(- 13/04/22

Also, I edited this whilst half asleep, so any comments correcting something are greatly appreciated. Actually, any comments are appreciated ^-^ -24/04/22

Last Edited: 2/7/22- +950 words

16th July 1997- [Around 8:00 am]

The roses turned out to be poison-free, so Harry allowed them to stay, although he had them moved downstairs to the front room, to brighten it up a little. He had the feeling that it was the room he'd be spending the most time in, with all the socialisation he was expected to do as a Noble.

It had changed since the day before, his trinkets giving the room a more personal touch and making it feel more relaxing to be in. The pillows Harry and his mother had sewn together were propped up on the window seat, the previously bare bookcase next to it now containing a few books and the potted plants Sirius and Remus had forced him to take now stood by the door.

He ate his breakfast in the front room, a lavish meal full of foods he'd only ever seen served at the dinner table. There were slices of bread from a myriad of loaves, and a cheese board with a shocking amount of variety. The fruits, 'a typical breakfast food' Harry thought to himself, were an exotic and unusual selection, such as the Dragonfruit sat nearest to his plate. He disliked most of them. There was even a platter of thinly sliced meats such as turkey, ham and beef. He picked at the meal, unused to such excess.

Harry frowned. He didn't have to eat this. He was the head of this part of the castle, he could eat what he wanted at meal times. " Anya, please prepare me some pancakes. I'd like to have some with my strawberries. Oh, and cream."

" Yes, master. I will inform Maia."

" Maia?"

" The Cook, master. She is one of the maids the palace has assigned to your care."

" Ah, thank you." Harry saw one of the new maids frown slightly out of the corner of his eye, and lean in to whisper to the maid working next to her. They gossiped to each other with disapproving glances sent his way, and Harry noted that he'd have to watch what he did around them. He tapped his fingers slightly as he sat there in silence, feeling too exposed to eat.

" Master, your pancakes."

" Thank you, Anya." He smiled, less genuinely than before, and handed her a few Galleons, which she took without a word. He knew that he'd find them added to his pouch later on.

After breakfast, Harry decided that it was time to explore the rest of his quarters, as he had yet to see the back room properly or even step into the kitchen. He started with the kitchen, which was behind the door on the left side of the room. It was a quiet place, with only a singular maid inside. He presumed this was 'Maia'. She was a tanned woman with curly hair and a bright smile that she flashed at him as she rose from her bow.

" Master, what can I get for you?" Her accent was similar to Fleur Delacour's, so distinctive that Harry assumed she was from France. Maia made her way to the fridge as she waited for a response, opening the doors with a searching look.

" I was just having a look around, there's no need to make anything else." He smiled, circling the marble island in the middle. It was white, like every surface in the kitchen, including even the cooker. Harry supposed that it would be easier to spot any mess, but at the expense of causing a headache.

The woman pushed on. " Are you sure, I have no problem with whipping up something light quickly?"

He smiled a bit more. It was nice that she was concerned. " Positive, I was only curious. I hope you have a nice rest of the day."

" And you as well, Master."

Afterwards, he headed towards the back room which was separated from the front room by an oak door, carved with vines and flowers. Pretty, he'd have to ask for more.

The back room was a more personal place, with a dining table for any future children and himself to dine at, a larger library-like area where bookcases took up both walls and a lounge with a TV. Behind the sofas was the staircase that led upstairs to his bedroom. Overall, it was much bigger than the front room and kitchen combined.

Harry wandered over to the library area and sat down on the window seat to observe the garden, which looked no different to the day before. He sighed. There wasn't much to do when you were the Emperor's concubine.

Unless he started on a flowerbed?

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11:00am

Digging a flowerbed whilst his maids fretted or judged him was not how Harry had imagined he would begin life at the Palace. However, his garden did look a little more lively now, with the beginnings of a flower garden and a small herb patch underway.

Still with an hour left until lunch was served, Harry decided to explore the rest of the Palace of Noble Handsomeness. He knew, from the whispers of his maids, that there was a courtyard in the middle of the Palace, filled to the brim with flowers and blossoming trees in the mid-July climate.

Exiting through the front door that connected to the back room [Why was it the back room whilst being connected to the front door? Harry didn't really know.] with Kia in tow, he was greeted with the fresh scent of nature and the sight of thousands of flowers in bloom.

It was beautiful, each flowerbed carefully arranged and trimmed not to hang over the marble footpath, overhanging canopies of trees just shy of brushing the top of his umbrella, and birds fluttering about within them.

Harry observed the garden peacefully, taking it all in as a brief moment of reprieve from the stress he knew was soon to come. He wondered what it would be like in the wintertime, whether it would still be as beautiful, or even more so.

Footsteps broke Harry out of his thoughts, and he lifted himself from where he was watching a butterfly, turning to face the newcomer. He was an incredibly handsome man, perhaps a few years older than himself, with golden-brown hair and a dazzling smile that grew when he turned to face him fully.

Noble Diggory, the Emperor's Sixth Noble, and the other inhabitant of the Palace. Although Harry knew him personally as Cedric Diggory, a friendly Hufflepuff he remembered from his early Hogwarts years, and admittedly had a crush on at some point.

"Greetings, Brother, it's wonderful to meet you. I welcome you to the Palace of Noble Handsomeness. I wondered when I was going to gain someone to share it with." Diggory's grin grew wider, and he held out his hand. Harry watched it for a brief moment, before realising what the gesture was for. He reached out his own, and they shook hands, Diggory's smile stretching even wider. Harry stared, unsure of the other. He had a different air to him than when they had last met, less soft and more like a hardened shell. It was... disconcerting, to say the least.

"It is a pleasure to meet you too... brother." Harry offered his own, slightly muted smile in response. Not that he had anything against his fellow Noble, he just seemed... a bit much.

Especially on his first day.

Diggory laughed, a slightly gruff sound that suited him perfectly. " I spotted you through the window and thought I'd come and invite you to have lunch with me." The tone he spoke in was light, but the look in his eyes had grown slightly heavier. It wasn't a question, but a demand.

" Of course," Harry replied smoothly. " My maids have yet to begin preparing lunch, so there won't be any hassle. I'll send Kia to inform them that I won't be returning for a few hours."

" Great! Well, follow me then. My rooms are on the farther side." He chuckled. " His Majesty granted me one of the corner rooms for my third year here, you see. I've only recently gotten settled in, but, oh, do I love it! There is so much more that I can do with the garden now-"

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" Brother, there has been something on my mind since I first arrived here and had my audience with the rest of the harem." The man hummed, showing that he was listening. " If It isn't too rude to ask, could you define the groups in the harem for me, so that I may know who is allied with who?"

Cedric hummed once again, this time consideringly. " Hmm, well, alliances in the harem aren't really defined by groups, as such. Consort Slytherin-Black is on pretty bad terms with Sister Isla, not to the extreme, but they do squabble often in and out of the daily meetings. However, Sister Penny, who is close to Sister Isla, gets along with Consort Slytherin-Black well. Sister Penny is on good terms with most people, that's just who she is. Consort Slytherin-Black does have close allies who are around her most often though, such as Concubine Slytherin-Black, her cousin. I guess you could say that is her 'group'."

Concubine Slytherin-Black, also known as Regulus Black, Sirius' younger brother. Harry had grown up hearing from his Godfather about him, and how close they had been when they were younger before Regulus began to take their mother's side of things. The last time Sirius had mentioned him had been right before he'd headed off to the selection, and that had been a warning about the man.

" Harry, about Regulus... Don't get on his bad side. Whilst he may be seen as relatively tame compared to cousin Bella, he didn't escape unscathed from the madness that runs in our blood. He may be lenient on you, due to your status as my heir and a Black by blood adoption, but don't rely on that too heavily."

He had glimpsed Regulus out of the corner of his eye at the welcoming earlier, the man looking much more fairy-like than his roguish, older brother, but the dull expression he wore on his face nullified the otherworldly air that hung around him. The Concubine looked, for lack of a better word, *soulless* .

Harry didn't think the man would be up to help him get acquainted with the harem at any time, his status as his older brother's adopted son be damned. Luckily, it seemed that Cedric had seen it fit to take him under his wing. However...

" Sister Penny's pregnancy has been progressing smoothly, and she believes that she's carrying a boy! I'm certain that his majesty will promote her straight to the rank of Noble Consort were she to give birth to another son so soon after her first." Harry hummed politely in the face of Cedric's enthusiasm, absorbing the information he was so freely giving him. A boy would bolster the position of a concubine in any harem, if only because their birth assured the continuance of the family name, and in this case, the continuity of the Slytherin Dynasty.

Harry would need to have a child if he was to get any sort of standing in the harem, a boy if he was aiming for the higher ranks. As of the moment, however, he was underage, and would therefore leave the childbearing to the other concubines. Besides, currently, the thought of having a child at the moment was just...

He shivered at the thought. No. Best wait until he was *at least* twenty, perhaps even older. Most, if not all concubines of his majesty hadn't had a child below the age of twenty.

" I wish her the best, and hope that she delivers a healthy prince for his majesty."

Cedric chuckled, sipping some of his tea. Harry mirrored him, if only to not look awkward. " Of course, most signs are pointing to the baby being a girl, which she wouldn't be disappointed in, but she dearly does want to give his majesty another son. The Emperor already has fifteen children, and only four of those are sons. The first Prince, Alexis, is still

much too young to be of any help to his majesty in official matters, but the sweetheart does try his best. The other day, he apparently burst into the Emperor's office, and demanded a duel with him! The Emperor was reportedly not amused, as he was working on important legislature at the time-

He was a bit *too much* .

Cedric blathered on all afternoon until, finally, dinner time was upon them and Harry convinced the man that they should part ways for the day. He didn't know how much longer he could go without attempting to hex him into silence.

" It was lovely to see you again, Brother." Diggory grinned, clasping their hands together. " I would like to make these meetings a daily occurrence." Harry smiled blandly, nodding his head.

" Yes, thank you for your aid, Brother. This afternoon has been an informative one. I look forward to tomorrow." If he had the strength to make it out of bed come morning.

All in all, his first true day as the Emperor's concubine was uneventful.

17th July 1997

Harry and Cedric, however, did not manage to meet up the next day. Cedric was invited by Consort Isla for tea, and with an apologetic smile, called it off with the promise of definitely meeting for the next. Harry was secretly glad, as he didn't know if he possessed the mental fortitude to listen to the man talk for hours on end, two days in a row.

He also had his own matters to attend to, such as the Emperor sending gifts to him that needed inspecting, and tea with the other new arrivals in his harem. Speaking of the man, Harry had yet to glimpse him in the Court, and from what he had heard from Cedric, his

majesty was preoccupied with state matters. Not preoccupied enough to not send gifts, however.

" Noble Potter-Black, the Emperor bestows upon you gifts chosen by his esteemed self. His majesty welcomes your Lordship into his glorious harem." Behind the Eunuch stood many others, arms laden with the apparent gifts. He observed each of them with assessing eyes, before bending at his waist.

" His majesty is gracious to his harem."

" His majesty, the Supreme Emperor bestows upon Noble Potter-Black the following: brocades of material supplied from the Empire's finest weavers, flowers handpicked from his majesty's private gardens, beautiful jewellery sourced from around the globe, books full of key knowledge, decorations to adorn his Lordships rooms and shoes his majesty believes will suit his Lordship well."

" I thank his majesty for his benevolence. May his reign last for more than a thousand years." The gathered murmured in agreement, bowing lowly as he straightened up. He stepped forward, examining each item thoroughly. However, Anya's whisper of the time was more urgent than inspecting gifts. " Please allow my maids to guide you where is wish everything to be placed. I have another affair to attend."

That affair was meeting with Dahlia, who had sent a maid over to the palace earlier in the morning, their accommodations being on opposite sides of the court. She, along with whoever else she invited along, would be arriving in his private garden shortly.

He walked out of the back entrance, Kia guiding him by the arm, and into his mostly bare garden. Apart from the small pond, a couple of trees and bushes, a few flowerbeds and the table they would be taking tea at, it was empty. Harry sighed softly, hoping that the lavish assortment of foods would be enough to distract his visitors.

Just as he was beginning to bore, the garden gate, guarded by a darkly robed man he'd barely met the day prior, swung open, a large group filing in orderly. Dahlia was at the front, smiling softly at him, closely followed by a maid he recognised as Jane, who had taken care of her since she was young. Another maid, with dark hair and equally dark eyes, followed solemnly, face blank.

Daphne and Theo came after, each attended by a singular maid. Luna was pursued by a haggard-looking woman who carried a cloak, trying to persuade her mistress to wear it. Luna, however, ignored her in favour of staring up at the sky in rapture.

The last was a concubine he recognised intimately, looking underdressed next to his schoolmates. Second-Class Attendant Clearwater, the concubine who had been his examiner for the fifth test. She walked slowly, head down, an anxious maid that he identified as Lucy by her side. Her long, curly blonde hair was done up simply, and the robes she wore were, whilst elegant, plain in comparison to Dahlia's.

" Brother Harry, thank you for accepting my request. I hope I didn't bring too many people, Sister Luna joined us on the way here."

" Sister Dahlia, there's no trouble. I have plenty of seats and food to go around." He reached for her hands, and they walked arm-in-arm to the ornate table situated underneath a blossom tree."

" This place is beautiful, Harry. I'm so jealous." She whispered into his ear with a grin, pulling away to stand near a chair. Anya pulled out a seat for him, and the other maids did the same, all sitting down once he was comfortable.

" Brother Harrison, this is quite a magnificent place. As is expected from his majesty, he keeps all of his concubines in grandness." Daphne smiled thinly, her fan fluttering about in front of her face, obscuring most of her features.

" It is, Sister Daphne. The garden in the courtyard is by far my favourite feature so far, although the towers do make the Palace feel more magical. I heard his majesty took inspiration from Hogwarts." He allowed that bit of information, although he was sure that their own sources had probably told them more. Theodore hummed theatrically, confirming his thoughts.

" Ah, I apologise for my rudeness, Brother, I forgot to introduce you both. May I introduce you to Second-Class Attendant Clearwater, she has been a member of the harem for six years now. Sister Penelope, this is Noble Potter-Black, a close friend of ours from Hogwarts."

The attendant bowed as low as she could whilst at the table, muttering. " It is a pleasure to meet your acquaintance, your Lordship. Thank you for allowing me to attend." Harry had to wave his hand to usher her straight, the woman acting utterly deferential towards him, despite her being his senior. He could understand why grudgingly. Whist she hadn't been outright horrible towards him during the selection, she hadn't treated him well. And now, he outranked her.

" It's quite alright. I was meaning to get to know more of my fellow concubines." Harry smiled, attempting to diffuse some of her tensenesses. It didn't work, the woman curling further into herself.

" Speaking of, have you had the chance to speak with Noble Diggory as of yet?" Dahlia turned to him, ignoring Clearwater entirely. Both Theodore and Daphne were doing the same, and he was sure that Luna wasn't even mentally present at the moment.

" Yes, he invited me to lunch yesterday and arranged that we'd meet most other days for the same. Earl Grey?"

" Yes, please. How wonderful, I'm sure he'll be a big asset in helping you learn the intricacies of harem life. I must say, you're rather lucky, Brother, the only other First Attendant is First-Class Attendant Erikson who lives in the other building."

Harry chuckled, taking a sip of his tea. Mint, grown from his own herb garden back at home. He had left it there, with express demands towards his parents to care for it and not allow it to die whilst he was gone. Just thinking about his mum and dad made his eyes sting. The chances he'd even return home now were slim, and that was something he couldn't quite acknowledge at that moment. So, he shoved the thought to the back of his mind. " I am thankful that his majesty took notice of me. It is a blessing, to be a part of his harem and bring eternal glory to my family name."

It wasn't a lie, but not quite the truth. And he doubted he'd ever be able to freely speak his thoughts in company ever again.

Dahlia giggled, the noise tinkling softly like sleigh bells. Harry hated that sound because he knew it was fake. " Yes, this is such an opportunity for us all. Long live the Emperor."

" Long live the Emperor." He echoed blandly, staring at his competitors with sharp eyes.

Chapter 5: [First Meeting]

Chapter Notes

I feel like this one is more boring than usual. I don't know. Please suggest any corrections :) Chapter 6 is coming along fine, although I've realised that there are so many birthdays. Should I gloss over the unimportant ones? How do I decide who is important?

Anyway, I've managed to plan up to chapter 14, which is good. Hope I manage to update on time ^-^

Last Edited: 20/07/22- +560 words

19th July 1997- Saturday

Having put it off for a couple of days, Harry recognised that it was time to begin attending the daily greetings. They were held in the Gathering Hall every day except Sundays, from seven until nine on Mondays, and eight until nine for the remaining days. Formally, they were for greeting the highest-ranking concubines and discussing changes in the harem, such as rankings and policies regarding them. However, most knew it was the place for gossiping, slighting and general dramatics, somewhere to showcase their talents, gain allies and enemies alike, and flaunt the attention they received from the Emperor.

Harry hadn't wanted to seem too eager to join in on all of this, the treasure trove of information that it was, but also didn't want to look as though he was putting off meeting them all formally, avoiding them and therefore seeming weak. Besides, joining on a Saturday meant that there was no meeting for him to attend the next day. It was the perfect day, and so he called on his maids to help him prepare.

Getting ready for meeting the other concubines, however, was hell. The maids dressing him for the day, Kia and a young maid named Amari, were ruthless with their opinions, swathing him up only to rip it all off of him a moment later.

" Your lordship, you must look perfect. Stunning the others, but without standing out. We can't be having you gaining enemies only due to the clothes you're wearing, not on your first

day." Her accented voice was soothing, and her smile was mostly teasing, but he couldn't help but frown.

" And how will you achieve that?"

She smiled toothily. " With a little bit of magic, anything is possible."

And, somehow, the girl made it work. Dressed in robes that, whilst lacking in the many adornments he saw other concubines wearing, accentuated his figure and features perfectly with its greenish-blue hue. He walked into the Gathering hall with his head held high, only minutes before the meeting was due to begin.

There were barely any concubines present, however. Harry counted twelve unoccupied seats, one of which belonged to himself. That left eleven other concubines to arrive. He noticed that Luna was in attendance, but none of the other new additions were yet and concluded that they probably wouldn't attend until Monday's session. They were waiting on seven then, which included Consort Bellatrix, who was needed to start the meeting up, and Concubine Regulus.

Harry made his way to his seat on the left side of the hall, one of his assigned maids having entered before him to prepare his space. It wasn't the luxurious chaise the higher-ranking concubines had, but it still seemed comfortable enough with its soft-looking embroidered pillows and conveniently placed side table laden with light snacks.

Luna sat in the seat to the right of the empty one across from him, where Dahlia would sit when she started attending. She smiled at Harry dreamily, giving him a slight wave, the bangles adorning her wrist jingling with the movement. She looked healthier than she had before, white hair glossy and robes fitting her perfectly despite her slender form. He smiled briefly in return at his friend before busying himself with reading his book.

The hall was mostly silent, the present concubines happy enough to sit quietly or converse in whispers with their maids. Harry felt himself relax slightly, something that he berated himself for internally. He couldn't trust those around him not to take advantage of a slight opening to ruin him, even within his first week.

The hush was broken by the arrival of a small group containing concubines he hadn't met yet but knew from photos released to the public every year. They were dressed rather sparsely, lacking the fine adornments he could see others of their ranks wearing.

Concubine Slytherin-Rakepick. First-Class Attendant Erikson. Second-Class Attendant Snyder. They were concubines that Harry was particularly worried about crossing. And it wasn't because they held much power, Concubine Rakepick was only seventh in the ranking, but because of their apparent disregard for morals. Rumour had it, that the Concubine had killed her own infant daughter to get an Attendant executed. One who had only been in the harem for less than a year, and her only misdeed was receiving a hairpin the Concubine had wanted. Harry shivered to think of what else she would do to keep the Emperor's favour.

Attendant Snyder, a rather plain-looking woman whose only defining feature was her violet eyes, sat at the very end of the opposite row, being the lowest current concubine. The knowledge that Rakepick, who coveted the Emperor's attention so much, would associate with someone in disfavour with the man was baffling to Harry. It made no sense, and that's why Snyder and Rakepick's alliance frightened him so much.

Erikson and Rakepick's was much more reasonable. They were distant relatives through their maternal lines, Erikson being somewhat of a nephew or cousin to the woman. Erikson himself sat in the lowest First-Class Attendants seat, having previously sat in first before he and the others joined the harem. He would have been first, still, if over the last month he hadn't gained the Emperor's disapproval as well. Some gossiped that he had created a fuss over his daughter and the Emperor had disapproved, but there was no concrete evidence of that.

Rakepick herself went to sit amongst the other Concubines, between a glum-looking Noble and an empty seat. She looked stunning, if a bit too haughty in her flowing blue robes that accented her vibrant hair colour, a flowery pattern trailing its edges. She didn't even glance at any concubines other than those of her rank, practically turning her back on the Noble to her left.

Rakepick cleared her throat loudly, drawing the attention of the hall onto herself. " Sister, how are you today?" She spoke to the only other Concubine present, flicking her hair over her shoulder. He vaguely recognised the woman to be Penny Haywood, rumoured to be the Emperor's favourite. She was very attractive, a textbook beauty, and Harry couldn't help but understand how she was already pregnant with her third child.

" Well, Sister. I took a short walk in the garden before I came here, the yellow roses look particularly vibrant today. And you?" Her voice was soft, her smile matching it perfectly, blue eyes shining with genuinely pleasant emotions.

Rakepick smiled wickedly. "Hm...perfect. I've had a very enjoyable morning so far. And how about you, Sister Isla?"

The Secondary Consort, a stern-looking woman of around thirty, looked up from her book, dark brown eyes flashing. " There is no need for you to include me in your pleasantries, Concubine Patricia. I am currently occupied." She dropped her head once more, the beads of her braids clinking with the movement.

" Oh, Sister! Concubine Patricia is just being cordial!" Haywood pursed her lips slightly, but her eyes were gleaming with mirth.

The Consort snorted slightly without looking up from the page. " As I said, I'm busy."

" Consort Isla, that is rather rude of you." Rakepick's voice sounded loud and violent in the quietness of the Hall, her magic seeping out a little to cover the area. The Consort, however, wasn't perturbed by the threat.

" My status endeavours me to be rude to those of a lower ranking than me. Know your place, Sister." The air grew taut with tension as the pair stared at each other, the conversations of others petering out at the slight commotion.

" Of course, Sister." The Concubine gritted her teeth and looked away, surrendering the fight. Silence reigned for a little while more until conversations started up once again.

A few minutes passed, and, finally, Bellatrix and what Harry could only assume were her closest allies arrived, dressed finely and sporting blank expressions. Slytherins to the core, the bunch of them.

They walked up the aisle as if it was a runway, three of them sitting amongst the other concubines whilst Bellatrix headed towards her seat on the slight dias, her swollen belly cradled gently in her hands as she sat. The Consort looked over those gathered for a few moments, before turning her head to the woman sitting in the right-nearest seat. " Consort Laurier, how are you this morning?"

" It is 'Consort Slytherin-Laurier', Sister. I am doing well this morning, how about you?"

The Primary Consort sniffed. " Snarking me already? As I expected of you, Sister." She frowned. " I am well. And you, Sister Penny?" Bellatrix turned to the left.

" Oh, yes, I am great, Sister! Thank you for asking. How is your baby today?"

" Same as yesterday, still healthy and fit. His Majesty is most pleased. Ah." The Consort looked up at the rest of them, who were sitting in silence, waiting to be allowed to speak, blinking slowly like a cat. " You may talk amongst yourselves. The important information can wait for a little while." Without acknowledging their responses, she turned back to her conversation, the other Concubines joining in.

A murmur of chatter started up around him, and Harry was at a loss as to what to do. He could sit in silence and be perceived as either someone afraid of confrontation and therefore easy to put down or believing that he was better than the rest of them. Or, he could come across as rude by butting into someone else's conversation.

Harry decided to sit in silence but appear to be listening intently to the conversation between his fellow Nobles.

"-has been very busy lately. It's upsetting that he hasn't called on any of us in over a week now."

" His Majesty is the Emperor, it is expected that there will be periods when he cannot spare much time away from work."

" Oh! Did you hear that his Majesty visited the children recently?"

" Yes, I heard that he went to talk with the First Princess about his expectations for her final year at Hogwarts. It must have been hard on her last year, with five of her siblings joining the first year all of a sudden."

" At least there will be no children joining until the First Prince begins attending in a few years. Evana and Sylvania would have long graduated, and I'm assuming the current first years will be in their seventh year? Gosh, I don't even want to think about that."

The conversation went along this line for a while until it was halted by Consort Bellatrix raising her hand for silence.

" I thank you all for attending this morning, as we have a few matters to discuss. Noble Potter, I'm glad you have decided to join us for today, I hope you are well?" She didn't pause to allow him to answer, so he simply nodded his head. " Good. Now, recently, the cost of Acromantula silk has skyrocketed-"

The meeting was over faster than Harry had expected, and Anya arrived to escort him back along with the maid who had stayed by his side. " The meeting went better than I had expected it to. There wasn't much to go over, and none of the other concubines seemed terribly concerned with my presence."

" That's wonderful, Master. You didn't want to stand out too much this soon." Harry hummed in response, side-eyeing his other maid to watch her reaction. There wasn't so much as a twitch. Good.

" Brother Harrison!" A slight shout from behind Harry caused him to immediately turn away from the conversation, placing his attention upon the trio walking towards him.

" Brother." He politely nodded, and Cedric smiled, gesturing to the two Nobles standing behind him, Macmillan and Vanity.

" We were just about to head back to the courtyard, and I wanted to know if you'd join us?"

Harry pondered for a moment. He had yet to have tea with other Nobles other than Cedric, so this would be a good way to break the boundary between them early on. If Harry could integrate himself with the other Nobles, he would have an easier time deflecting any threats. Unless, of course, they came from within the group he intended to form. And before that could happen, he'd need allies more powerful than himself. " That would be lovely. Thank you for inviting me, Brother, Sisters."

" Sister Penny's children are such Darling's, Brother. The Ninth Princess is so sweet and caring despite her young age. And the Fourth Prince is just like his mother, already showing compassion towards even the lowest of maids." Cedric had been gushing about 'Sister Isla' and 'Sister Penny' ever since they had arrived in the Pavillion, and whilst Harry was smiling and nodding along, he could feel his body beginning to droop. " Sister Isla's son is also equally as sweet. He loves to spend time with His Majesty, who dotes on him a lot."

" The Second Prince resembles His Majesty greatly." Noble Vanity commented airily, the glum expression that she had sported throughout the meeting still prominent on her face. " His Majesty was quite surprised to see that he inherited his red eyes once the colour came through."

" Yes, the Second Prince's eyes are very beautiful. I hope that a child of mine will be born with similar looks." Cedric smiled, staring at Harry intently. " Brother Harrison is lucky to have black hair like his Majesty's. It will increase the likelihood of your future children looking like the Emperor. Ah, I'm so jealous!"

Vanity also stared at him, or more accurately, into his eyes." His Majesty does seem to favour his children whose royal blood shines through clearly. Although... he may favour your eye colour being passed on. After all, green is the colour of Slytherin." The hummed agreements from the other two made him blush slightly.

" Thank you for the compliment, Sister. I am honoured that you think his majesty finds my eye colour a desirable trait."

" Oh, I know so. He's always liked his concubines who've had green eyes, such as Late Noble Severn who was one of his majesty's favourites up to his death."

Cedric piped in. " Oh, I never met Late Noble Severn. Was he one of his Majesty's earlier concubines?"

" Yes, he was chosen in the selection of 1982, alongside Consort Isla, Noble Rosenberg, Noble Lafington and Noble Witt. However, after only a few short years within the harem, he unexpectedly passed away in 1986."

And didn't that sound suspicious. "They didn't find a cause?" Harry asked, eyebrows slightly scrunched.

"No, he was just alive one moment and gone the next, no traces of poison or foul play. His Majesty was, understandably, upset by this, and it was most definitely one of the darkest periods of this Court." She went silent for a moment, staring down at the floor in deep thought. "Anyway, that's in the past, and this is the present. A concubine hasn't passed away since 1990, and that was naturally, so you have no need to worry about how the harem was back then."

It didn't settle his growing worries but instead heightened them. Noble Vanity had explicitly mentioned the similarity Harry and Archie shared, green eyes, and how Archie had been a favoured concubine of his due to them. Leading to his untimely death.

And currently, he was the only one who had green eyes.

The tea ended soon afterwards with cordial goodbyes shared between them all, and they parted with promises of meeting up again.

Walking through one of the many alleys of the Court, two maids in tow, Harry heard a sudden crackle to his left in the direction of a field, a flash following it. Lightning? No, a spell? He frowned, holding his hands up to halt his entourage. " Stay here for a moment." He stepped forward, dodging Anya's hands that attempted to stop him, and peeked around the corner of the building.

A form was almost dancing around the field, sparks of lights at their fingertips, robes lit up by the many hovering orbs. Harry watched in awe as magic flowed seamlessly from the man's hands, twisting into various luminescent animals that joined him in his merriment. The source of the noises and flashes, he deduced.

His breath stuttered as he caught a glance of the man's face as he twirled, the Emperor's red eyes glowing in the light. The Emperor was beautiful like that. Not that he usually wasn't, far from it, but the way his magic made him shine supernaturally was breathtaking. The control he held over his magic was immensely impressive, and so was the ease with which he cast it from his hands. He was exceptionally powerful, not that Harry had ever doubted that, but it was another thing to see the Emperor's power with his own eyes.

He continued to watch, spellbound by the sight, well into the afternoon.

Tom's POV

He noticed his spy the second they stepped into the range of his sensing, body tensing up to protect himself in the instance of an attack. However, their magic was familiar, so he restrained himself from turning around and striking at the person as his mind encouraged him to do. He regarded their magic for a moment and smiled when he recognised its sensation.

It was Harrison Potter-Black. His newest Noble, hiding behind one of the walls to observe him secretly. Tom span a couple of more times, allowing the orbs surrounding him to crumble, deciding on his next course of action.

Well, since his Noble looked as if he was expecting a show...

With an overdramatic flourish, a beam of ice lept from his hand, forming into the shape of a mighty dragon. With a loud roar, the creature made of ice soared into the sky, snow raining down upon the field in its wake. He delighted in the little gasp his display drew out of the boy, waving his hand again to shatter the dragon into a million tiny pieces. Tom breathed in the frigid air, revelling in the feeling of his magic surrounding the area, oozing into every crevice and marking it as his own. Some even clung onto his concubine, unbeknownst to the boy, and Tom grinned in satisfaction as their magic combined. He was powerful and bright, shining like a beacon for his dark magic.

He carried on with his show, shooting out bolts of lightning and swarms of fire, creating monsters out of wind, ice and earth, turning the surrounding vicinity into a wasteland only to restore it with a swish, the hair on his nape sticking from exertion. But the drain was worth it to watch the emotions on Harrison's face fluctuate between fascination and awe.

Tom chuckled to himself in delight, feeling his magic sing.

Chapter 6: [Declaration]

Chapter Notes

I quite like how this chapter turned out :) I finished it a few days ago, but decided to do one last edit today, and managed to add 500 words to it. Although, I do think that the ending scene could have been drawn out a little longer. 4k is really good for me, though! I hope you enjoy it, and please comment any scenes you wish to see.
[Chapter 7 is nearly complete as well, but I'll hold that update off for the time being.]

Last Edited: 20/07/22- +440 words

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

24th July 1997- Thursday- [Afternoon]

Over the next few days, Harry met up with Cedric twice more for tea and the Attendants for the other days, one of which was today. So far, the chatter had been light, the tea and snacks served, and their gathering was going perfectly, overlooking any snide remarks from Greengrass or overly deferential actions from Clearwater.

Therefore, when a Eunuch approached the table, they weren't expecting anything of much note. Especially not the information he came to relay.

" His Imperial Majesty, The Emperor, wishes to spend this evening with Primary First-Class Attendant Malfoy. The Lady is expected to greet His Majesty at 5 pm sharp within the Emperor's dining hall. His Majesty asks his concubine to dress appropriately to attend dinner alongside his royal advisor. A Eunuch will be waiting for Lady Malfoy to escort her there."

The group fell into stony silence, turning to face the Eunuch properly. Harry felt the polite smile on his face drop at the sight of burgundy robes, which was the colour his Majesty's personal servants wore to separate themselves from the rest. And they had barely taken any notice of his approach. He could feel the stare of Greengrass burning into the side of his head, eagerly waiting for his reaction.

All Harry could do was stare at the Eunuch in growing alarm. " Congratulations, Sister." He felt slightly ill yet still managed to throw a convincing half-smile on his face before she could spot his grimace.

Dahlia, who had yet to stop staring at the Eunuch in open disbelief and astonishment, snapped her head towards him and smiled tearfully. " Thank you, Brother." She turned back to the man waiting patiently, still bowed. "I am grateful for the opportunity to spend time with his Majesty. Please convey my sincerest gratitude."

" Yes, my Lady." With one final bow to their group, the man hurried off.

Dahlia stood up quickly after he was out of sight, still smiling happily, ignorant or perhaps simply not caring about the repercussions this meeting could have, about what sort of statement it was sending and how this would affect how the other concubines saw him. " I'm sorry, Sisters and Brothers, but I must be off. There are only a few hours until his Majesty expects me, and I need to go and prepare. Thank you for the lovely time, Brother Harry." With a brief peck on his cheek, she linked arms with her maid.

" Ah, I will come with you, Sister." Greengrass stood, Nott following with his own excuses, and Clearwater mumbled something unintelligible before she was scampering off to follow as well. Harry and Luna were left alone at the table unexpectedly, each with a maid still by their sides. He brought his cup of tea up to his lips, frowning softly at the sight of his hand slightly shaking.

He couldn't believe he was still so weak-hearted. Of course, the Emperor would want to meet with Dahlia, his close advisors' daughter, society's newest flower, and to top it off, a Pureblood whose family had always been allied with the dark. It didn't matter that he had a higher rank, she was the one who held more power.

" Harry." He turned his head to his friend, startled by the soft smile on her lips. " Don't dread that you weren't chosen. The Emperor's interest in you is growing by the day, and soon, that will be you." She downed the rest of her tea, standing up with a jingle. " I must be leaving now. I'm sure the Nargles have been busy whilst I've been gone; my jewellery has been going missing more often these days."

" The- Yes, it's best if you hurry. I hope you stop the... Nargles." Harry stammered out, Luna giggling in response. She spun once, the maid grabbing hold of her arm with an admonishing look.

" *Mistress!* "

" Bye, Harry! I'll see you tomorrow!"

" Bye. And thanks, Luna!"

[Evening]

That evening was a chilly one, especially for July. The knowledge that Dahlia was currently having dinner with the Emperor still sat heavily on his mind, thoughts swirling in his head of all the things that could happen. Harry knawed anxiously at his lip. He felt stupid for this. The Emperor had many concubines, as well as many children, him paying attention to his friend wasn't going to cause Harry or his status any harm. Still, he couldn't help but believe that his chances of gaining the Emperor's favour were slipping away the longer he didn't receive an invite.

It was telling; an Attendant being called upon before a Noble, an unusual occurrence. No doubt, the others would make assumptions due to this.

Anya broke the heavy silence as she placed a cup of water before him. " How are you feeling, Master?" Harry hummed questioningly, so she elaborated. " About Lady Dahlia's meeting with his majesty."

" I have no right to be feeling anything but happiness for my sister. We are all his Majesty's concubines, here to serve him as he desires, and today he wishes to have dinner with Dahlia."

" Of course, Master. How dare I presume that you would feel any sort of ill will towards Lady Dahlia."

He allowed her to bow for a moment longer than he usually would, feeling wrung out and tired suddenly. " Anya... I am no longer an ordinary person. There are expectations I must meet; and feelings I must suppress due to these circumstances. I can't allow myself to show others what I truly feel, not until I have a stable standing here."

" Of course, Master."

" I adore Dahlia with all my heart; she is my closest friend, has been since we were young. But... I can't help but feel relieved that his Majesty refuses to take his younger concubines to bed, even when I know that she dearly wants his child. I know it's wrong, but I hope she doesn't become pregnant before I do." He allowed himself to bask in the silence for a moment, swallowing heavily. " Anyway, enough of that! I am hungry. Please dress me quickly."

" Yes, Master."

25th July 1997- Friday [Early Morning]

"- We simply talked with my father, Harry, nothing much else happened. It was quite boring if you ask me, although the Emperor's appearance was enough to quell some of that." Dahlia sipped her tea daintily, grinning at him over the lip of her cup with twinkling eyes.

Harry laughed, raising his own cup. " Make sure nobody else hears you say that, Sister. I don't think many would take you calling being in the Emperor's presence 'boring' well."

" Not being in the Emperor's presence, it was my father's addition that made it dull! He wouldn't let me talk to the Emperor apart from greeting him, and I was sent away minutes after he left. It seems that His Majesty only wanted me there to ensure that the talk between them went well."

" Your Father does have the habit of challenging his Majesty's patience." The pair chuckled with one another, Dahlia sliding closer to him. They were sat in Harry's front room on one of the window seats, watching the maids tend to the garden. It was coming along well, no longer looking as bare as before, the extra flowerbeds brightening up the previously monotone space. He was content to relax in her presence, leaning further into the plush pillows.

Dahlia sighed heavily, sitting up straighter to gain his attention. " You know, Harry... you're a really great friend." He looked at her questioningly, put off by the sudden change in tone. " I hope that us competing to bear the Emperor's children and gain the most status doesn't affect that. I don't know if I could bear you being my enemy."

He smiled softly. " Me neither, Lia."

" But-" Here, her voice sharpened, and Harry glimpsed a peek of what being Dahlia's enemy would entail. Her eyes slightly glowed with excess magical power, hair slightly rippling. " If you try, in any way, to sabotage me, I will have no remorse for what I will do."

" I wouldn't expect any less." Harry placed a hand on her shoulder, watching as Dahlia beamed and placed her cup on the table, assured that her point had gotten across. " However..." Harry allowed his own magic to seep out, coating the room in a dangerous blanket of pure malice. She froze, eyes widening and goosebumps visibly developing on her body. " Don't expect me to take anything lying down, either. No matter our relationship, my family comes first."

" Of course, Brother Harrison. I will heed your warning if you heed mine."

" Good, now, you said that His Majesty has plans for Draco's employment once he graduates?"

" Uh-huh, because Draco's doing so well in Defense and Dark Arts at the moment, top of the class now that you've left, he's thinking of offering him a place within his Knights! Father and Mother are so proud, it's a high honour as it'll mean he'll be getting marked."

" Wow, that's amazing! Usually, his Majesty wouldn't scout through Hogwarts."

" That's the thing, he didn't. First Princess Evana recommended him instead! You know, I think that she likes him, she's always hanging around him and fawning over him."

" Won't that be a little weird? I mean, you're his sister, married to his Majesty, and she's his Majesty's daughter."

" It's not as if she's my daughter, and Draco's only my half-sibling. The only relationship will be between my children and their children."

" Still..."

" Oh, come off it Harry, let me dream!"

[8 am-9 am]

Later that morning, the day's meeting began, with Bellatrix and the group that stuck around her already seated when Harry arrived. He stopped at the doors for a moment, surveying the room with a cautious gaze. It was out of the norm. Usually, they were the last to arrive. It was a statement that they liked to make, that they could enter whenever they wished.

He sat down in his usual seat, dressed in a dainty blue robe patterned with dandelions, and waited for the meeting to commence.

The Consort began the meeting as usual, prattling on and on about how- "My baby seems to be getting more active lately, their kicks are getting stronger!" -and- " His Majesty is very pleased that I'm progressing so well. I've barely experienced any discomfort, and the Royal Doctor says that the baby is looking healthy." Until, of course, the ball dropped.

"Ah, and since we are on the topic of pregnancy..." Here, she turned her head to slyly smile down at Noble sitting to Harry's left, who he had come to know was named Pippa Macmillan. She was a mostly quiet woman from what Harry had seen of her so far, rarely speaking up

during the daily meetings, but she also had an almost unconsciously snobbish air to her that kept him from approaching. Even during the tea, he had attended with her a few days before, she hadn't said a word to him. "Congratulations on your pregnancy, Sister Macmillan! His Majesty has been eagerly anticipating a child between you both. May the union between your families deepen due to this joyous news!"

"...Thank you, Sister, your words are eagerly welcomed. I, myself, only found out last night." The woman looked incredibly uncomfortable to be speaking about it, and Harry felt pity for her. She had obviously been aiming to keep news of her pregnancy a secret for long as possible, but that choice was taken out of her hands as soon as she gained it.

" Oh, Isn't this just so exciting! It's been so long since there were this many concubines pregnant at once! I'm quite sad that my child is expected to arrive this year, whilst yours, Sister Penny's and Sister Jasmine's are expected next year. I expect that the children will all be in the same year at Hogwarts, though." Bellatrix looked giddy, and by the fearful glances shared between the others, it wasn't a welcome reaction. Her magic, once calm, was swelling with emotion, the effects of her pregnancy showing clearly.

" Cousin Bella, calm yourself. Getting yourself so worked up isn't good for the baby."

It was the first time Harry had heard his voice, and he could tell instantly that Regulus Slytherin-Black was nothing like his older brother. His voice was smoother, more refined, although it lacked the life that was found so bountifully within Sirius' own. He felt homesick just thinking about his Godfather, missing the carefree manner he held himself with compared to his shell of a brother.

Bellatrix relaxed instantaneously at her cousin's words, cradling her stomach in alarm. " It's alright, sweetheart, Mummy didn't mean to cause you any harm. Mummy just got a little excited for a moment there." Her smile appeared less flighty than before when she finally looked up. The Consort waved her hand half-heartedly, all previous pomp diminished. " You may talk amongst yourselves."

Conversations commenced immediately, whether they were talking about Bellatrix's outburst or the news that she had dropped so unexpectedly on them. As Pippa, the woman involved in the latter sat to his left, Harry eavesdropped on the discussion she was partaking in.

"-how many days are you along now? Did you get pregnant when his Majesty invited you-"

" Yes, so I'm currently eleven days along today. The Healer barely managed to catch that I was carrying, and it came as such a shock." The Noble still looked rather frazzled, pale white and clutching the front of her robes, as if to protect the life growing inside her.

" My, you're so fortunate to have caught your pregnancy so early on, Sister. I would have loved to of had an extra few weeks of planning; there was so much that I wasn't prepared for. My Serina was such a handful when she was younger; it's such a relief that she's heading out of her toddler stage now. Sister Jasmine, you're also experiencing your first pregnancy at the moment, right? Have you got any advice for Sister Pippa?" Jasmine, who sat next to Pippa, smiled sheepishly, her dimples accenting her simple beauty.

" I'm afraid I don't. I haven't experienced much so far. I'm only just over a month along, myself."

" Ah, a shame. From my experience, I believe it's best if you ask the household department to begin sourcing the items you will need as soon as possible. The months fly by, and soon, you'll be wishing for more. Also, ask them to deliver your kitchen a variety of foods, your taste buds will change their preference frequently."

" Thank you for the advice, Sister Erin."

" Anything to help my Sister." The Noble grinned, her freckled face and gingery-brown hair sending a sharp pain to Harry's heart in remembrance of a past friend who had turned against him long ago. The boy had never agreed with his fascination with anything to do with the Emperor.

" I wouldn't take any advice about pregnancy from Sister Witt, Sister Pippa. After all, hasn't she failed to bring his Majesty's children into this world three times now? And even with her success in birthing the Tenth Princess, her track record leaves much to be desired."

" Sister Cordelia, that's uncalled for!" The sharp voice of Secondary Noble Vanity sent their gazes towards her, who, although looking as sickly as usual, had a hard and disapproving

look in her eyes. " You should not comment on a fellow concubine's hardships when you have never experienced the pain they have gone through yourself!"

" Is it not the truth?" All she received was glares from the others, so she tutted, returning to the book in her lap. " Don't come crying to me when you eat something wrong because of Sister Erin's suggestions. You have to be careful with what you digest, it's best to stick with what your body knows."

" Her maids wouldn't be as stupid as to give her something that would cause any harm." Erin retorted hotly, a flush spread across her cheekbones. Cordelia lifted sharp blue eyes to stare at her blankly.

" Yours were, though." The discussion ended with that, Noble Erin curling into herself and refusing to converse anymore, the Primary Noble continuing to read her book. The mood was dampened, so none of the others attempted to start it up again.

Bellatrix took that moment to clap her hands, and begin the true objective of their gathering." Alright, now, let's discuss recent changes to the Emperor's schedule. His Majesty's duties have lessened considerably, so be prepared to be called upon more frequently from now on. Of course, he's most likely to call upon those he's familiar with, so don't expect anything you don't deserve-"

31st July 1997- Thursday

A week later, Harry finally turned seventeen. It was a significant milestone in his life, one that would usually be largely celebrated by his family and friends with great fanfare. However, in the Harem, things were different.

He was moderately low-ranked, and therefore, there was no grand celebration. His friends and family weren't invited, and barely any concubines sent presents to congratulate him. Only Dahlia, Cedric, Luna, and a few of the Attendants sent him gifts, most simply items such as bolts of silk too feminine for his liking, or books containing information he had little use for.

It was, in all, his most boring birthday so far.

However, the Eunuch knocking on his door, as usual, changed that.

" His Majesty, the Emperor, invites Noble Potter-Black to dine with him this evening in celebration of his seventeenth birthday. He asks his Lordship to arrive at the Emperor's Palace by 6 pm, dressed appropriately for the occasion. The Emperor also advises his Lordship's maids to bring nightwear as Noble Potter-Black is intended to be staying the night."

Harry almost sat back down in disbelief, only Anya's tight grip on his arm keeping him steady. *What?* The Emperor was going to personally celebrate his birthday with him? And he was going to be staying the night? Surely the Emperor wasn't thinking of sleeping with him on his first night as a legal adult. The man had never shown any inclination of doing so with any other concubines before him.

" I-I thank his Majesty for his thoughtfulness. Please express to him the gratefulness I am feeling and to expect me at the requested time." The Eunuch bowed, leaving the pair to their thoughts. " Anya!"

" Master, have no fear. We have been preparing outfits for such an occasion ever since you were chosen. They are all ready, you just need to choose one, and we will sort everything else."

" Thank you, Anya."

" It is simply my job, Master."

[6 pm]

" Noble Potter-Black, I see that you are a rather punctual man." His voice hadn't changed at all since the last time Harry had laid eyes on the Emperor just over two weeks before, but his reaction to it was the same. His knees felt like jelly as he stumbled forward, barely able to stand under the attention of such a powerful being.

" Your Majesty. Thank you for inviting me." Harry bowed, conscious of how much skin his new robes were showing. They weren't immodest by any means, but they were much more revealing than any other he owned, with a revealing neckline that left much, but not all, to the imagination. It has been Amari's idea, the woman having giggled the whole time she adorned him with simple but beautiful jewellery such as the necklace he was wearing. It was a regular silver chain with a bright blue gem that stood out against the pale expanse of his chest, glinting in the summer sunlight that still burned ferociously outside.

" Sit." The imposing man pointed to the plush seat on the opposite side of the table, and Harry gingerly sat down in it, despite feeling uncomfortable sitting in the Emperor's direct line of sight. " Elson, serve the tea."

A Eunuch appeared almost from the shadows, filling up the cups he hadn't noticed were placed on the table. The Emperor didn't spare the man a glance, instead, continuing to stare at him intently. The man was as incredibly handsome as ever, with perfectly styled black hair, a sharp jawline, and piercing red eyes that did nothing but add to his attractiveness. Having all of his attention fixated on him made Harry squirm in his seat.

The Emperor shifted, one side of his robe slipping to his shoulder. " I hope that you enjoy chamomile."

Harry cleared his throat. " Yes, I do." He did not. It tasted like socks on the better days.

The Emperor's stare didn't lessen, in fact, it seemed to grow sharper. He raised his hand with purpose, and Harry instinctively reared back but leaned forward eagerly when the Emperor simply vanished the contents of his cup with a simple wave of his hand. "Elson, serve another tea for Noble Potter-Black. Mint?"

" Ah, yes, that's my favourite."

The Eunuch obediently nodded, producing a satchel of tea and another teapot out of seemingly nowhere. He poured the tea and vanished once his job was completed.

The pair of them sat in silence for a little while, taking the occasional sip of tea.

" Dinner will be served soon if you were wondering. I had it held off for the time being, as I have a question to ask you."

" Whatever do you want to know, your Majesty?"

" Why did you, who has such prospects, and the heir to two Noble Houses, decide to leave Hogwarts and become my concubine?"

Harry breathed in deeply, steeling himself. He had expected questions such as this one, he knew it was extremely unusual for the heir to a family to join the harem. " To help my family regain our former glory and status, your Majesty. The surest way to do so is to become your concubine, and bear your children."

The Emperor laughed at his straightforwardness. It was a pleasant sound, amusement mixed with enough mockery to know that he was edging the boundaries of polite talk with that comment.

" My new concubine is a rather ambitious one. Only twelve of the thirty-one concubines I've ever had have given me a child, and only three of those have given me multiple. To fully recover your family's status, you'd have to bear me a son, a possible heir to the throne. I only have four living sons, despite having been on the throne for twenty-one years now." The Emperor left it at that, allowing how unlikely his intent was to sink in.

" I hope that I won't disappoint you, your Majesty."

With a hungry gleam, the Emperor sat up straighter, leaning forward. "Then, can I hope to expect a son for each of our titles? How many is that, four? Slytherin, Gaunt." He placed a hand on his chest, then outstretched it to place it on Harry's hand. " Potter and Black."

Harry, with the warmth of the Emperor's hand on his own, became emboldened. " Perhaps, if there is a fifth son, as we are both descendants of Peverell, they may obtain that title as well. That's five, you're Majesty." He looked up and flinched at the burning look in those red eyes.

What was he saying?! Five! Five sons!? Merlin, why couldn't he ever keep his mouth shut!?

The Emperor tilted his head, watching him intently as he squirmed. " My, how bold of you, Noble Potter-Black. I wonder, what makes you so confident that you'll ever bear a child of mine?" Harry pulled in a deep breath, closing his eyes in preparation. He couldn't believe that he had been so daring, challenging the Emperor as if they were friends. " We'll just have to wait and see, hm? I suppose you should know that you've already gained my attention, you only need to hold onto it ferociously from now on." A sharp sting on the tip of his nose made Harry rear back with a yelp, opening his watering eyes slightly.

The Emperor was *smiling* .

His voice was smooth as silk when he spoke up again, looking behind Harry. " Ah, look, dinner has been served. I heard that you enjoy turkey, yes?"

Chapter End Notes

Birthdays: [HM= Harem Member, RC= Royal Child, O=Other] [The numbers means age on birthday]

31st July- Harry= HM [17]

Chapter 7: [Break]

Chapter Notes

This one is just over 3k long, which is good for me! I'm actually sticking to an update schedule for this story, which is a first, and have most of next chapter written up already. That said, I realised that it's going to take a lot of chapters for this story to involve any sort of children between Tom and Harry ^-^ For reference, 31st December happens in the 14th chapter. But, I have been doing a lot more longer timeskips recently, so perhaps it'll be sooner than I'm expecting.

Please comment if you spot any mistakes, or if there's anything you want to see. Also, how do people feel about POV from other people?

1st August 1997- Saturday

Although they had not been able to share the same bed for the night, that right reserved for his Majesty's legal spouses, he and the Emperor's beds had only been separated by a silken curtain. It meant something, and he was much too unaware of his Highnesses personality for the time being to figure out what. But Harry knew for certain that he and the Emperor's relationship had blossomed that evening, filled with pleasant interactions and a delicious meal that was catered for his tastebuds.

In the morning, the Emperor was softer, feeding him pieces of fruit with a gentle gaze, sending him on his way with a kiss on Harry's palm and a playful ruffle of his hair. In his euphoric daze, he almost floated out of the Emperor's Palace, welcomed by Anya who was waiting by a Sedan with a happy smile.

" Master, I assume you had an enjoyable time?"

He blushed minutely, taking her hand. " You assume correctly. The dinner was lovely, and me and his Majesty seem to have grown closer."

" That's wonderful, Master. The Emperor certainly dotes on his concubines. Is there any need to arrange for a healer to do a check-up in the next few days?" The warm smile never strayed

from her face but became more salacious as she helped him sit down.

Harry stopped and frowned in confusion. " Why is there a need for- No, no! Absolutely not! Me and his Majesty did not- not that! We simply shared a room, is all." He stammered, glaring at her. " Don't be so open with saying such things, his Majesty isn't fond of rumours, and neither am I!"

" This servant apologises, Master. Please, forgive me for my assumptions; I will accept any punishment you deem necessary." Harry tutted, turning away.

" You need to be more mindful, Anya. However, there is no need for any punishment; just be mindful from now on."

" My Master is a gracious one."

When he arrived back at the Palace of Noble Handsomeness, Dahlia was waiting for him in his front room, his maids rushing about to serve her. Harry cleared his throat to announce his presence, the maids barely stopping long enough to give him the required bow, before continuing.

He turned to his friend, frowning. It seemed that the maids the Department had issued him preferred to serve another master. " Dahlia, to what do I owe this visit?"

" His Majesty allowed you to stay in his Palace for the night." It wasn't a question. She continued to stare into the depths of her tea, a neutral expression hiding any clue of her true feelings.

" Yes. The Emperor had another bed prepared for me, since he knew our conversation would run on for a while."

" And? What did you talk about?"

" This and that. Mostly about my reasons for entering the Harem and my interests and hobbies. Small talk, he's a good conversator."

"Why would the Emperor want to know all that about a Noble?"

" I didn't question his Majesty. I am here to serve him in any way I can, and that includes answering any questions he has for me without asking."

She slammed her teacup onto the table, its contents slightly splashing over the side. A maid hurried forward with a cloth, largely ignored by the two as they stared into each other's eyes. " Harry, you slept in the Emperor's Palace, in your first month of being in his Harem. Don't you know how huge this is? This could cause you all sorts of trouble with the others if they take it the wrong way." Dahlia threw her hands up in the air, eyes wide. She had obviously been stewing in her worries overnight, and Harry felt sorry for being the cause.

" Then, I will simply tell them the truth, that me and his Majesty ate, talked, and then slept in separate beds."

" And what if they don't believe you? What if- What if Concubine-"

" Don't. Don't say any names. If they don't believe me, then that's on them. It will eventually sort itself out."

" Yeah, with you potentially hurt or killed! Harry, I am of the opinion that you should-"

Harry turned his back on her, hands shaking slightly as he fiddled with the vase of roses. " Not interact with the Emperor for a few months until this blows over? And let you spend all the time you wish with him? I can take care of myself, Dahlia. I have nothing to hide from the others since there's nothing, I did that they can complain about. "

They stood in tense silence for a few moments before Harry heard the rustling of fabric brush past him. " Fine. I hope you don't regret your choices, Brother." He was left feeling as lonely as ever, maids whispering around him in hushed tones that were still perfectly audible to his ears.

" This one will be the next to fall."

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[8 - 9 am]

" Noble Potter-Black, I heard that you spent the night in his Majesty's Palace last night; is that correct?" The Consort's hands cradled her heavily swollen belly with care, sharp nails drumming upon it rhythmically as she stared down at him. Harry fidgeted under her gaze yet met it head-on to show his sincerity.

" Yes, Your Highness. The Emperor invited me to dinner and then allowed me to stay the night. In separate beds, of course, I wouldn't dare assume to share his Majesty's bed with him."

" You will do whatever his Majesty orders of you, sleeping in his bed with him and all. Still, I am glad that you understand your position here. Please; do remember to inform me the next time his Majesty invites you so that I don't have to find out the next morning, however. We have a way of doing things around here, and if his Majesty had taken you to bed, any subsequent pregnancy wouldn't have been considered a legitimate one."

" Of course, Your Highness, I understand. Thank you for informing me." She nodded, turning away from him with one last assessing stare.

" His Majesty has announced that there are to be changes in the current Rankings." A murmur swept through the room, pointed stares and whispers shared between the concubines. Harry had heard about occurrences such as this, which happened on the first day of each month, although only if the Emperor ordered it. It seemed that some concubines had left an

impression on him during the month. " Quiet! This isn't exactly out of the norm, there is no need to make such a racket." Bellatrix shouted, raising slightly from her seat. " The Emperor has instructed me to inform you of who and why those mentioned have risen in the ranks. Noble Macmillan." Nobody looked shocked to hear her name being announced, however, many looked sour-faced.

" Yes, Your Highness."

" Due to your pregnancy, the Emperor has graciously promoted you to the rank of Secondary Noble. He has high expectations for you and eagerly awaits the child's birth. Do not disappoint him and protect the gift you have been given with your life."

" I thank his Majesty and hope that the child I bear him will be healthy and suitable for their esteemed position."

" Noble Potter-Black." Harry felt fear engulf him. He wasn't expecting to be called upon, his only notable interaction with the Emperor being the night previous. Had he done anything to gain the Emperor's ire in so little time? Or had their conversation yesterday pleased the royal so much that he was raising his rank as a reward?

Harry gulped, placing his book to the side." Yes, Your Highness."

Bellatrix raised her eyebrow as she stared down at him, less contemptuously than she had before. " His Majesty comments that he greatly enjoys your presence, and conversating with you amuses him. He raises your rank to Fourth Noble."

Harry had been in the Harem for less than a month, and he was already moving up the ranks. If this didn't paint a target on his back, he didn't know what else would. " I thank his majesty for his benevolence."

" And Finally, Attendant Erikson." The mentioned man sat straighter, an eager expression on his face as he stared up at the Consort. She raised a singular sharp eyebrow at his continued silence, to which he smiled.

" Your Highness."

" His Majesty acknowledges that your behaviour in recent weeks has improved, and so he has raised your rank to Third First-Class Attendant."

The man grinned. " I thank his Majesty."

" Do not forget that his Majesty is still not pleased with how you acted that day. Continue to reflect on your behaviour, and your previous status may be restored."

No others were mentioned after that, and Bellatrix moved swiftly on to the next topic. She flipped the page of the booklet on her table, lounging further into her chair.

" Next on the order is the children's school reports, which were finalised last night. From Hogwarts, all the children currently attending are said to be doing splendidly, as expected, with notable comments on how well First Princess Evana has done in her first NEWTs year. His Majesty is set to reward the children and their parent. For those who are still too young to attend, their tutors have written up individual reports that have been sent to both his majesty and their other parent. If this concerns you, his Majesty orders you to thoroughly read and discuss with him at a later date the contents."

A concubine made a noise, presumably to ask something, but Bellatrix had already flipped the page again and moved on.

" His Majesty also responds to expresses of concern that some concubines feel as though they are not receiving enough money. He dictates that the weekly stipend is calculated thoroughly to ensure his concubines may live in luxury and that if the concubines feel as though they do not have enough, they should stop spending their stipend on items they do not need." She thumbed through the next pages in quick succession, not allowing herself to spend more than a minute on each subject. " The Emperor wishes his Harem to stay healthy and content and to come forward with any concerns if they feel they cannot deal with them themselves. I declare this meeting concluded."

They rose and bowed. " Thank you for having us, may the Primary Consort's power flourish, and her health never diminish." His exit after that was swift, dodging even his friends as they wished to hear from him about his promotion.

However, it seemed as though his Majesty's interest brought forward others, too. And he couldn't avoid every one of them.

" Noble Potter-Black, would you be interested in joining us for lunch this afternoon?" The voice was slightly nasally, and Harry turned his head to stare at the pair who had stopped him. He seemed to be getting accosted for invites to tea frequently these days, lower concubines attempting to curry favour with him, and the higher ones fleshing out if he was suitable to join them. Harry wondered when his status as the 'shiny new noble' was going to wear off and lamented the fact that the next harem selection was three years away.

" Yes, you have been in the Harem for a little while now, yet we still haven't been able to greet you properly." The other man spoke up, his voice not as irritatingly high pitched but no less pompous.

" Of course, Attendant Warrington, Attendant Pucey, I would love to attend. At what time should we meet, and whereabouts?"

" Does 11 am sound fine, and in the gardens of the Palace of Gathered Handsomeness? It is where we usually take it."

" Yes, that is perfectly acceptable. I will meet you there. Have a good rest of your morning, Brothers."

" Same to you, Brother."

[11 am]

" This is a very lovely garden, Brothers. I love how the flower beds are layed out; it looks so sophisticated." He smiled at the pair opposite, eyeing up the decorations dotted throughout

the garden.

" Yes, both of our maids take care of the garden, and we have free reign to decide how it looks since we are this palace's only occupants. It is pleasant that his Majesty is so selective with who he allows into his harem, it keeps the number of people lower than many had expected."

" Yes, I heard that before his Majesty began the selection process, most families assumed that he would want a spouse from each prominent family, so they prepared one that they would send. When he announced that they would have to meet select criteria, that wiped most off the list!"

" Such as the Weasleys! They were planning to send that brother of current Lord Arthur Weasley, weren't they? The one that died young."

" Despite their Pureblood, they really are an undesirable bunch." They shared a laugh, looking at him for approval. When he showed none, they stopped abruptly.

" You are so lucky, Brother. His Majesty pays so much attention to you despite your less than pure blood." Warrington absentmindedly commented, reaching for a small sandwich.

" His Majesty's harem contains plenty of concubines who aren't Pureblood. Most of His Majesty's children are Halfblood's."

The man looked slightly flustered at that, spluttering softly. " Yes, but your family's background is... less than stellar. With your Grandparents being..." A pause. " You know... former members of the Order. At least his Majesty's children contain his blood, which makes their blood equal, if not better than even us Purebloods."

" They were not a part of the Order. They sided with the Light's ideals, yes, but ultimately, they never joined."

" However, your father was-"

" My father was born ten years after the Order of the Phoenix was dissolved. And there hasn't been a group such as that one since." Harry stood suddenly, finally having enough of the hardly hidden jabs at his family and status.

" Where are you leaving to, Noble Potter-Black? You have only just arrived!" Attendant Warrington leaned forward, Pucey standing up as if he were going to make a grab for him. Anya stepped between them, assuring that wouldn't happen.

" Excuse me, Brothers, but I am feeling quite faint. I will be heading back now." Despite their protests for him to stay, Harry was gone only five minutes after first arriving.

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Concubine Patricia Rakepick [5th Concubine]- The Palace of Great Brilliance

Patricia restlessly paced in her quarters, maids scrambling about, attempting to clean up the mess she had created without getting in her way and incurring the Concubine's wrath. She huffed angrily, a bolt of magic whizzing past a young servant, who flinched, cowering into a corner.

" That blasted bitch, how dare she become pregnant without my say-so!? I told her, I told her that she only got in here because of my suggestion to strengthen ties with the Macmillans, and she still goes against my word? She told me that she was secretly on contraceptives, lying whore- And how could the Emperor promote her to such a high position when there isn't even a baby yet! If that child is born, no matter its gender, she may overtake me, and then his attention would be split yet another way!" She bit at her thumb, magic thrashing dangerously and slashing at a table. " And that Potter, waltzing in here, fluttering his pretty green eyes at his Majesty and somehow managing to sneak himself into his bed in less than a month? How shameless, how vile, how disgusting!" She screeched, and another window smashed under pressure.

" M-Madam, please, someone may hear you-"

Rakepick span to face the maid, face flushed and breathing heavily. " And why should I care? I am one of His Majesty's Concubines, no one should dare gossip about me if they know what's good for them!"

" Yes-Yes, of course, Madam. Please forgive me for my impudence." The maid bowed lowly, knees crashing to the floor in the face of such anger.

Her head cocked, like a predator catching the scent of prey. " Yes, that was rather impudent of you, wasn't it? How dare you speak to me in such a way."

The maid sobbed, head banging on the floor. " Please, punish me as you see fit, Madam!"

Rakepick smiled sharkishly, snapping her fingers." Ruby, take her to the punishment bureau, explain to them her offences, and ask them to punish her justly. I will not tolerate such behaviour from a mere maid, not in my Palace."

" Yes, Mistress." She stepped forward, brown eyes glinting maliciously as she hauled her fellow maid up, binding her with a whispered Incarcerous. The maid's eyes widened, and she began to blubber.

" The-The Punishment Bureau? Wait, wait, no, no, please! Please, Madam, have mercy! Please, not the-! Please!" The door slammed and bathed the room in silence for the first time in over an hour. The maids still present dutifully carried on with their cleaning, keeping their heads down and a wide berth from their Mistress.

" My, and she had the gall to insinuate that I was the one making a scene." The Concubine chuckled cruelly, collapsing onto a settee gracefully. " Fucking Bellatrix and her dramatics, should have at least forewarned me about it. I could have had this all sorted out before the meeting." She snatched the bottle of Firewhisky from the table, gulping it down. " If only my darling Dani was still alive, me and his Majesty would have a much deeper connection, and many more children would fill this palace. If only she had been born a boy, I wouldn't have to suck up to Bellatrix and her group." Patricia sneered at the empty bottle, tossing it to the side. " Bring me another!"

Chapter 8 [Uncle]

Chapter Notes

The last scene didn't go as I'd planned, the characters took the decision out of my hands. Enjoy the peace of the chapters whilst it lasts, the next will contain heavier topics. TW will be placed at the beginning of the chapters.
3.7k words, which is good for me.
Also, 10k hits!!

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

4th August 1997- Monday

The 4th of August was supposed to be a day of celebration in the Court. There would have been a gathering, the first of its kind that he would have observed, with guests from outside of the Palace in attendance. But unfortunately, the woman it was for had fallen ill during the night, more so than usual. She was a frail woman, barely making appearances outside of the morning greetings, however, she still held prominence in the harem.

Noble Vanity, despite her rank, usually received a birthday celebration fit for Concubines. She would be one, after all, if the pregnancy of her daughter early on in the Emperor's reign hadn't left her weak and sickly, her death frighteningly imminent. She was one of his first, and therefore, held more prestige than most.

Instead of an empty celebration, each of the concubines was instructed to pray at the Hall of Worship for her quick recovery, along with her teenage daughter, Sylvania. The girl hadn't left the building since she had received notice of her mother's condition if the gossip was to be believed.

It was to the sight of the girl crying that Harry walked in on, and he rushed to her side, robes becoming crumpled as he knelt. Despite having never met her before, Harry placed a comforting hand on her shoulder and allowed her to bury her head in his neck when she leaned upon him. It was a daring gesture that could have gotten him heavily punished, but luck was on his side.

" I'm so worried." The Princess gritted out after a few minutes of sobbing, sniffing wetly and leaning more of her weight on him. "She looks so frail recently, even the Healers said that it was worse than they were expecting. It's dreadful to think about, but I am close to believing that she may pass soon." She broke down further, the tiara upon her head tilting to the side. His hand ached to right it, but it wasn't his place to do so.

" Princess Sylvania..."

The princess continued to sob. " Please, don't speak. I would prefer it if we just sat here, paying respects before my mother's altar. I am in no need for false assurances, I am old enough now to understand the concept of sickness and death." Harry did as was asked, and remained there, with the Princess almost hanging from his neck. No other concubines walked into the Hall during that time.

The girl, Harry internally referred to her as such although she was only a few years younger than himself, sniffed harshly as she drew away, her pale blue eyes rimmed with red. " I'm sorry for keeping you for so long. You are free to go now, you spent longer here than any of my fathers' other concubines had. Thank you for that." She smiled at him softly, turning back to the altar.

Harry raised into a kneeling position. " I have yet to say my prayers, and wish your mother good health."

" Prayers are not needed, your presence has been enough. It is more than anyone else has given, and magic will know that. Again, thank you, but I do wish to be alone."

Reluctantly, he stood and left, the princess staying put on the cold, marble flooring. " Then, I wish both you and your mother well, Princess Sylvania. I bid you farewell."

9th August 1997- Saturday

After the morning meeting on Saturday, Harry decided to wander the Court, having not explored its entirety yet, despite living in the harem for around three weeks. He took two of his new maids with him, Anya being too busy to join him. The pair were named Giana and Orla, both with brown hair and dark eyes, and similar personalities. They liked to gossip about his every move to each other, although acted perfectly cordial towards him to his face.

They walked at his sides, a step behind, silent and blank. His attempts to coax them into conversating were met with cold looks and an occasional whisper of 'You are our Master', with no further explanation.

It was when Harry was nearing the gardens surrounding the Royal children's palace's that he met an obstacle. The Emperor, surrounded by a group of his Knights. He had on a serious expression as he surveyed the group of women, looking bored and unamused by their presence. They seemed harried and pleading, some having dropped to their knees in the dirt, but the Emperor appeared unaffected.

Harry surveyed this scene and decided that it would be best if he walked away and forgot what he had seen. Unfortunately, it seemed that the world had other plans for him.

The Emperor noticed him and began toward him purposefully. Harry froze on the spot, debating if he still had time to pretend he hadn't seen him.

" Noble Potter-Black, it is lovely to see you out and about in my Court." Damn it.

" I greet his Majesty, the Emperor."

" Walk with me?" He flicked a dismissing hand towards the group of Knights, and with clear reluctance, they dispersed. " How have you been finding your time here thus far? It has nearly been a month since you first arrived now, yes?"

" That is correct, your Majesty. It has been hard to settle down, as it is my first time away from my parents, but the other concubines have been very helpful and welcoming."

The Emperor grunted, looking amused. " Oh, have they now? You know, I'm surprised that not one of you has fallen ill yet. Usually, when a bigger bunch is selected, a couple are always bedridden by the end of the first month. Well, I suppose there are still a few more days to go, we'll just have to wait and see."

" Are you insinuating that you wish for one of us to fall ill, your majesty?"

" Of course not, my concubine. I was merely making an observation. Have I offended you? If so, then allow me to make it up to you by inviting you for a walk in my personal gardens." The man lifted his hand to his lips and laid a kiss upon it, smiling as Harry blushed. " I hope that you'll accept my invitation, Noble Potter-Black?"

He let out a breathless chuckle, the sound of his voice so giddy it gave him pause. " Of course, your Majesty. I would be a fool not to." The Emperor smiled, and Harry pulled back his hand to stare at it, still flushed with a mixture of embarrassment and satisfaction.

" Then, let us be on our way. My Eunuchs are waiting around the corner to escort us." The man unexpectedly grabbed ahold of his hand, intertwining their fingers with a teasing grin. " I have heard from others that you are quite the wanderer, my Noble, it is best if I don't allow you to stray from the path."

Flushing even further, Harry stared down at the ground, the sight of their hands together too much to bear. " How thoughtful of you, your Majesty."

The Emperor's gardens, suitably named 'Gardens of Everlasting Endurance', were a sure sight to behold, far grander than any other he had seen before. Many of the plants that grew inconspicuously in the flowerbeds were ones of great rarity, and some Harry was sure had been declared extinct for many hundreds of years.

" Do you like my garden, Noble Potter-Black? I spent years planning where I wanted everything to go, what plants I wished to be placed within it, and how I wanted those plants to grow." He looked pleased as he surveyed the land before them, a smug air surrounding him and his fingertips gently brushed the leaves of a plant he had never seen before. Later on, he'd discover that the plant was one that had last been cultivated in the time of Merlin, and its flowers helped with the creation of many medicinal potions.

Harry paused to think of the correct response to his feelings, but he felt it was lacking in comparison. " It is magnificent, your Majesty, truly."

The man smiled at his answer, although his eyes were no longer focused on him and had grown cold at the sight over his shoulder. " Thank you for your kind words, my Noble. Unfortunately, I must be going now. Please, continue exploring my garden until your heart is content." The Emperor was gone with a 'pop', and when Harry looked over his shoulder, only one of his maids was present.

He frowned. " Where is Giana?"

The woman stuttered, pale and shaken. " She-she- His Majesty-My Lord, can you-" With a click of his tongue, the maid fell silent.

" If it was his Majesty, then there is no way I can contest." The maid, Orla, frowned at his uncaring response but kept silent as he turned to carry on surveying the gardens. He wasn't about to risk any favour he had gained with the Emperor for a maid that he held no fondness for. It was a cold reaction, but that was the sort of emotion he needed to get used to feeling as a member of the Emperor's harem.

[Afternoon]

After his eventful morning, Harry made his way back to The Palace of Noble Handsomeness and was accosted by Cedric and Jasmine who wished to have lunch with him. Naturally, he couldn't refuse as he had no excuse not to attend. The conversation they held was light, the lunch not so much lunch as it was dessert, the sweet-tasting treats turning sour on his tongue as they breached a topic he hadn't expected.

Cedric placed his cup down, leaned back in his chair, and crossed his arms. " Brother Harry, I thought you should know, but, there is no actual rule in the Harem stating that you must report any of your meetings to the Consort. It is practised, yes, but not a legitimate rule."

His cup met his saucer with a *clack*, some of its contents spilling over the rim. "What?" Harry's eyes went wide, bright green seeming to darken as his previously open expression closed off.

"That's true, his Majesty's Eunuchs record on a scroll if you have... copulated with the Emperor, and then if you are revealed to be pregnant, they can confirm that the conception dates match up. Nice, right? Otherwise, I doubt I'd even be pregnant right now, one of the others might have slipped me a contraceptive if they knew beforehand. They're just trying to manipulate you because you are new, Brother." Jasmine smiled at him, cradling her stomach which showed no hint of swelling yet. "However, please be careful with disobeying those of higher ranks, some can have a nasty way of showing their ire."

Cedric hummed consideringly. "Ah, yes, be especially aware around Consort Bellatrix, Concubine Rakepick and Concubine Carrow, they are particularly known to be cruel."

"I will take your advice to heart, Sister, Brother, thank you for informing me. If I hadn't known, I would have reported my every meeting without thought. How careless of me, I should be more thoughtful in the future." He could have ruined his family's chances of increasing their prestige by being unknowingly forced onto contraceptives, as Jasmine had said. It was a heartless but efficient way to stop him from raising his position in the Harem, and now he knew that no matter how low of a rank they had, everyone was a target. He gritted his teeth slightly, picked up his cup once more, and smiled sweetly. "On that topic, how is your pregnancy progressing, Sister? Are you well?"

"Oh, yes, very well indeed! I've never been happier, it's such a joy knowing that my child will be in this world in a matter of months. I haven't experienced many symptoms yet at all, it still being in the early stages, but I have been feeling a little nauseous in the mornings recently. I never thought that I'd be so happy to feel ill, but it's proof that I really am pregnant, so I'm not complaining." She said this all with a happy smile, reaching for another cake, but froze before she could pick it up.

A shadow loomed over him from behind, casting shade over their colourful assortment of treats. The group paused, a few seconds passing before they began to move once more. Jasmine picked up her cake and promptly stuffed it into her mouth.

Cedric cleared his throat, clearly caught off guard. "...Brother Black, It is a wonderful surprise to see you here, will you be joining us for tea?" He beamed happily up at the man, who stared back with a glum expression. Regulus was dressed, as always, in duller colours that somehow managed to make him stand out far more than the more dolled-up concubines. His grey eyes surveyed the scene with disinterest, before landing on him, a small spark of interest igniting within them.

" No. I am here for Noble Potter- *Black* ." The last word was said in an undecipherable tone that sent a shiver down his spine.

Harry's head snapped up in surprise as the words clicked. " Concubine Slytherin-Black, you wish for me?"

The man hummed, that glint of emotion still present." Come, I want to talk to you." Harry stood, still confused but willing to obey, the others preparing to stand but were stopped by a raised hand from the concubine. " Alone."

Harry awkwardly wished the pair well and followed his Godfather's brother to wherever he was leading him. Their destination was a table with tea prepared for two, just outside of the boundaries of the Royal Children's Court which was surrounded by walls of white brick. They sat, getting comfortable, and stared at each other in silence.

The Concubine stared at him for a little while longer and swallowed awkwardly. Another emotion he hadn't expected to see from the one dubbed as his Majesty's coldest Concubine." What I wished to ask you is...How is my brother? Has he... produced any sprogs yet? With that... Werewolf of his. If-If that's possible?"

Sprogs. A perfect word for any spawn that came from Sirius. It was truly unfortunate that he had decided against unleashing any mini versions of himself upon the world. Harry would have been delighted to have played the role of doting cousin/brother, but supposed that he'd have to be the one to produce the next generation of Marauders.

" Sirius is doing well, although, he has decided against having children, and instead passed the mantle of heir onto me through partial blood adoption. And yes, it's possible, just a personal choice not to."

" Ah, yes. I remember, he sent a letter to me." He picked up his teacup and took a sip. " I hope you are representing our family well."

" As well as I can." The expected response.

" I suppose that the circumstances aren't as bad as they could have been. My brother was responsible and handed over the title to someone whose children will surely benefit the Black line."

" Yes, his Majesty's blood is a boon to every family."

" And when mixed with my family, it has some... Interesting results." He looked to Harry, lip quirking up slightly. " Have you met my Carina yet?" His expression seemed to brighten at the mention of her name, and Harry sat up straighter.

" No, I can't say that I have. I haven't met many of his Majesty's children yet."

" Then I will take you to see her after we finish our tea. The Black family needs to stick together within these walls, as cliché as that sounds, and I won't be having you not even knowing what your own cousin looks like."

" I would be honoured, Brother."

The other man frowned, tilting his head to the side in consideration for a moment, before straightening. " Hm, no, please do call me Uncle. None of that brother nonsense, it sounds strange coming from the mouth of my brother's son, no matter if it's by adoption."

Harry hesitated for a brief moment. " I suppose that would be the correct address, Uncle."

" Good. Now, if you would follow me."

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The Royal Children's Court was a vibrant place, mostly grassy with a few colourful flower beds dotted about. The Palaces themselves, one for the younger children, and the other for Hogwarts-aged ones were styled like true fairytale fortress, with towers and all. Harry was led into the one on the right, containing those of Hogwarts age. Within the foyer stood a girl who he faintly recognised as one of the first-years, although he supposed sure was soon to be a second-year. In her hands was a thick book that she was heavily absorbed in, enough so that she didn't acknowledge their approach.

" Carina, sweetheart." The man's whole body seemed to come to life in the presence of his daughter, his back straightening and shoulders lowering from their defensive scrunch.

Her head snapped up, and a grin spread across her aristocratic features. " Dad! You came to see me today as well?" Her voice was chirpy yet composed as she bounded over, book forgotten and left to tumble to the floor.

" Of course, If I could I would spend my every moment here." The pair smiled softly at one another, Regulus turning his body slightly to face Harry. " And I've brought along a guest. This is Noble Potter-Black, your Uncle Sirius' adopted son, and one of your father's newest concubines."

The girl examined him with assessing eyes, a startling light grey colour that matched Regulus' own, her wild and dark ringlets framing her face. She looked like the perfect amalgamation of his Majesty and the Black family. He couldn't see what was so interesting about her, but perhaps his 'Uncle' didn't mean physically.

" It is a pleasure to meet you, Cousin." Her smile dimmed a little.

" The pleasure is mine, Princess Carina." Harry bowed his head slightly.

They stood in silence for a short while, Regulus' expression having closed off once more and neither wishing to break the silence. The princess didn't offer any more than a greeting, so the message was clear.

' You aren't wanted here. Leave.'

" Concubine Black, thank you for inviting me for tea, but I believe that I must be going now. Princess Carina." He bowed his head shallower than before, ignoring the way Regulus' hand twitched when he turned his back on them.

It wasn't how he'd wanted it to go, or how Regulus had intended. But, it was nice to know where he stood with his Majesty's children.

He wasn't accepted, and the royals were willing to show that openly.

11th August- Dahlia's POV- The Palace of Noble Beauty

Dahlia's birthday that year occurred on a hot day, with clear blue skies and a refreshing breeze, the perfect conditions for a celebration she wasn't qualified to hold. As her rank was even lower than his own, and her age a less significant one, the Emperor did not invite her to spend the evening with him as he did with Harry.

This, understandably, was devastating for the girl who idolised the man with her whole being.

" What does Harry have that I do not? Surely being one year older does not mean all that much, right? I'm the Pureblood, I'm the one who comes from the more wealthy and influential family, so why am I yet to receive an invitation!"

" I'm sure his Majesty will soon send a Eunuch to inform you that he is expecting your presence." One of her maids soothed.

" It is already nearing dinner, his Majesty would not give such short notice!" A knock on the door had her freezing in place. She looked at it as if behind it stood a wild animal. Straightening her clothes, Dahlia waved her maid away to begin tidying, plastered a smile on her face, and opened the door.

To her combined surprise and disappointment, Harry stood at the entrance, a parcel in his hands and a smile on his face. " Happy birthday, Sister Dahlia."

Dahlia blinked down at her best friend, her ire dissipating as she soaked in his relaxing presence. " Thank you, Brother! I was starting to worry that you had forgotten."

" The evening is still young, don't be so quick to assume." He grinned teasingly, brushing past her and placing the present on the table.

Her maids stood around aimlessly, gawking at the sight of him instead of rushing to help the man with his robe. " Lola, help Noble Potter-Black with his robe, it is a hot day and he shouldn't have had to stand in it for so long!"

" Yes, my Lady! My apologies, my Lord."

" It is fine, my robe is charmed to stay cool so it hasn't been bothering me. Still, I appreciate the help."

" You're too soft, Brother. It is their job to help us, they should be falling over themselves to serve you who is a higher rank than their mistress."

He stayed silent for a few moments, seeming to be searching her expression for something. " That is correct. Are you going to punish them for their discretions?"

Dahlia frowned in confusion, visibly showing how shocked she felt at his words. Harry disliked violence and wasn't the sort to ask for others to be punished, so why was he acting like this? " Did you have anything in mind, Brother?"

" No, I was simply asking if you had any intention of punishing them for their inaction. Will you? It is your choice, Sister, as their mistress, after all."

She gaped at him, before snorting as realisation washed over her. " Trying to be scary, Brother? Really? I was fooled for a minute there."

His serious expression cracked, and he grinned at the pale maids. " It's a new talent of mine, I appear to have gained a pretty impressive blank face if Anya is to be believed. Was it up to your standards? You were complaining about it for so long that I was too expressive."

" It's a good skill to have obtained, Harry. Use it well, there's a reason Purebloods put so much emphasis on being expressionless."

Chapter End Notes

Birthdays: [HM= Harem Member, RC= Royal Child, O=Other]

4th Aug- Emma= HM [38]

11th Aug- Dahlia= HM [16]

Chapter 9- [Mourning]

Chapter Notes

I dislike this chapter, but since I've held it off for a couple of days, I thought It would be best to post it.

Word Count- 2.8k

IMPORTANT: I've edited chapters P-4 heavily, and added some more scenes to them :)

Expect this to happen to all of the other chapters before I post the next chapter in 2 weeks.

TW- Referenced Miscarriage

17th of August 1997- Sunday

Life in the Emperor's harem wasn't as cut-throat and oppressive as Harry had first thought it was going to be. Sure, the concubines would sometimes poison and harm you to get the favour of his Majesty, but most days, they lived in relative harmony with each other, the days passing in blissful luxury. There hadn't been an incident such as that for as long as he had been in the Court.

"Perhaps a lighter shade of blue today, Master? It's rather sunny outside, so I'll also keep the layers thin." Anya held a silken robe out in front of him, decorated with wisps of white that caught the light and shimmered slightly. He fell in love a little.

"Yes, that'd be good. It's quite hot, and I'd rather not faint today." Harry chuckled to himself, slipping it on with a little help from his maid.

"And for hair decorations, Master?"

"Silver, keep it plain, but a few blue gemstones won't cause a fuss."

"Yes, Master."

That's how his carefree morning went, lazing around until the time arrived that he had to begin making his way to the hall for the daily meeting. Harry stood, looped his arm with Anya's and grabbed a book on the way out. It was bright outside, and the perfect temperature for a stroll after he was finished with his duties, which he told his maid with a smile on his face.

Just before Harry exited his garden, the guard holding it open for him, a Eunuch looking distressed rushed up to him, and collapsed to their knees at his feet. He took a step back, raising his eyebrows at the sight. "Noble Potter-Black, this one comes bearing ter-terrible news!" The Eunuch lifted his head, eyes a bloodshot red and tear tracks marking his face. Dread shot through Harry's heart, and he grabbed a hold of the Eunuch's robes, staring into his eyes intently.

"What, what is it!?" He shook the man as he continued to blabber. "Pull yourself together and tell me! This is a matter of importance!" Was it his family? Were they hurt? Or was it the Emperor? One of the royal children? A concubine? Was he in any trouble-

"No-Noble Lafington has unfortunately mi-miscarried the child she was carrying e-earlier this morning. His-his Majesty has ordered for his concubines to stay within their palaces until-until instructed otherwise. You must go back inside at-at once, Noble Potter-Black. The morning meeting has-has been cancelled!" The man wheezed for breath, falling backwards to land on the ground when Harry let go of his robes.

Harry didn't even attempt to stifle the gasp that tore from his throat at the news. Noble Jasmine had declared yesterday that her child was brimming with life, and growing normally, smiling happily whilst she told all who would listen. To think that the child she had treasured so deeply was just *gone* so suddenly was...

Harry breathed deeply in through his nose, and out. In and out. He took a few moments to compose himself, to make sure that his voice didn't tremble as much as it wanted to. "May... May Magic bless my Sister and his Majesty the Emperor in this trying time. I wish them both my deepest condolences for their loss."

The Eunuch bowed, hesitating as he turned to glance back over his shoulder at Harry, before hurrying off through the gate which slammed shut behind him. The guard had a companion

now, dressed in identical black robes. In the short amount of time Harry had spent with the Eunuch, the Court had already moved into lockdown. He just knew that he'd find a similar pair guarding the main doors.

Harry sighed, stripping himself of his blue robe, and headed back into the palace to inform his maids of the situation.

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Later in the evening, another Eunuch dressed in black came knocking at the door to read out the Emperor's latest ruling: "At his Majesty's decree, there is to be a week-long mourning period for his royal child that unfortunately passed in the womb. All concubines are expected to only wear mourning clothes for the duration and to not leave their Palaces in respect for the Emperor and Noble Lafington until informed otherwise. This is to be strictly enforced from five am tomorrow morning. Accept the decree."

Harry bowed, arms folded in the sleeves of his robe. "I will heed his Majesty's decree, and grieve the loss this Empire has experienced, as well as for the heartache his majesty and Noble Lafington have undergone."

"I will relay your words to the Emperor. May magic's blessings be with you, your Lordship." He left soon after, the palace plunging back into silence. His maids, all nine now since Giana had been replaced by another the day after she disappeared, moved about quietly so as to not disturb his thoughtful stillness.

It was so strange that Noble Lafington's miscarriage had come upon so suddenly and unexpectedly. Sure, it could have been a natural occurrence, but Harry's instincts were screaming at him that that was not the case.

He hadn't expected something of the sort to happen so early on, but this was clearly a deliberate miscarriage caused by another concubine.

21st of August 1997- Thursday

"His Majesty has decreed that his concubines are allowed to begin attending daily meetings once more, however they must continue to wear mourning clothes. If a concubine is discovered to be engaging in anything more, they are to be punished according to the Emperor's will."

Twenty-four figures cloaked in robes of the deepest black filed into the meeting hall, the air around them so sombre that it almost choked him with its heaviness.

Jasmine was noticeably absent, her seat draped with a black veil, a bunch of white lilies placed upon it. A tiny teddy bear, draped with a blue ribbon, sat innocently on the armrest. Harry stifled his sob in the hem of his sleeve.

"Thank you all for attending this morning, despite the tragedy that has occurred recently to one of our own." Bellatrix looked worn-down, her hair frizzier than usual without adornments to control it, and a protective hand over the swell of her stomach. "There... isn't much to be said. His Majesty has postponed all of his engagements for the near future, stating that he needs time to grieve... the children are reported to be mourning for Noble Lafington well..." She sighed, a perfectly manicured hand coming up to rub her face, eyes darting towards the singular empty seat that stood out so blatantly. "Is there any news to be shared that any of you wish to speak about?"

The room was quiet. Bellatrix sighed deeper, sinking into the plush cushions of her chaise. They all sat in silence for a while, Bellatrix's huffing getting consistently louder. "Alright, you all may leave. There is no point in continuing when it is not an appropriate time for small talk. I declare this meeting concluded."

"Thank you for having us, may the Primary Consort's power flourish, and her health never diminish."

They exited as they had entered, a mass of black robes, and in silence.

On his way back to his palace, Harry passed by the Palace of Noble Beauty, and hanging from its battlements were flags of Black and green, the faint outline of the dark mark visible on each.

The symbol of death, and now of mourning.

25th of August 1997- Monday

The remaining meetings continued with an identical sombre manner, ending quickly with little conversation, starting the next day with the same information, repeating until the week was over.

Harry had expected there to still be an overtly melancholic tone to the meetings for at least another week, however, some of the other concubines just had to be unpredictable.

"His Majesty went to visit the Hogwarts-aged children again today, to discuss with them about his expectations again, as well as spend time talking to them about their concerns. Surely, my Flora and Hestia would never disappoint their father, there's no question." Concubine Alecto bragged, smoothing down her green robe with a satisfied smile on her lips.

"Of course, Sister, they've had your sole attention for twelve years." Concubine Felix, a Rosier, commented with a sly smile.

Alecto looked a little miffed at that. It was a sore subject for the Carrow family, that their sole close connection to the Emperor had become barren after birthing her twins. Twin *girls*. She could never become the Empress or really rise above the rank of Consort, not without having personally given the Emperor a possible heir. "Yes, I've been teaching them well."

Most of the concubines were watching these two converse uncomfortably, sitting in silence and waiting on Bellatrix to call the meeting to an end. However, she would not do so unless nobody had anything else left to say.

Harry observed the conversations, noting those who had dressed more brightly, and those who chose more muted tones like himself. It was telling.

It was known throughout the Court, but not spoken of, that the miscarriage was not a natural occurrence, and that someone was the cause of it. Harry no longer felt as content to laze

about as he had merely a week before.

He could hear Hermione's warning words ringing in his ears once more: *'Have you gone mad? You're going to get yourself killed. Do you know how ruthless it is in there?'*

The Emperor's harem truly was a rotten place.

Harry eyed Noble Cordelia suspiciously, watching the way she flipped through her book without a care in the world. After all, hadn't she been the one to foreshadow Jasmine's miscarriage?

30th August 1997- Saturday

Over the coming days, the Court slowly regained its previous functionality, and the Emperor began to reschedule the appointments he had cancelled. Although it left him with a few days of no commitments, so he had summoned a few of the other concubines to spend time with him, most notably the ones who were pregnant, to check that they weren't experiencing any difficulties.

So, it came as a shock for Harry when the Emperor called on him one day to play wizarding chess. Harry was, honestly, bad at the game, something which clearly showed when again and again, the Emperor beat him easily.

"Noble Potter-Black, I seem to have discovered something that you don't excel at." The man's voice was gruff and less warm than usual, his eyes boring into Harry's own with a hardness that he hadn't seen since before he joined the Harem. Ever since his birthday dinner, Harry felt as if the Emperor had grown a sort of soft spot for him, but that apparently meant nothing whilst the man was grieving.

"I've never felt the need to be good at playing chess, I've always preferred gobstones or exploding snap. Apologies if I have disappointed you, your Majesty."

The man snorted, pushing a piece into place. "Checkmate." They watched as the piece destroyed the other, cheering whilst doing so. "Still, your strategies are rather sound. I believe if you were playing against someone else, you may have a chance of winning."

"You flatter me, your Majesty, but I know that I am not very good. You, however, are perhaps one of the best people I've ever played."

"Accept the compliment whilst I am still in a good mood, Noble Potter-Black, I am unfortunately rather prone to lashing out at simple things these days. And, one of the best?"

"My apolo-"

"I don't need an apology, just accept the compliment. One of the best?"

"... Thank you for the compliment, your Majesty. And... yes, one of the best."

The man huffed at his non-answer, nodded, and waved his hand to fix the broken pieces and set up the chess board once again. "I am sorry for snapping at you, Bella says that my moods are horrendous recently, It's just, I hate it when my children are brought into the squabbles of my concubines, even the unborn ones. It's disgusting that they are used in such a way, but there's not much more I can do about it but punish the ones responsible." He slid a piece on the board, a complicated expression on his face.

Harry felt uncomfortable in the face of such a sudden confession and hesitantly looked at the Emperor, whose eyes were fixed on the board. "And... have the ones responsible been punished, your Majesty?"

"The ones that I found, yes. I crucioed the maid who was responsible for poisoning the tea into insanity and buried the Eunuch who helped her alive. The trail went dead after that, and even using legillimancy I can't find who ordered it." The Emperor gritted his teeth, lifting his head to look at Harry once more. "That is all you are permitted to know, Noble Potter-Black. Don't ask anything more."

"Thank you for informing me, your Majesty."

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He parted ways with the Emperor hours later, having not won a singular game. His new maid met him as he exited the Emperor's palace, a young woman named Lien that had gained his favour quickly. She was intelligent and hardworking, not spending time gossiping as even his personal maids did on occasion. She fulfilled his every request beyond his expectations, and would even take the time to ask his opinion on matters that no other did. All in all, he'd call Lien a friend more than he'd call her his maid.

"Master, what do you wish to do now?"

"It's probably best that we head back, It's getting quite close to lunchtime now." Lien nodded her head and looped their arms together.

"Of course, what should I ask Maia to prepare today?"

"Hmm, how about-"

"Noble Potter-Black" A voice from behind him barked. Harry turned his head to peer back, his body following when he recognised the woman standing there. He opened his mouth to greet her. "Come to tea with me." Harry was startled at her sudden command but nodded his head despite Lien tugging on his arm.

"Of course, Noble Rosenberg."

Harry obediently followed the woman who was headed for the Palace of Noble Beauty, receiving glances from the guards who were on duty as they watched him trudge along. He wasn't prepared to be confronted with Cordelia this soon after coming to the conclusion that she was the one behind Jasmine's miscarriage, but he had no excuse to deny her.

They sat at a beautifully prepared table in her garden, one of the corner complexes, maids rushing about to serve them both tea. Lavender and Rose. He took a sip and bit down his disgust at the overly fragrant taste.

She cleared her throat, drawing Harry's attention. "I am Cordelia Rosenberg, you know, as in the third princess of the Rosenberg royal family, and his Majesty's *Primary* Noble. I'm the first witch of my line, which is of course no surprise, my parents said that they knew I'd be special from the moment they discovered they'd conceived me. Granted, they hadn't thought that I'd be a witch, or eventually become the Emperor's wife, but I always like to outdo expectations. I've heard that your family was once quite a high-ranking one but lost his majesty's favour. Why did his majesty call on you, anyway, when your family is disapproved of by him?" Cordelia tilted her head in mocking sympathy, her eyes glittering.

He took a moment to absorb her bragging, biting into a slice of cake. "His majesty simply wished to play some games of wizarding chess with me, despite his view on my family."

"Wizarding chess? That's it? His Majesty, the esteemed Emperor, called upon a mere Mid-Noble to play chess with him?" She scoffed contemptfully, straightening up to send him a glare of disgust. "Unbelievable, how dare you lie to me like that!"

Harry felt overwhelmed at her accusation, but to keep their relationship cordial, responded as calmly as possible. "I assure you, Noble Rosenberg, his majesty and me did nothing but play chess and talk."

Instead of the mollified expression, Harry had been expecting, her face contorted. "I don't like your tone." She snapped, nose up in the air. Harry flinched back slightly, eyes widening at the sudden change of atmosphere. He hadn't done anything wrong, though? "You shouldn't speak so rudely to someone of a higher status than you. Julia, slap him three times for his impudence." The mentioned maid stepped forward and raised her hand. It caused him to jolt back even further, unsure whether to retaliate or not. Eyes switching between the pink face of the other Noble and the raised hand of the maid, Harry gathered his magic into his palm.

Luckily, he didn't have to do anything with the magic and allowed it to fizzle out at the kind tone of his rescuer.

"Sister Cordelia, surely your reaction is a bit much, Noble Potter has yet to do anything wrong."

Chapter 10 [Saviour]

Chapter Notes

I ended up not editing any more chapters, but I will be doing so. Although, I don't know if my next chapter will be out on time. Yesterday, one of my chickens passed away, and I was only really able to get this chapter out due to it being nearly done. However, the last time a pet of mine passed away, I threw myself into writing and wrote 20k in a week.

So.... could go either way.

Word Count: 3k

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

Both their heads turned at the unexpected voice. Behind Harry's chair stood Concubine Penny, who was staring disapprovingly down at the scene, a frown on her usually cheerful face. Cordelia spluttered, standing up to take a step towards the woman, before deciding against it at the look sent her way. Instead, she began to justify the scene. "Sister Penny... Noble Potter-Black offended me with his rude tone, I was just reacting appropriately to the offence he has caused for daring to-"

"Then, don't you think you take offence rather quickly, Sister?" She cut in, raising one blonde eyebrow. "From what I saw, Noble Potter-Black was merely informing you that he had told the truth, and you in response acted rather rashly to his words. I believe you should work on suppressing that hastiness of yours, to turn yourself into a better partner for his Majesty, he does so dislike carelessness." Penny sat down on the chair next to him, her maid hurrying to pour her a cup of tea whilst Cordelia's own floundered. Harry watched, amazed, as she turned the once pompous princess into a stuttering mess.

"Y-Yes, of course, Sister! I-I will endeavour to do my best to please his-his Majesty!"

"See to it that you do so." She patted her swollen stomach as she reached for a slice of cake, closing her eyes in bliss as she took a bite. "Your cook always makes the best cakes, they taste so fresh!"

"I-I will ask her to make you some, Sister."

" Oh, thank you, Sister! That would be lovely!" Commanding demeanour gone, Penny turned into a sweet woman hellbent on making sure he tried every treat on the cake tower. "Try this one, Brother, it's got a hint of rose to it which goes well with its sweetness." and "I'm sure that you'll enjoy the taste of this!" Soon, the tower was empty, and with nothing left to say, Penny stood alongside him and led him out of the palace, shouting cordial goodbyes over her shoulder.

After the pair had left the vicinity of the Palace of Noble Beauty, Penny raised a hand to her face to stifle her giggles into it.

"Oh, Sister Cordelia's face was brilliant! She looked terrified to be told off, even knowing that I'd never do anything so harsh as to warrant that." She continued to chuckle, Harry watching on with a slightly raised eyebrow. Penny wiped her eyes, breathing heavily. "It's been a little while since I last laughed like that, thank you for the entertainment, Brother."

She found the situation he feared *funny*? "You're welcome?"

She brought a hand up to her face once more, lips twisting in clear amusement. Before she could burst into hysterics once more, Harry quickly butted in. "Thank you, Concubine Slytherin-Haywood. For helping me out of that situation, I mean. You have my gratitude."

The woman waved off his bow, reaching out to take his hand in her own. "Oh, please, call me Sister. I'm not a lover of overly formal terms of address."

"Then, thank you, Sister." She smiled, kissing his cheek gently, and much to his embarrassment, he flushed red at her actions.

"Then, as thanks, remember to come and visit me at my palace sometime. You are quite refreshing to be in the presence of, Brother. Well, farewell for now."

31st August 1997- Sunday

The day before the Hogwarts-aged children were due to leave for the start of their new school year, was the 12th birthday of Seventh Princess Odelia, Noble Cordelia's one and only child. For the day of celebration, the Princess had asked for a gathering containing all of her father's concubines, none of her other siblings, and various people of importance to be attending. The first part was to be a grand dinner of several courses, lasting hours, which Harry was not looking forward to at all.

When he arrived at the hall, dressed appropriately for the occasion, Harry was immediately directed to his seat at one of the tables near the Emperor, without being allowed to converse beforehand. Surrounding him were the other Noble's, with Jasmine's seat still glaringly empty even as the celebrations began.

The Princess, along with her mother, sat to the sides of the Emperor at the head table, lavishing in his attention for the day.

" Father, did you see what Grandmother and Grandfather sent over for me? A golden harp! Isn't it so beautiful, father?"

" Very nice, Odelia."

" And mummy had some new robes made for me, this is one of them!" She held up a sleeve to the Emperor's face to inspect, which he did with vague interest.

" Gold stitching, how pretty."

The girl giggled, reaching for a glass orb that sat on the table in front of her. " Oh, and Auntie Bellatrix also got me this! It's pure crystal, see?" The Emperor received the crystal ball into his hands as his daughter turned to pick another item up. " And, Uncle Felix-"

" Odelia, please eat your meal, we'll have plenty of time later to go through your gifts."

She sat back, chastised and sheepish, and bowed her head slightly. " Of course, father, I apologise for my uncouth demeanour."

The concubines watched on as he smoothed a hand in her golden curls, tutting. " It is no matter, it is your birthday, after all." He replied with evident fondness that the Princess latched onto.

"Father... Did you... Did you get me a gift?"

The Emperor's hand paused and he drew back. "As I said, dinner first, then gifts may be discussed."

"Yes, father."

The rest of the dinner lasted for an hour or so more before they were allowed up to mingle. Harry, as still a relatively new concubine, was mostly left alone by the officials and knights wandering about, but he at least had Luna by his side to keep him company.

Dahlia, on the other hand, was socialising with the others like it was second nature, her more prestigious name garnering her attention despite her lower rank. Bored with standing around, he decided to approach her when she was left alone for a minute.

Harry overheard the nearby group of concubines' conversation as he stepped nearer to Dahlia, whose eyes were slightly widened. She shared a glance with him as they listened in.

" Yesterday, Noble Potter-Black was rather rude to me, can you believe it? He's been in his Majesty's harem for less than a few months and he's already being a brat." Cordelia giggled, eagerly soaking in the ruffled expressions of the group surrounding her. She glanced at Penny, whose face had fallen.

The Concubine was frowning at her and the group, clearing her throat to interrupt. " That is untrue, Sister. Noble Potter-Black was simply answering your question, and you took offence quickly. If anything, you are at fault for that altercation. Please do not spread misinformation about one of our youngest brothers."

Cordelia seemed to startle at her unexpected call-out before she sneered. "Sister Penny must be feeling a bit lonely. I mean, why else would someone of your standing hang around with the Emperor's newest 'beau'. It's obvious, you're looking to gain back some of his majesty's favour that you see the boy has snatched away."

Penny froze, her head turning when the words computed. "I beg your pardon?" She sounded gobsmacked. " 'Emperor's newest beau'? How rude, Noble Cordelia! How shameless can you

get, and on your daughter's birthday, as well! Speaking about the Emperor in such a way, about you fellow concubines in that manner-"

" What seems to be the matter over here, my concubines?" The Emperor had, without the group noticing, sidled up behind them alongside Princess Odelia, who looked shocked as well as a tinge angry.

Cordelia blushed, whilst Penny spun with an indignant huff. "Noble Rosenberg is making unfounded accusations towards me and Noble Potter-Black!"

His Majesty smiled, a sly smirk that darkened his eyes. "Oh, well, that won't do, not on a day such as this. Noble Cordelia, what do you have to say for yourself?" He drawled, staring down at the woman.

She spluttered. " I- Sister Penny is obviously lying, why would I ever, especially on my daughters-"

" I heard it all for myself, so perhaps you would." The Emperor frowned down at the Noble as she collapsed to her knees and bowed, her daughter reaching forward as if to lift her before deciding instead to plead with her father.

" Dad, wait, don't hurt-"

" I won't, sweetheart." The Emperor seemed to soften slightly when faced with his daughter's pleading, a side Harry had yet to see of him. The indulgent look suited him. "Your mother hasn't done anything to warrant such a punishment. Instead, her weekly stipend shall be halved for the next three weeks, with it going towards both Noble Potter-Black and Concubine Slyterhin-Haywood, as the targets of her behaviour. Heed my words."

"I-I thank his Majesty for his lenience!"

"Cordelia, you have thoroughly embarrassed both yourself, your daughter and myself with your behaviour on a day such as this. Return to your palace at once and think about your actions."

"Yes, of course, Emperor!" The woman stood with the help of her maid, and the pair rushed out of the hall as if it was on fire.

With that, the festivities drew to a close long before expected, as no one was in the mood to keep up their mannerly fronts, wishing instead to gossip behind closed doors.

1st September 1997

On the morning of September the first, Harry attended his second meeting which included changes within the harems structure. After the month's incidents, he wasn't surprised that there was to be some upheaval.

" His Majesty has declared that Noble Lafington is to now assume the rank of Primary Noble-
" There was a noise of indignation from Cordelia, but she didn't speak. "-and that due to

gaining his majesty's disapproval for her unsavoury actions yesterday, Noble Rosenburg is demoted to Secondary Noble. That is all. Now, onto our next topic-"

She chose now to speak up, a frown on her face. "Sister Bellatrix, there must be a mistake, his Majesty has already punished me with-"

Bellatrix raised her voice. "The Emperor makes no mistakes, Noble Rosenburg. Regarding the concern of-"

" But-"

" Noble Rosenburg, if you interrupt me once more, I shall have you thrown out of the hall and punished for your actions!" Cordelia shrunk back into her seat, muttering apologies towards the Consort, who huffed. "Now, regarding concerns over the latest Wizengamot meeting and the new laws they have brought forward to his Majesty: His majesty reminds us that he has in mind the best for our country and that we shouldn't doubt his choices. He wishes for us to not get so involved with the Wizengamot's affairs unless we have reason to. Which, in this circumstance, we do not."

Harry had heard nothing of these new laws. The Wizengamot meeting had only been held last night, and he wouldn't receive mail from his father of Sirius until the evening at least. He didn't know whether to be worried or not, but speaking up and announcing that he was out of the loop wasn't the ideal situation. Harry would have to ask around his allies for information later on.

"Also, as most of you know already, after this meeting, we are all requested to gather in the main square to see off the Princess' for Hogwarts. May I remind you all to be on your best behaviour, as his Majesty will be present as well, and I will not tolerate any mistakes that will reflect badly on my management of you all, is that clear?"

" Yes, Sister. We will adhere to your demands."

" Good, see to it that you do."

Later that morning, all personnel of the Court gathered to send off the seven oldest Princess' for their new year at Hogwarts. They were already dressed in their Hogwarts uniforms, all proudly showing off the Slytherin insignia stitched onto its front, and swishing about the golden-lined cloaks that distinguished them from the other students. Evana, the First Princess, and a year mate of his, stood next to the carriage alongside the Emperor and her younger sister, Viviana. They, as the children of the late Noble Consort, had no one but their father to see them off personally, who was fussing over their robes, making sure that the crest of their house was proudly showing.

He wondered how it would be taken if one day, a child sent home a letter stating that they had been sorted into another house. Harry, personally wouldn't mind whatever house his potential children got into, but he knew that some of the concubines were fanatical about their previous houses.

Concubine Carrow being one of them.

"Don't disappoint Mummy, alright sweethearts? You are Slytherins, and as Slytherins, I expect nothing but the best from you. Slytherin is the finest house for good reason, as it contains the best of the best, and as it is the house of all of your ancestors, you are obligated to be the very best. If you disappoint me, your apologies won't be enough once you're back, and if you dare to hide away in that palace of yours, you'll be sorry."

"Yes, mother." The twin girls chorused methodically, bowing to the concubine. Harry watched on, feeling disgusted at how someone could treat their children in such a way.

"The only time Alecto liked her children was when they were days old infants who had brought her the glory of bearing twins for his Majesty. However, she was soon told that they had caused her to become infertile, and since then, she's always acted as if they are a burden to her." Harry whipped his head around at Regulus' whispered words, the man smiling blankly at his surprised expression.

"Are they not in danger staying with their mother who so clearly doesn't like them, then?"

The man grinned, as bland as his previous smile. "Don't worry, his Majesty had the girls removed from her care when they were young, and she is only allowed access to them at events such as these. They live within the children's palace, which was built in 1990 for the recently orphaned first prince and his sisters after Late Noble Consort Evangeline was poisoned. She hadn't wanted anyone to gain control over her son, so she asked that of his majesty in the event of her death. It was designed for orphaned children and those who wished not to live with their other parent." Regulus paused, looking over to the Emperor, who was hugging each of his children as they made their way into the flying carriage, with a grudging look. "However, his majesty seemed to think that it was best that his children lived away from their parents, and ordered that after their fifth birthday, they should reside there permanently." He looked bitter at this, and Harry realised that he had wandered over with the intention of ranting to someone to distract himself from his daughter's departure.

"I... that does sound rather... unsatisfactory."

His Uncle scoffed at his choice of words. "Unsatisfactory, indeed! That's why I decided from thereon, that I will never have another. There's no way that I'm allowing multiple children to be taken away from me." The man frowned, staring at the carriage which was slowly making its way into the sky. "It is always so bittersweet, sending the children off. Many of us wished to have them continue homeschooling, but his majesty decreed that it was a Slytherin's duty by birth to attend the school their ancestor helped to build." Regulus gazed at the carriage his daughter was in as it slowly disappeared into the distance. "The worst part is, however, the fact that after Carina graduates, I have no idea how long she will continue to reside in the court. I suppose we'll find out once Princess Evana graduates, whether his majesty will marry her off soon, or if he'll continue to covet his daughters like a protective dragon with its hoard." The flying carriage had now disappeared, and many of the concubines had begun heading back towards their accommodations. "Thank you for the talk, Harry."

Harry startled at the address. "I am happy to speak with you at any time, Uncle." The man chuckled as he walked off, face morphing once more into that perfect mask of blankness.

His uncle's personality was an unexpected but not unwelcome one in the stifling atmosphere of the court.

7th September 1997- 3rd Person POV- The Palace of Noble Beauty

Huifen carefully carried the tray filled with an assortment of cakes and tea into the front room with shaking hands and a harshly beating heart. The news she was to bring was most definitely not going to be accepted by her mistress', but as a lowly maid, she had no choice but to relay it.

She set the tray down on the table in front of Noble Lafington, placed the food and drink in the correct place, and prepared the tea, going through her usual motions as her mistress continued to stare blankly into thin air.

Huifen cleared her throat. "M-Mistress?" No response. "Mistress, there is news from his Majesty, the Emperor." Still, the woman did not stir from her daze, tear tracks still prominent on her cheeks from the last time she had wept. "Mistress?"

"...What?" Her voice was hoarse from disuse, bloodshot eyes swivelling to stare at Huifen with blankness. "What has my Emperor decreed?"

"That... His Majesty has announced that there is to be a celebration for your birthday, one of which your relatives are permitted to attend. He also sends you his well wishes-"

"A celebration!" The Noble stood abruptly, shocking Huifen into stumbling back from her suddenly animated form. Her previously blank expression had morphed into one of distaste as she picked up a glass to take a sip. She paced a little. "Why? Why would I want a celebration! My baby is gone, the one that I had hoped for, for over fifteen years now, I have no desire to celebrate!" She threw the glass at Huifen who had knelt on the floor, and screamed, collapsing to her knees in sobs.

Huifen scrambled helplessly, thumping her head on the floor pleadingly. "My-My ap-apologies Mistress! This one did not think!"

"No, no you did not, get out of my sight! And make sure somebody informs the Emperor that there will be *no* celebration happening, no matter that it's my birthday!"

"Yes-Yes mistress!"

Chapter End Notes

Girl Dad Tom for the win~

Just know that the ranks of the other Noble's has shifted accordingly:
Jasmine L- 1

Cordelia R- 2

Pippa M- 3

Emma V- 4

Harry P-B- 5

Erin W- 6

Cedric D- 7

=====

Birthdays: [HM= Harem Member, RC= Royal Child, O=Other]

31st Aug- Odelia= RC [12]

2nd September= Penny

7th Sept- Jasmine= HM [30]

Chapter 11 [Dolphin]

Chapter Notes

If you hadn't noticed already, I've started naming my chapters :) Sometimes, one might be posted without a name, and that's because I didn't know what to name it- feel free to give suggestions

Anyway, Happy Birthday Harry Potter!~

This chapter hit somewhere in the region of 3.7k words [That's honestly mad to me, I used to struggle with 2k!] I don't know if I need any TW for this chapter, perhaps birth? Although, it's not described in any way, soooooo.

I've edited chapters 5 and 6- named Meetings and Jealousy- in the meanwhile. Please feel free to give me suggestions such as spelling, plot points, scenes that need expanding and all that- It makes me feel happy when I post something edited :)

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

15th September 1997- Monday

Harry was awoken abruptly in the early hours of Monday morning to the sound of pounding on his front doors. He sat up in his bed, bleary-eyed as he scrabbled for his wand, which was kept under his pillow. Clambering out of his bed, he reached for the robe neatly hung up nearby.

A clamour of noise followed as one of his maids opened the doors, the intruder stomping inside purposefully. They slammed shut, and a man's voice could be heard, ordering his maids to call for him immediately.

Harry made his way down the stairs, having hurriedly thrown on the robe, wand in hand and stiff at the shoulders, wary of danger. The sight that greeted him at the bottom was a delighted-looking Eunuch who was proudly holding out a scroll that was embossed with gold. The sign of an Emperor's decree. Harry sighed, head spinning from having woken up so abruptly, gesturing with clear annoyance for the man to read it quickly. He cleared his throat. "Her highness, the Primary Consort Slytherin-Black, as of only a few minutes ago, entered labour. Noble Potter-Black, along with his Majesty's other concubines, is ordered to enter the

Hall of Worship to pray for the healthy birth of his Majesty's child and the wellbeing of their royal mother. You are to stay there until ordered otherwise. Respect the decree!"

Without showing the varying emotions he was feeling, Harry respectfully bowed. "This is joyous news. This one will heed his Majesties orders and pray that the birth of his majesty's child is a successful one and that both my sister and her child are healthy."

This was huge. The first child of the currently highest ranked concubine, who had never carried a child past the first trimester before even within twelve previous pregnancies, was about to be born. Whether the child was a boy or a girl, Harry did not know because Bellatrix had requested for it to be a surprise for even herself, they would automatically outrank most of their sisters, and possibly the large majority of the rest of their siblings as well.

Harry straightened, still feeling dizzy as he linked his arms with Anya's. She gave him a worried glance at his tight smile. "Anya, please help me dress appropriately."

"Yes, Master."

A little while later, Harry joined the crowd of concubines, in their pastel tones, as they knelt on the marble flooring of the Hall of Worship in neat rows. Every concubine was present, even Noble Jasmine who looked haggard and unhappy whilst staring down at the floor, the small teddy he had seen on the chaise before clutched tightly in her hands.

Before the group was an altar, covered with flowers signifying health and luck, as well as new life and royalty. In the middle, a candle glowed brightly, flickering gently every so often, a symbol of Bellatrix's well-being. If it extinguished...

The Hall was silent, as it usually was in such a place, but the air was heavy with a mixture of eagerness, anxiousness and jealousy. Not everyone was happy with the knowledge that another royal child was going to be born, especially due to who their mother was.

He settled into the group, blending in and bowing his head. By his sides sat Noble Erin and Noble Pippa, their eyes fixed to the floor and mouths moving in silent prayer. Along his row, most were respectfully doing as his majesty had ordered. However, a few of the concubines ahead, such as Concubine Rakepick and Consort Isla, merely sat on their knees and read books to pass the time. The Eunuchs to the side ignored this but lunged forward to berate Second-Class Attendant Brennan when she wobbled and fell.

"His Majesty expects the utmost sincerity. Pray for her highness with elegance. Anything but perfection is dishonourable to both the Emperor and his Primary Consort."

The woman shifted awkwardly, muttering back an embarrassed: *"My apologies."* The Eunuch harrumphed at this and returned to his position, resuming his eagle-eyed watch.

An awkward cough rang through the silence, but no one dared to look at the source. Harry shifted, already feeling his knees beginning to ache. It was going to be a long next few hours.

Many hours later, they were called to come to the Consorts residence in preparation to welcome the newest royal child and witness his Majesty naming them. His Majesty, at the beginning of his reign, had decided upon naming styles for his children. Any male children's names ended with an -s, whilst female children's names ended with an -a. Most families had naming traditions that were unique to their family, such as the Black family's inclination for naming their children after the stars.

The group of concubines entered the Palace of Universal Desire with trepidation, and Harry felt too energised to even take in the grandeur surrounding him. All his focus, instead, was on the door of the Consort's personal infirmary, and the sound of the first cries of a new life.

The Emperor stood by the door of the room whilst they were ordered to kneel behind him, Consort Isla as the highest ranking, standing by his side in lieu of Bellatrix. He didn't look anxious in the slightest, although Harry supposed he had seen enough of his children being born to be less worried of complications now, but there was an enthusiastic gleam to his eyes that brightened with every wail.

They waited anxiously for the door to slide open and permit them in, the crying newborn baby behind them grating and taunting to their ears.

Finally, it opened, and there stood a maid with a bundle cradled to her chest, bowing slightly whilst faced with the Emperor. He looked as collected as ever, even in such a moment of joy. The maid took in a deep breath. "Congratulations, Emperor, on the birth of the Twelfth Princess." Beside him, Harry felt more than heard a concubine let out a relieved breath. "May your reign last forevermore, and your newest child inherit your Majesty's immeasurable power."

The Emperor stepped forward to take his newborn daughter into his arms, staring down at the tiny child with an unreadable expression. He hummed, tilting his head. "What a strange hair colour." And it was, a silvery white colour, which neither parent possessed, only a tuft of it poking out from underneath the blanket. It caused some stir to go through the crowd. "A Black, through and through, hm? I remember that your sister also has the same shade as this."

The Consort cleared her throat from when she was sat, reclined on her bed. "Are you... pleased with her, your Majesty?" Bellatrix bit her lip anxiously, tensing as she awaited the Emperor's answer. The crowd surrounding them held their breath.

He hummed again, lip quirking up into a smile as he stared down at the tiny being in his arms. "Very much so. Our daughter has been born, how can I not be? I have waited to hold a child of ours in my arms for twenty-one years now, and she is a perfect daughter."

Bellatrix seemed to deflate at that, shaking slightly whilst hiding her face from view. She was crying. "Yes, she's perfect."

The Emperor continued. "And, for such a daughter, only the name Delphina is suitable. In honour of the maiden family's tradition, it is a name derived from the northern constellation 'Delphinus', which depicts the image of a Dolphin. Dolphins are vastly intelligent creatures, and it is my hope that she will attain that intelligence as she grows."

"Thank you for honouring my family's traditions, your Majesty. Delphina is a beautiful name. And as for her middle name?"

"As for her middle name..." He hummed consideringly. "What is your choice?"

The Consort looked shocked, looking up at the Emperor with glossy, red-rimmed eyes filled with confusion, before composing herself. "I...had hoped to give her the name 'Amalthea', the same as my own. It means 'Tender goddess' in Greek, and is also related to my family's ancient naming tradition."

"A worthy name for a daughter of mine- Delphina Amalthea Slytherin. It suits her well."

"All hail her young highness, the Twelfth Princess." They echoed.

After that, the more formal part was over, and they could begin talking amongst themselves, most turning eagerly to their neighbours to express happiness over the baby being a Princess. Sure, they coated what they said with pretty words, but it was obvious that they had been praying for a girl from the beginning.

Harry stayed put on the floor whilst the Concubines stood to give Bellatrix their personal congratulations, Regulus looking more animated and happy than he had ever seen him before. Bellatrix herself, whilst looking understandably tired, seemed gleeful as she watched the Emperor cradle their child, observing them with soft eyes. It was probably as relaxed as he had ever seen her, and as he ever would.

When he looked over once more to stare at the small bundle, his eyes met crimson red as they stared back at him, the Emperor's eyes burning with suppressed emotion.

21st September 1997- Sunday.

Nearly a week after the birth of the twelfth Princess, a celebration was held in the Court, and invited was the entirety of the Black family, the maternal family of the newly named Princess Delphina Slytherin. As the family's heir, Harry too was invited when he usually wouldn't be.

This also meant that as the Lord of 'The Most Ancient and Noble House of Black', his Godfather, Sirius, and Uncle Remus were also in attendance. He had heard through gossip around the Court that Bellatrix had attempted to have the pair of them uninvited, but the Emperor had reminded her that they were the Lords of her house, and her daughter would not be recognised as a Black without their approval. Needless to say, she hadn't mentioned a word about them since.

"Pup, how are you? You've grown so much! I thought you were going to be around Lily's height, but by the looks of it, I'd say that you're taller than her now. Merlin, It's only been about two months since I last saw you!"

"I am?" It was bittersweet, having to fish information about his parents from others when he should be the one person knowing nearly all about them.

The man cackled, ruffling his hair. "Yeah, though you're still a while off from matching your father's height. Merlin, that man is a tree!" Sirius slung his arm around his shoulders, and as much as he hated to do so, Harry shrugged it off. "Hm?"

"Sorry, Siri. Um, there are expectations about how others are expected to behave around me now, and, well..."

"Bah, bunch of stuck-ups! Can't believe it, I can't give my own Godson, my own heir a hug! Remus, the atrocity!" Sirius threw himself into his husband's arms, who sighed, resigned to attracting the eyes of the crowd for the rest of the night.

He looked up at Harry with a tired smile, eyes warm. "Hello, Harry, It's good to see you again. You look well, although I suppose that's from all the fine food you've been eating these past couple of months."

Harry worriedly scanned his Uncle, who looked frailer than he had previously. "Remus, how are you?" The man opened his mouth but was beaten by the muffled voice of Sirius.

"He's an idiot, Harry. Moans to me about taking care of myself, but doesn't do it for himself. Tell him off, maybe he'll listen to an authority figure such as yourself."

He scoffed. "As a Noble, I don't have *that* much authority, Sirius, especially not more than a Lord of a house such as yours."

Sirius looked at him with wide widened eyes. " *'Not much authority?'*" He whispered incredulously as if sharing a secret. "Harry, you have a shit ton! As a concubine of *the Emperor of the world*, there are only a few spots higher than that and they are all achievable only by those who are actually in his harem. You have the potential to become one of the world's most powerful people, and even with your current rank, you'll garner the respect of most people."

Harry scrunched his eyebrows. *What?* Him, a person with equal if not more authority than the Lords of Ancient and Noble Houses such as the Blacks? Surely, there was no way that was true. He chose to wave off the conversation and steer onto another topic of interest.

"So, Consort Bellatrix is your what? Cousin?"

The man snorted. "Yeah, although she acts more like she's my aunt, bossing me around all my childhood just cause she was a few years older. Don't know how Reggie and her get along so well."

Concubine Regulus was currently fawning over the new addition to the royal family alongside a group of other Blacks, cooing over the tightly wrapped bundle. As if hearing his name despite how far away they were from the group, his head lifted up and he stared blankly into his older brother's eyes.

Sirius quickly looked away. "Merlin, does he always have to be so creepy!? At least show a little emotion towards the big brother you haven't seen in years, brat!"

"Sirius, please don't call Unc- Concubine Regulus such things. What if it reflects badly on me and he decides to take revenge?"

"Ah, I doubt he's that petty, he's always been used to me calling him that. And, let's rewind a moment. What did you call him?"

"Concubine Regulus?"

"No, no, before that. If I remember, it was something like Unc-."

Harry cleared his throat and looked away awkwardly. "I don't know what you mean, Sirius."

Sirius raised an eyebrow, pointing a thumb toward the Concubine. "Pup, do you really call Reggie, that soulless little prick over there, Uncle?"

"Absolutely not. I have no idea why you'd think that."

"Yes, you do. I just heard you say it."

"No, I don't."

"Yes!"

"No!"

"Ye-"

"Alright, be quiet! Yes, he gave me permission to call him Uncle."

Sirius howled. "Haha, that's the best thing I've heard since that time James was insistent that Lily had a crush on him back in our third year. The best part is that he said that right before she socked him one in the face!" Even Remus snorted, his eyes twinkling with mirth.

"The more I hear about mum and dad before they started dating, the more I question how they ever ended up together."

It was relaxing to soak in Remus and Sirius' presence, just talking to them without all the formalities he was expected to use at every moment in the Court. He would have stayed with them the whole night, reminiscing and joking around, however, he had business to attend to that could not be avoided. Excusing himself, Harry began heading towards the crowd gathered at the front.

As he approached the group, they began to lift their heads, most grudgingly bowing them back down as he met their eyes. Bellatrix and Regulus, however, kept their heads raised and postures poised, watching him with assessing eyes. Harry clasped his hands together and bowed his head. "Congratulations on the birth of your daughter, Consort Bellatrix. I hope that she will grow up healthy and powerful, and be a benefit to both the Royal House of Slytherin and Noble House of Black."

The Consort shifted proudly, the princess in her arms making sweet cooing noises as she was held tighter. "Thank you for your well-wishes, Noble Potter-Black, I am sure that my daughter will do just that." Harry bowed to her, then to Regulus, who waved him upwards. Awkwardly, he stood there for a moment, not sure if he should continue with the conversation or not. Walking away now would be seen as him being dismissive of them, but carrying on the conversation for too much longer could also be detrimental to his image.

A throat cleared behind him, the decision made for him. "Ah, Noble Potter-Black?" Harry turned to stare down into beady black eyes, the owner staring back at him in mixed attraction and disgust.

He was hesitant to respond but squared his shoulders in the face of such a group. "Yes?"

"Might I dare say that you look rather ravishing tonight?" *What?* "The Emperor sure is a lucky man to have such beauties warming his bed." He chuckled, oblivious to the incredulous

stares sent his way by the remainder of the group. Talking about a concubine of the Emperor in such a way...

Harry bristled, reaching for his wand, but Regulus' arm pushing him behind him stilled his movements. "Sir Gray, refrain from saying such things in the future. We are concubines of his Majesty, not the sort of people men like you are allowed to ogle. Begone."

"But, Concubine Black, I was merely complimenting-"

"Guards! Remove this man!" Bellatrix hollered, glaring. Delphina warbled in her arms. "He is upsetting my daughter."

"I-I did no such thing- please-" He yelped as he was manhandled away through the side doors, the guests watching his form as it disappeared behind closed doors. Regulus huffed.

"I was taking care of that, Cousin."

"You were both being too loud. And you," She turned her stare to Harry. "Learn to be less rash. Whilst his Majesty wouldn't punish you too harshly if you had cursed that filth of a man, it would have reflected badly on this harem and therefore my management of it."

"My apologies, your highness."

"As punishment, please head back to your Palace and reflect on your behaviour tonight. Go."

"Thank you for your leniency, your highness." Harry hurried from the hall, ducking his head so he wouldn't have to meet the worried stares of Sirius and Remus, as well as the judgemental ones of the others.

Great.

Evening

Once settled in his Palace for the evening, Harry began to compose Hermione's long overdue letter, but he'd waited for an occasion to contact her.

Dear Hermione

Happy eighteenth birthday! I know that this birthday means a lot in the muggle world, so I hope it's a more enjoyable one than usual. Do you have any plans for the day? I would love to know what you're going to do, even if it's not that interesting.

I wish for you to have a wonderful day and enjoy the gift that I have sent along, it's something I know you've been wanting for a while now. Knowing you, I'm going to get the summary of it in my next letter, as well as your thoughts and opinions.

I hope that you are well, and know that I am also doing well despite the situation. Your advice was helpful, and it has helped me adapt to life here quicker than I'd expected. Thank you for that.

Shall I expect to hear from you soon?

From, Harry

Placing his quill back into its inkpot, Harry cast a quick drying spell on the parchment, folding it up once he was satisfied that it wasn't going to smudge. He drizzled wax onto the fold and stamped the envelope with his seal, knowing full well that the letter could be opened by someone to check it despite that.

Sighing, he held out the letter to Kia to deliver to the Royal Owlery, which would ensure that his letter arrived at the destination. Unfortunately, he'd had to leave Hedwig at his parent's

house. It was forbidden for anyone under the rank of Concubine to own their own pet, and it was frowned upon for even those of higher status to do so. There was one clear reason.

The only animal his Majesty could tolerate was snakes, and most people were sane enough not to risk the dangers of owning such a creature.

"Please inform the Eunuchs in charge that this letter and the parcel are birthday gifts for my friend, and I would appreciate it if they didn't open them and instead use a spell to examine their contents."

"Yes, Master, this one will make sure that they both leave intact."

"Thank you." With this done, he was ready to turn in for the night, feeling more exhausted than he had thought by the socialisation he had done all afternoon.

Same time- Tom's POV

He stared down at his youngest child in fascination, dragging a gentle finger along the side of her face, flinching away when she snuffled in her sleep. She was just so small. How had he created such a tiny creature as this one?

Delphina Amalthea Slytherin.

A name that would serve her well, and ensure that she would stand out amongst the common rabble, unlike his own which had been far too common to leave its mark. That is, until, he became known as Slytherin's heir, and later on as the family's Lord. In some circles, he had even gone by another name, Voldemort, which he had scrapped quickly as the power his family name held came to light.

Family names were everything in the Wizarding World, and even in the Muggle one, which had carried over into their now joint existence. And on top of all of them were the Royal and Noble Houses, of which his daughter was descended on both sides.

Black, a family name that's power persisted for generations despite its people's flaws and the Slytherin line whose prominence had endured despite many believing it had been wiped out.

Two of his daughters shared this connection, his darling Carina who was so much like Regulus, as intelligent and deceiving as a Slytherin comes. And now he and his Consort's long-awaited child, little Delphina, whose talents were already shining through if the unintelligible hissing noises she made were anything to go by.

And there was Potter, too. Or, Potter-Black, since he was partially adopted by Sirius Black to become his heir. He would hopefully give Tom yet another connection to the illustrious House of Black that had once looked down on him.

Now, all they could ever do was look up and hope that he paid them any mind.

Chapter End Notes

Birthdays: [HM= Harem Member, RC= Royal Child, O=Other]

15th- Delphina= RC- Born [0]

19th- Hermione= O [18]

Chapter 12 [Consorts]

Chapter Notes

I'm not too sure on this one. Do I need to add more drama, or is everyone ok with how it's going so far? Honestly, I do have lots of drama, but as this fic is going to span the timeframe of possibly decades, I want to get a solid footing beforehand.

Also, does Tom feel alright? I think I'm portraying his too softly, so I might add a POV from him within the next chapter showcasing his darker side.

Word Count: 3.7k

TW- References to previous miscarriages

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

28th September 1997- Sunday

One week later, Harry was once again sat on his window seat, observing as the clouds drifted by in the greying sky, dulling his once bright garden with a dreary shroud. It was beginning to grow colder outside, now that summer had come to a close and Autumn had begun, signing that he was nowadays less inclined to accept invites for outdoor tea or to socialise at all, leaving him more bored than usual.

As he had his rank elevated recently, in such a short amount of time compared to others, showing that he had the Emperor's interest, the others were less likely to retaliate to his refusals. That is, if they were of a lower rank than him, but as of yet, only one of the higher ranking concubines, Regulus, had invited him for tea. It was slow progress to the next title than he would have liked, but much faster than he had actually expected. Still, he wasn't powerful enough yet. Still, days, when he wasn't included due to his rank, were more common than he would like.

"Is the gift ready to be sent, Anya?"

Anya, who had been preoccupied with fluffing up the pillows on the settee, turned towards him with a shallow bow, a pillow still in her hands. "Yes, Master. It's wrapped as you ordered. Shall I head to the celebration to deliver it now?"

Harry nodded. "Yes, It's best if you drop it off early before the First Prince arrives. I can't be accused of attempting to curry favour with him, then." As if he'd actually try something like that with a seven-year-old. He was much more inclined to get the elder siblings, who were older or around his age, to like him first. Hopefully, the rest of the royal children would follow suit after that. If they didn't, well, it was his majesty's favour that mattered the most anyway.

"I will go promptly, and leave you in the other's care."

Today was the First Prince's 7th birthday, a big deal in the Wizarding world, and for the Empire as a whole. A child's 7th birthday is synonymous with the sudden exponential growth of their magic, whilst their 11th is the stabilisation of that influx of magic. Therefore, it being the Prince's day of magical growth meant it was to be even more celebrated than the usual birthday.

However, Harry, nor those below the rank of Concubine, were invited to his birthday celebration. His mother, the late Noble Consort Evangeline, wished for him to be as far away from his father's harem as possible, and therefore stated that those who weren't legally married to the Emperor couldn't approach him, as he was a Prince. As the vast majority of harem inhabitants were usually in the lower ranks, eighteen out of twenty-five in his Majesties, this kept her only son and the probable heir to the throne safe from most machinations.

Instead, Harry had decided to send along a present to the young Prince, even though it had a high probability of being thrown away by those more suspicious of his escorts.

Harry sighed, turning away from the window to collapse on one of the armchairs instead, picking a book off of the shelf at random to begin reading.

'The Basics to Healing Magic'

Life was so boring nowadays.

30th September 1997- Tuesday

After lunch on Tuesday, with no prior engagements, Harry decided to take a short walk, if only to alleviate the boredom he was feeling from his monotone routine.

Wake up. Have breakfast. Get ready. Attend the meeting. Possibly have tea. Lunch. Reading. Dinner. Sleep. Repeat.

The weather was perfect for a short stroll, although a little cold, and Anya had assured him that he'd have a hot bath awaiting him on his return to the Palace. Therefore, he was in quite a content mood, happy to close his eyes and hum softly as he walked through the streets. The Court was still rather quiet, the lack of children meaning that quite a few of their maids and Eunuchs were off until they came back (excluding their primary maids, of course, who were either with them at Hogwarts, or taking care of their rooms until they arrived back for Christmas).

It was when he was still humming quietly to himself that Harry turned around the next corner and spotted the Emperor leaving his gardens, a serene expression on his face. There were no guards or even Eunuchs surrounding him, but the Emperor was deadly enough in his own right that the presence of guards was merely for show. Therefore, It was easy for him to spot Harry without the usual traffic, as the only other person in the area, and his lips twitched upwards as he began walking toward him.

As the Emperor approached him, Harry bowed respectfully. "Your Majesty, greetings." *Why did he and the Emperor always seem to bump into each other like this?*

The man stared down at him and flippantly waved his hand for Harry to straighten himself. "Greetings, my Noble. How are you today?" He looked as handsome as ever, dressed in dark robes with silver and green accents, and small accessories adorning his hair that glinted in the sunlight.

"I am well, and your majesty?"

He smiled impishly, obviously thinking back to a recent situation that had caused him such joy. "Well." They stood in silence for a few moments, Harry beginning to shift uncomfortably underneath the Emperor's direct gaze, who didn't seem to be carrying on with his walk in the meantime. The man cleared his throat, drawing himself up taller, red eyes flashing with emotion. "Say, may I ask a favour of you?"

With a raised eyebrow, Harry, too, squared his shoulders. "Whatever you wish, your Majesty."

"Then, would you give me a kiss?"

"...What?"

A kiss? The Emperor...surely not, he must have misheard him-

"A kiss, my Noble. Surely, you've experienced one before?" There was a lilting tone in that voice now, teasing as well as demanding, and so very smooth.

Harry flushed. "Ah, um..."

The Emperor paused, eyebrows drawing together in mock thought. "You have not?" Harry nodded his head, too embarrassed to speak. The Emperor grinned. "Even better, then this shall be your first."

He leaned down, a smug smile still marring his features, and Harry was drawn to him like he was a magnet. He arched further into his hold, and tilted his head up, waiting-

"Your Majesty!"

The Emperor stopped in his advance, and Harry threw his head back, his neck protesting the sudden movement as he turned towards the person approaching them. "Concubine Felix."

The man replied monotonously, his arm still wrapped around Harry's waist like a bar of steel, preventing him from escaping as he wished to.

Harry flushed under the scrutiny of the Concubine, who was merely watching him with a blank expression. "You had promised to come and watch me paint. I have been waiting for you to arrive for a little while now. Are you going to make me wait any longer?" He drawled.

With a sharp laugh, the Emperor responded. "Surely, as the Emperor, I am entitled to some lenience. I am a busy man."

"Yes, very busy, it seems." He hummed, still staring at Harry. "Are you coming, then? Or are you too...preoccupied."

"Yes, my Concubine, I will come." With a brief brush of his lips to Harry's cheek, the Emperor released him from his hold and began walking away with the Concubine, a metre of distance between them.

Harry stood watching their retreating forms for a minute, his mouth slightly open. With a deep blush marring his features, from a mixture of embarrassment and anger, Harry marched back to his palace with his heart slightly aching and mind spinning with millions of thoughts.

1st October 1997- Wednesday

On the first day of October fell another meeting where the rankings would change. Most, including Harry, were expecting Bellatrix to arrive all smiles due to being able to flaunt the news that she was being promoted to Noble Consort, a title that would afford her even more power than she already had. However, that was not the case.

Bellatrix never arrived in the hall, and instead, Consort Isla sat in her usual seat and read out his majesty's decree. "His Majesty congratulates Consort Bellatrix on the birth of their child, although as she is already the highest ranked Consort, she has no one to rank above. Therefore, he has bestowed upon her the auspicious title of Honoured Mother."

There was tittering from the lines of concubines, emboldened by the absence of the Primary Consort. "Was the birth of her daughter not enough to push her up to the rank of Noble Consort, Sister?" Concubine Patricia asked snidely, gaining a glare from Regulus.

Isla looked heavily smug and amused as she responded, dark eyes twinkling with enjoyment. "No, it was not. However, I'm sure that her next child will surely do that. That is, if she is able to bear his Majesty another, she is the oldest of the harem by now. It was honestly a miracle that her young highness, the twelfth Princess, was born." She coughed into her hand, looking down at the scroll again. "Once again, Noble Potter-Black, his Majesty has seen it fit to raise your rank. My, aren't you beginning to be favoured? You are to once more resume the rank of Fourth Noble. Congratulations are in order for your quick elevations." She looked at him with glimmering eyes, head tilted as she judged him.

Harry was quick to bow his head and avoid her gaze. "I thank his Majesty for this honour."

Again, titters of conversation swept through the hall, this time, all eyes focused on him. He had been raised in rank twice, once from seventh Noble to fourth Noble, and now from fifth to fourth. Despite there being no promotion to the next title yet, most could feel that it wasn't far off.

And he had only been in the Harem for less than three months.

Harry watched as Dahlia's face twisted in displeasure from where he sat, no longer facing each other, but diagonal. Soon, he'd be seated on her row, but there would be a space between them, an even further distance.

Despite his wish to covet his majesty's attention, he hoped that she'd receive a promotion soon, if only to save their relationship from further deteriorating.

2nd October 1997- Thursday

A day later was Consort Isla's birthday, a lavish affair from what he had heard, and yet again an occasion his status did not allow him to attend. Instead, he had to content himself with the gossip that his maids brought with them as they wandered in from fulfilling duties elsewhere.

Two of such were whispering to one another, heads almost touching as they hissed.
"...Consort Isla...requested...Emperor agreed...can only hope for another..."

Intrigued, Harry stopped them from advancing further, shooing his other maids towards their stations. "What were you saying a moment ago?" He questioned, head cocked slightly to the side.

The one who had been talking spluttered, flushing red. This was Orla, if he remembered correctly. "Um, nothing-"

"Tell me." He demanded, looking towards the other maid, a mousy woman called June whose warm brown eyes stared up at him with slight fear, but also held a healthy amount of respect that Harry would attempt to capitalise on.

"Uh, the-the Second Consort reportedly requested for his Majesty to spend the... um... night with her since it is her birthday. I heard that the Emperor has accepted." She bowed, eyes widening as she hurriedly tacked on: "This one hopes that a powerful child will be borne out of this union, magic bless his Majesty and the Secondary Consort."

Harry ignored her formalities, more interested in gaining answers to the many questions that were swirling around in his head. "Is that usual? Do my fellow concubines request for his majesty to sleep with them often like that?" If they did, that could pose a further problem. There were many in the harem that were higher ranked than he was, and more favoured too, and their requests would take precedence over his own.

"Only on birthdays or special occasions, master, and his majesty often refuses, Master."

Harry hummed. "Do you know anything else about what occurred at the celebration?"

"No, Master. This one only knows what I have heard from other maids."

"Please report to me if you hear anything else, I am rather curious as to what happened at this celebration, seeing as I wasn't invited."

"Of- Of course, Master!" She looked eager to please him, a metaphorical tail wagging behind her as she said her farewells, bowed and rushed off to complete her duties. He turned to Orla, who was still standing before him. He eyed her, who still had a stubborn clench to her jaw, and tutted.

"Go and kneel outside until I send for someone to call you in. I dislike liars, especially ones who are my own maids, those who are supposed to listen to my every command."

"Yes...Master." She hesitantly made her way towards the garden door.

"No, the Courtyard. Kneeling on grass won't teach you much."

With a grimace, she turned and marched to the other doors, eyes smouldering as they flashed over his face.

5th October 1997- Sunday

Cedric and himself met up a few days later for morning tea, as the weather outside had grown warmer. It was a quiet day, the court seemingly on lockdown, but he knew that wasn't the case. So, he'd invited his fellow Noble to the Courtyard to chat and find out what the occasion was, and why he hadn't been informed. Before that, however, he had heard an interesting piece of gossip from June that morning and was eager to verify it.

With a questioning expression, he leaned forward across the table to whisper conspiratorily at Cedric. "Why is his majesty refusing to meet even Consort Bellatrix today? Is there anything wrong with him?"

Drawing in a deep breath, Cedric eyed him with considering eyes, before deciding to answer. "Ah, you don't know? Today is the seventh anniversary of the late Noble Consort, who his majesty favoured immensely. He asked to be left alone to mourn today, but I suppose some

believe they can ignore commands such as that." Cedric snarked, gripping the handle of his teacup a little tighter.

Harry hummed thoughtfully. So that was why the atmosphere was different today. He had been hearing of the late Noble Consort more and more these days. She had been the highest ranking of the Emperor's harem, having reached the rank of Noble Consort even before the birth of her third and final child, the First Prince. To this day, nobody in the harem had ascended higher than a Consort, the rank which both Bellatrix and Isla held.

Bellatrix had been a Consort for many years now, despite her continuous miscarriages being a detriment to her rankings. She had risen and fallen from the rank many times now, but was supposed to be stable in her position nowadays after the birth of her daughter. Harry was sure that, if not for the Black family's inbreeding causing her to be more mentally and physically unstable, she would have long gained the title of Noble Consort.

And Consort Isla gained the title in 1995, after having been in the harem for just over thirteen years. Her only child and son, Silas, the Second Prince who was born in May 1992, greatly helped her on the way to the rank of second highest in the harem.

It was said, and he completely agreed, that with the successful birth of her third child, Penny would be promoted to Consort after more than nine years in the harem. Her two current children, a daughter, Aurelia, born in July 1993 as the Ninth Princess, and a son, Rastus, born in April 1996 as the Fourth Prince, as well as his majesty's favour, were the reasons for such a quick promotion to Consort.

With those around him rising in ranks, even though he too was doing so, it dropped him further and further away from the ranks of the Emperor's legal spouses, and therefore further away from being able to interact with the Emperor on a more regular basis. Harry was going to have to think of a way to gain a rank, and fast.

He could only hope to gain that rank within five years or less.

"Consort Bellatrix seems to be rather bold with his Majesty's attention. However, she has recently given birth to their child, it is to be expected that she wishes for his company."

Cedric tutted. "I guess so, still, she seems to be getting bolder recently. As the leader of the harem, there is no way we can say anything about her, though. How annoying."

"Hm, quite."

7th October 1997- Tuesday

For the first time since the birth of her daughter, Bellatrix entered the hall with her usual entourage. But, wrapped closely and securely to her chest was a recognisable bundle. Princess Delphina. How bold of her, but Harry supposed that when you were the most powerful person in the harem, you could do as you wished.

It was a very obvious statement on her part. She was showcasing her fertility, and ability to give his majesty children despite her age and previous miscarriages. She was taunting those who had previously made comments about her so-called 'failures', shoving in their face her healthy daughter, and the power that this child gave her.

She sat on her chaise regally, as if it was a throne comparable to the Emperor's- or most likely the matching one that sat empty next to his own in the throne room- and swept her eyes across them consideringly. She hefted her baby higher up in her arms, and looked down at them with a smug smile, turning to face Consort Isla, who had yet to seat herself and was holding onto the scrolls. "I thank you, Sister, for temporarily taking over my role whilst I was tending to my daughter. However, as I am back now, I believe I will be needing those." She pointedly stared at the scrolls, and smugly preened to herself when they were grudgingly handed over.

"Of course, Sister. It is wonderful for you to be back." Isla looked upon her with cold eyes, unwavering in the face of her superior stare. With an equally frosty smile, she snarked: "We were starting to wonder if there had been any undisclosed problems, seeing as you had her at such a vulnerable age."

Bellatrix's face dropped, first turning white, then a terrible shade of red. "How dare-" She began to shout.

However, always the mediator, Regulus interjected softly. "Cousin, your child is in your arms. Please, think of the Princess." Bellatrix, feathers still obviously ruffled, turned away from her fellow Consort to instead open the scroll, sniffing superiorly.

"His Majesty believes that there is nothing of importance to report, and instead wishes for his concubines to speak amongst themselves and foster stronger relationships." She stared sourly down at them, eyes scanning each row. She frowned, letting the scroll snap shut. "It's been nearly two months since Noble Jasmine showed up for a meeting now, hasn't it?" She tutted. "Very irresponsible on her part. She is supposed to be the figurehead and leader of the Nobles, and being so lax in her duties can only be tolerated by me for so long. I will be informing the Emperor of my opinions on this matter later today."

How cold of her. It wasn't as if the woman was skipping because she felt like it, she was in mourning for her lost child. Bellatrix, of all of them, should know how it felt to lose a child like that.

As the meeting- or more appropriately, gossip session- carried on, Bellatrix and her group devolved into further topics that grew offended looks from many, and approving from others. Near the end, however, a topic was mentioned that left Harry fuming on the inside as he later had to deal with its aftermath.

"To not have provided a child for his majesty, or even to have never fallen pregnant with one, is the utmost disgrace one can have in this harem. All those who have never done so cannot think themselves as on the same level as us who have." She chuckled, the tittering of several others joining in viciously.

The meeting ended soon after, leaving a sour taste on Harry's tongue. Bellatrix, whilst not as mad and frenzied as the rumours, was definitely not a sane woman. He left the hall, maids in tow, but stopped short when Dahlia sidled up beside him and clasped her hand into his own. He looked up.

Seeing Dahlia's scrunched-up face, so obviously on the brink of tears, Harry swiftly invited her into his rooms to talk, the floodgates bursting as soon as they were safely within his front room. She fell into his arms and he wrapped his arms around her. It was during times such as this one that he remembered that Dahlia was a year younger than himself, and had lived an extremely coddled childhood under the care of her two fathers.

"Auntie Bellatrix's comments were uncalled for! She knows that some of us are unable to bear his majesty any children as of yet, and she still taunts us like that!" She wailed, handkerchief dapping at the trails of tears streaming down her face. "Why did she have to bring something like that up, for?"

"Because she is spiteful and proud of the child she has borne his majesty and wishes for us all to know that. Don't take it to heart, Lia, she was most likely aiming such comments towards those in the harem who have made comments like that towards her before."

He shushed her as she began to speak up once more, continuing to sway with her wrapped in his arms. As she could not see his face, she did not see as his eyes began to glow as he stared out of the window, a menacing, Avada Kedavra green.

Chapter End Notes

Birthdays: [HM= Harem Member, RC= Royal Child, O=Other] [Numbers mean age on birthday]

28th Sept- Alexis= RC [7]

2nd October- Isla [33]

Chapter 13 [All Hallows Eve]

Chapter Notes

I don't know how to feel about this chapter, honestly. It needs some work when I'm feeling up to it. Next chapter will probably be a monster chapter, since it'll contain from 1st November all the way to 1st January. Hopefully.

Word Count: 2.6k

Also, I've recently started coming across people recommending my book on Reddit and Facebook, and it honestly makes me so happy to find stuff like that :,)

ADVICE: Someone informed me in the comments that an author has been taking my work, slightly changing it, and posting it as their own. Is there anything I can do, or can I only comment for them to delete it?

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

17th October 1997

Regulus' Daughter's, Carina's, birthday fell on the seventeenth of October, and Harry was surprisingly invited by the Concubine himself. In his morning mail, he'd received a scented envelope containing the invitation, with express orders to dress finely.

He complied, his maids having fun decorating him in a way that he usually didn't allow, with twines of silver in his hair and glittering gems hanging from his ears. His robes were patterned with silver birds and trees, delicately stitched onto the fabric by Tabitha's talented hands. Overall, he thought he looked wonderful, although he couldn't help but feel that it was all a bit too much for a child's birthday party. He voiced these opinions to Anya but was quickly shut down.

"It is not any child's birthday, it is her Royal Highness's, the third princess, the daughter of your ally and member of your House. As an Heir, this sort of clothing is expected of you, no matter your ranking in the harem."

It soothed some of his feelings, but not completely. It wasn't until Regulus tucked him under his arm and complimented him, did he feel that he had done right.

"Perfect, exactly what the heir of the House of Black should be wearing." He smiled down at Harry, eyes dragging over the robes he was wearing. It came to Harry then, just how unlike this Regulus was compared to the man Sirius had warned him about. He was still waiting for the ball to drop, for Regulus to go back to being the cold and disinterested man Harry had come to expect. This sociable, caring man was not him.

He looked down at his robes, looking into the man's eyes with hesitance. "It's not too much? I'm only a Noble."

"Not at all. In fact, you could have snuck on some more jewels here and there, and nobody would bat an eye. You are the heir of arguably the most prolific House in all of Britain, perhaps the world, barring his Majesty's, of course." Harry hummed, disbelievingly. "And, only a Noble? I entered his Majesty's Harem as a First-Class Attendant, you are already doing much better than I did. In fact, you are advancing rather smoothly, in my opinion. Perhaps, before the end of your first year as a concubine, you will be promoted to the rank of Concubine, and formally become one of the Emperor's spouses."

Harry blushed at the thought. "Oh, I don't know about-"

A snide laugh came from behind them, and the pair looked around to see Bellatrix sauntering their way, baby Delphina tucked into her arms. "Do you really think his Majesty is that enamoured with this *boy*, cousin? It's doubtful he'll make it to Concubine so quickly if even I didn't. And I've, we've, got much better blood inside us than any Halfblood could ever!"

"Cousin," Regulus called out warningly, and Harry's eyes sparked with unnatural light, her earlier comments coming to mind once more.

He turned to face her fully, drawing up slightly, the same height as the Consort in her heeled shoes. "His Majesty has many Halfblood children, Consort Bellatrix."

One perfect, black eyebrow rose. "Huh?" She questioned him with a confused expression, having expected an outburst instead of the calm exterior he was wearing. Internally, his magic was raving with viciousness, and it inflected a harsh bite into his next words.

"Are you saying that your blood is better than the Royal Princes and Princesses? Because, to me, that's exactly what you just said."

Regulus turned to him with a surprised and worried stare, stepping between a blank-faced Harry and a fast reddening Bellatrix.

"What did you just-!"

A shrill shriek from the baby in her arms quietened her quickly as she paled, shushing the child to no avail. The Princess wouldn't stop wailing, all because the Consort had screamed. Bellatrix flailed worriedly, whirling round to hand her off to a maid with shaking hands whilst she apologised in a high voice. "Mummy's sorry, sweetie! Mummy didn't mean to frighten you! Shush, now, shush!" She looked frantic, catching the eyes of the many occupants of the room who had turned at the ruckus. Bellatrix blushed slightly, sending Harry a glare, pushing on the shoulder of the maid to hurry them out of the hall.

The rest of Carina's birthday celebration carried on without another hitch, however, with the Consort's abrupt exit, the atmosphere thereafter was a stilted one. Harry and Regulus no longer talked about his ranking, and instead focused on the birthday girl, who had turned thirteen, and who still didn't seem all that enthused to be around him.

27th October 1997

For Cedric's 20th birthday, he invited all the concubines who would attend (and who he had the gall to invite) to the Palace of Handsomeness for festivities in the courtyard. Of course, Harry, as an inhabitant of the Palace, got an invite, but Cedric spent some of the day assuring him that he'd have been invited anyway.

"I even invited the Second-Class Attendants, Brother. I wouldn't not invite you, who I am so close to. Besides, you live here with me, and you are the head of this Palace as the highest

ranked resident, there would be no stopping you from attending." Cedric laughed, in a joyous mood, having perhaps had one too many drinks.

"I had no doubt that you would invite me, Brother, there's no need to reassure me." Harry smiled up at him, basking in the sheer joy the man was excluding.

"I'm just saying~" He slurred out slightly, beginning to giggle again, giving Harry a wink before he wandered off to another group, starting up a conversation with them eagerly.

A maid wandered over to Cedric and whispered into his ear a little while later, and the man smiled happily at whatever news he had received. The concubines around him coyly urged him for answers, and Cedric had never been the best at keeping secrets- the man being too nice and friendly at times.

"I boldly asked his majesty if he would spend the night with me, and he agreed!" He blurted out with a happy smile, almost vibrating with excitement.

"Oh, that's brilliant, Brother!"

"Congratulations!"

"I'm so jealous! You are so bold to ask him, Brother!"

"Well, you are one of his majesty's favourites for a reason." The group giggled and Harry stood awkwardly to the side.

Was it really that simple? Asking his Majesty, and the Emperor complying?

Cedric looked positively ecstatic at the news, preening under the jealous stares of the other concubines, smiling at the hissed, faked congratulatory smiles and whispers, his head tilted upwards.

"Yes, his Majesty does so enjoy the time we spend together. Perhaps, this time... I may soon await a child." There were overdramatic, scandalised gasps, and Harry's eye twitched slightly as the gathered concubines began to gush and tease- their jealousy and spitefulness palpable.

Yes, Cedric was much too nice. One day, that might cause the man to meet an untimely end, something that Harry would never wish upon what he knew to be one of the only genuinely nice concubines.

31st October 1997

Halloween arrived after a week of preparing for the grand celebration, or it'd be more appropriate to refer to it as Samhain, as that was what the Emperor and Palace celebrated. The celebration was a big deal in their world, but Harry's parents had always enjoyed celebrating Halloween as well, his mother still attached to her muggle roots more than she ever admitted out loud.

The whole of the Harem was invited to the celebration, with his Majesty and the Royal children old enough to observe in attendance- one of the only events that none of them, no matter their rank, were barred from. It took place within a specialised courtyard, with a wide field surrounding it so that there was less of a threat of a great fire. A great fire pit, created from rocks that seemed to be onyx, stood in the centre of the courtyard, surrounded by stone benches for the viewers to sit on, as well as tables filled with food and offerings.

In the middle of the pit was a raging bonfire, flames over five metres tall and ever growing with the addition of more logs from the spectators surrounding it. It was a brilliant sight, lighting up the area with an unearthly glow, repelling the dark shadows that crept across the field with the dawning of All Hallows Eve.

The Emperor was stood to the side, holding a conversation with a few members of the Knights, looking as dashing as ever in ebony robes decorated with wisps of white flame. His red eyes were sweeping the surroundings, sending brief smiles when he caught some people's eyes- adoring for his children, slightly strained for the concubines. Their eyes met for a brief moment, and he received a quick smile- unsure whether it was real or not- before the Emperor moved on.

It was... disappointing.

Blinking his eyes rapidly, Harry bowed his head as the Consorts met up with him, and he turned all of his attention onto them, receiving the wreath Isla was holding.

The Emperor stepped forward to begin the celebration, the pair following close behind him, a wreath made of autumn flowers in his hands, ready to be thrown into the fire.

He stopped before the pillar of flame, staring into the fiery depths with an undescrivable emotion, standing up straighter. "I welcome you all, both the living and the departed, to this celebration tonight." The Emperor called out in that authoritative voice of his that drew the attention of all those in the clearing, if they hadn't already been staring in his direction. "On this All Hallows Eve, I offer my wreath, made from chrysanthemum flowers and the branches from yew and cypress trees, to my ancestors of recent and old. May they be looking upon me, and the Empire I created and now rule, with the utmost pride." With that, the Emperor threw the wreath into the fire, which burst into blue flames, and the audience 'oohed' and 'ahhed' at the brilliant sight.

Next up were the two Consorts. Bellatrix, as the highest ranked, began her speech first. "My wreath, the wreath of the Primary Consort, I offer to my honourable ancestors of the House of Black- made of lilies and branches from the Acacia tree our family has taken care of for generations. May my maiden house, and the house of my beloved spouse, prosper under your watchful gazes."

Then stepped forward Consort Isla, her colourful robes brightened in the firelight, who began to speak in a language that Harry didn't understand, voice rising at moments, the bonfire following suit. She ended with a bow to the flames, before both she and Bellatrix threw their wreaths in at the same time.

The Concubines were next to offer their wreaths. Penny with a colourful, flower-filled wreath, Alecto with a more plant-based one, Regulus with a similar wreath to Bellatrix's- just more toned down. Felix held one with more branches than visible flowers, and Patricia's was a mixture of both, red the prominent colour.

The Nobles and below had not been invited to join the formal procession for throwing their wreaths in the fire, but once it was finished, they, along with the others in attendance, were

allowed to throw theirs in. Harry's was made from the branches of a holly tree and white lilies, with a few twigs from the Black Family's Acacia tree- all symbols of his family. He chucked it in, watching as it burst into bright flames.

After the formal ceremony, the more casual gathering began.

Of the Royal Children of the Empire, only those aged seven and over were allowed to attend the celebrations. Those who attended Hogwarts had arrived for the night before they would floo back in the morning.

It was startling to see firsthand the differences in how the children were treated by the attendees, even their own concubine parents, depending on their gender. He watched as Eighth Princess Amelia was left to cry after being frightened by the flames, whilst her brother Alexis was attended to immediately by a nearby maid. The poor princess didn't even have a mother to run to, the concubine having died soon after giving birth to her. It made his blood boil, but he was under express orders to not approach any of the children, and therefore had to watch the girl cry from the sidelines.

Luckily, it seemed that the Emperor was not one of those who favoured his children.

"How dare you leave my royal daughter to cry on the floor like that!?"

The maid immediately collapsed to her knees, blabbering for forgiveness as the first Prince stood at her side, frowning down at her with bright blue eyes, a pout amplifying his cherubic features. The maid blubbed some more, the Emperor standing above her with unforgiving red eyes and a stony expression.

"Drag her to the Bureau of Punishment. I will deal with her tomorrow. Let us not ruin the celebrations any more than they already have been."

"Yes, your Majesty." Two cloaked figures darted forward, clamping tight grips onto the maid's upper arms, and dragging her limp body away as she stared up in fright, eyes darting around at the crowd staring down at her.

There was awkward shifting around the clearing, but nobody stepped in, either believing that the Emperor was just in his actions, or simply not caring that a maid was being dragged away to a place known for its cruel torture of those who went against His Majesty.

Harry gulped as their eyes met, hers pleading, begging him to speak up, but Harry wasn't stupid. The maid had done wrong. He wouldn't jeopardize any good feelings between him and the Emperor for a maid he didn't know.

The celebration carried on through the night, the children being whisked away to their beds as the adults began to get increasingly more intoxicated and less uptight, inebriated wixen spilling their deepest secrets to anyone who would listen. Harry pushed through this throng, in search of someone he knew well enough to attach himself to.

It was only by chance that that someone was the Emperor, who had been staring into the fire when Harry had bumped into him.

"Sorry!" He called out as he knocked into the body without looking up, staring to brush past, eyes instead scanning the crowd. A hand wrapped around his arm, and in reflex, Harry tugged at it harshly, twisting to shout up at whoever had grabbed him. "Hey-"

A low, sultry, slightly slurred voice cut him off. "My Noble, it is good to see you this evening, we haven't gotten around to chatting yet. How are you?" Harry was struck dumb at the sight of the Emperor, his hair slightly tousled, red eyes lidded and lips slightly swollen. The man caught his stare. "Ah, Penny was rather eager." He stared down at him slyly, lowering his voice. "Do you, perhaps, want to ask for a kiss as well?"

"Um..." Harry gaped unabashedly at the unusual sight of the unkempt Emperor and gulped. "Ah, I'm-I'm not too sure, you're Majesty. You seem drunk, perhaps another time-"

The Emperor drew closer in his moment of uncertainty, staring at him intently. "Your eyes, I've never seen such a vivid green before. They... entice me, my Noble." He seemed to hesitate for a moment, eyes flashing with clarity, before coming to a decision.

In front of the bonfire on that All Hallow's Eve, Harry and the Emperor shared their first kiss, chaste and sweet, any onlookers too drunk to notice the pivotal event they were witnessing right before their eyes.

Chapter End Notes

[Tom wasn't drunk ;)]

Birthdays: [HM= Harem Member. RC=Royal Child, O=Other] [Number is age on birthday]

10th Oct- Amelia- RC [7]

13th Oct- Cassius- HM [20]

17th Oct- Carina- RC [13]

27th Oct- Cedric- HM [20]

[Note that, as next chapter takes the story to the 1st of January 1998, it will take a while to post :)]

14 [End of 1997]

Chapter Notes

This might be the longest chapter of this book yet at 4.6k words, and I was thinking of splitting it and having Tom's birthday in another chapter, but I decided not to. Anyway, I'm a bit iffy on posting anything at the moment because my IRL friends found my account recently, and although they promised not to read anything, I still don't like it. How can you make a fic anonymous? Im on the fence on whether to do that or not.

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

1st November 1997- Saturday

The next morning, Anya allowed Harry to sleep in for longer than usual, the man having arrived back at the Palace looking shocked and worn out in the early hours of the morning with his maids in tow. However, it was growing closer to the time that he needed to be up to be on time for the daily meeting, so she had no choice but to wake him.

Knock knock

"Master?" She called out, waiting for a few moments, hearing no sounds of shuffling from behind the door or any noise to indicate that the man had heard. When there was no response after nearly a minute, she knocked again.

Knock knock knock

"Master, you need to begin getting ready, the meeting will begin in an hour."

Inside his room, Harry was sitting on the bed, his face in his hands, staring down at the carpet from between his fingers. In his head, he was replaying last night's events on repeat, flushing as he remembered his and the Emperor's final interaction of the evening before the man had left the celebration.

They had kissed! The Emperor and him!

It had been totally unexpected, Harry not having thought that the Emperor felt about him like that so soon. But, he had obviously missed something, because, in a moment of drunkenness, the Emperor had kissed him. It was a good occurrence, it was physical proof that he and the Emperor were growing closer with time, but he would have appreciated a little forewarning so that he didn't embarrass himself as he had!

It was hard to look back on, the way he had reacted, and Harry shied away from the memory, shaking it vigorously from his thoughts.

"Master Harry?!" Anya sounded slightly frantic now, knocking on the door more harshly than she had dared to before, the sound knocking Harry from his embarrassment.

He sighed, standing up. "Yes, Anya, I'm awake. Please call on Amara to help me choose my outfit for the day."

Harry heard Anya's very audible sigh of relief. "Of course, Master. I will be back with her in just a minute, please wait a moment." He hummed in response, collapsing back on his bed in an ungraceful sprawl. He lay there for a moment, simply getting lost in his thoughts once more, before shooting up as that moment came to mind once more, blushing and kicking out his legs with an embarrassed groan.

"Whyyyy!"

As it was the first day of the month, once again, the concubines of the harem eagerly sat in the hall, minus Jasmine who was still in her self-imposed isolation, waiting for Bellatrix to read out the new rankings. She seemed to have a longer scroll than usual, more like the length she had when Harry first got promoted, so about three or so people's ranks were changing today.

He felt giddy. Would the kiss he and the Emperor shared affect anything? Or was it too soon for any change to take place? Maybe, there had been a change, but it just wasn't enough to push up his rank.

Bellatrix smoothed out the scroll in her hands, scanning it quickly, her dark eyes shining. As she read further, her lips curved up slightly, and she spoke with a put-on sombre tone, mirth tinged. "It is with great dismay that I must announce this: As Noble Jasmine is still refusing to fulfil his Majesty's requests as Primary Noble, having not observed any meetings within the two months after the official mourning period, as well as having not attended any events, he has no choice but, with great reluctance, to lower her rank. She is to become Sixth Noble, having lost much of his Majesty's previous favour. The Emperor makes this decision on the advice of his royal advisors, as to make the best decision possible in this situation."

There were titters through the hall, some gossip that even the advisors had stepped in, some mirthful and happy that this would raise their own rank, and a few sympathetic, although nobody seemed all that surprised she had been demoted. Harry felt that it was a bit harsh, the woman had lost a child she dearly wanted, however, he supposed that the role of the First of a rank was an important one enough that her absence was notable and disturbing. However, from First to Sixth was still a distinct drop in rank, and he couldn't help but feel sympathetic.

Bellatrix allowed them to talk amongst themselves for a little while, before moving on to the next decree. "Noble Witt, his Majesty has seen fit to raise your rank for... undisclosed reasons." Bellatrix turned to face the pale woman with a raised eyebrow, asking nonverbally for the answer. She simply stuttered and mumbled that she also did not know why.

Harry was confused. Surely, if you had done something to please the Emperor enough for him to raise your rank, you would be boastful about it. Instead, Erin looked frightened at the unexpected raise, as if she, too, hadn't expected it.

"You shall now be known as Primary Noble Witt. Accept this graciously, and let us hope that you perform your role as you should."

"I-I thank his Majesty for this opportunity."

Bellatrix moved on swiftly, looking toward Cedric next, who straightened up as the concubines stared at him

"Noble Diggory, his Majesty comments that you have... entertained him this month." The man slightly blushed, but the smile on his face showed no regret as Bellatrix stared down at him with a stony expression. "However, this is not enough to raise your rank." Her lips tugged slightly as his exuberance dimmed, smile falling. "Perhaps, next time, you will achieve what you are here for, yes?"

"It's not like it's taken you twenty-one years to give his majesty a child, or anything, huh?" Harry heard Cordelia to his right whisper viciously, earning a giggle from Patricia, her hand coming up to muffle the sound. Bellatrix didn't seem to have noticed this exchange, because she simply carried on reading out what was on the scroll.

"As the ranks have shifted quite a bit due to today, I will now read out the positioning of each Noble in the ranking: Primary Noble Witt, Secondary Noble Rosenburg, Third Noble Macmillan, Fourth Noble Potter-Black, Fifth Noble Vanity, Sixth Noble Lafington, Seventh Noble Diggory. That is all for today. I congratulate all of you who have risen in the ranks and implore those who have fallen or not moved to reflect on what they have done wrong not to please his Majesty. Leave."

Harry left the hall, Cedric hot on his heels. They made their way leisurely back to their shared Palace, the man looking as if he wanted to say something to him.

"What is it, Brother?"

"Consort Bellatrix does realise that what she said at the end also applies to her, yes?" He burst out. "She has even recently given his majesty a daughter, yet her rank has also not moved for a while now! She acts all high and mighty when in reality, isn't her power waning nowadays-" He huffed, scuffing his feet. "My apologies, Brother, what she said was simply weighing on my mind. All I have done in recent months is go down in the rankings, so I'm a little stressed currently. Forgive me."

Harry smiled. *Oh? What was this, discontent?* "No worries, Brother, I understand what you are saying. The Consort has been rather contradictory as of late, and unfair to those who follow under her for guidance in this new and unfamiliar setting. I have only been a member

of this harem for over three months now, yet I have seen the Consort act in unsightly ways that do not match with her position's duties."

"Exactly! But, of course, there's nothing that we can do about it. We are too low-ranked to say anything about her, that's why I joined up with Consort Isla, but she isn't proactive in going against her tyranny. However, perhaps, with the rate you are going up in the ranks, maybe one day, you will be high enough to question her, and with your status as her maiden family's future Lord, you'll definitely have some impact."

Harry shifted on his feet and shrunk at the weight of Cedric's expectations. "Ah, perhaps one day, but surely not any time soon." Cedric gave him a heavy look that he couldn't quite decipher, so he looked away and sped up.

Could he really have an impact?

4th November 1997- Tuesday

Bellatrix's 46th birthday was just a day after Sirius' 38th, a fact that Sirius had eagerly divulged to Harry, along with many stories of Bellatrix throwing tantrums over them being so close together, with his before hers. It was strange to piece those stories of a tantruming teen screaming at a young child with the ageing woman in front of him who stared over at the group of them- he, Sirius and Remus- with clear contempt, although Harry supposed that she still had her moments even now.

He was only in attendance due to his status as her maiden family's heir, having received the invitation from a huffy and pompous maid on the morning of the day, who had looked around his modest accommodation with contempt. Harry had sent her on her way soon after her arrival, having no doubt that she would titter to Bellatrix about the lesser grandeur he was living in compared to her.

It didn't bother him much. One day, Harry was sure that he'd at least make it to the rank of Concubine, or maybe even Consort, but unless Bellatrix had another child at the age of 46 and above, there was little chance of her rising in the ranks more than he currently ranks. To

put it simply, Bellatrix had achieved her full potential in the harem, and it wouldn't be long until her top spot was devoured by those younger and more virile than herself.

All they had to do was wait it out.

Returning back to the present, Harry smiled at Sirius' infectious laugh as he jostled him, taunting him about soon no longer being an only child. His mum, who had apparently started 'glowing' recently as she neared her due date- in late January, was reportedly still doing as well as she had been when he and Sirius had last talked, just feeling more and more like a 'whale' every day. His little sister would be here soon, and Harry felt the ambitious need to rank even higher than he currently did, all to protect her from the worse of the scorn he had faced growing up.

His current, lower-ranked place and need to grow was only solidified when Bellatrix stalked past their group with a horrible sneer on her face. "I don't even know why I had to invite you, there's no reason for you to be here. It's not like you are actually the Black Family's true heir, you don't share our noble blood, you filthy half-blood."

It was a clear snub, one that set off all of Sirius' protective instincts in an explosive, and loud way. "How dare you!" His shout drew the eyes of many towards them, although most were polite enough to avert their eyes when they discovered who the racket was coming from. Harry just thanked the stars that the Emperor had yet to arrive.

Bellatrix slinked back, a shit-eating grin on her face. "Huh? Is lickle baby cousin talking to me, hmm?"

Sirius' eyes flashed, and his lip lifted like a dog snarling. "Bellatrix, do not. Am I not your Lord?"

"Am I not the Emperor's wife, Sirius?" Her voice was sickly, eyes fluttering mockingly up at the man.

Sirius froze, and Harry stared at him when he spoke darkly. "The Emperor's wife you may be, but If I requested it with all of my power as the head of the Black Family, would that status

not be revoked from you? Don't even try it, and apologise to Harry, what you said was uncalled for."

"Why should I apologise to that-"

"He is your 'Brother', is he not? And are you not the role model of the harem, there to act as a guiding light, a 'mother' to all the royal children? I see none of that in you now. You are disgracing the house of Black, and insulting the heir of your house. Apologise."

The woman gritted her teeth, sending him the most poisonous glare he had ever received. "Apologies, Noble Potter-Black. There, now, I will be on my way. The Emperor will be arriving soon, and as its my birthday, I need to be the one to greet him." With a swish of her black skirts, she drifted away towards the oaken door.

By his side, Sirius' glass began to crack. "She's such a childish bitch! Harry, I am sorry if this interaction will make things difficult between you and Bellatrix in the harem, but be assured that you can call on me and my power at any time."

Fat lot that would do when he was being poisoned left and right by the incensed and offended head of the harem. Harry merely rolled his eyes, grunting. Hopefully, this party would be over soon, and then he could hole himself up in his rooms until the next morning.

As the festivities were coming to a close later that evening, the sky beginning to darken with wintery darkness, Bellatrix stood from her seat and headed towards where the Emperor sat, discussing with one of his advisors. Seeing the Consort's approach, he held up a hand to halt the conversation, turning his attention to the woman with a slight smile. He nodded his head for her to speak after she had greeted him with a bow.

"Your Majesty, this one humbly requests a night with yourself. Would you accept this wish of mine, on my birthday?" Bellatrix demurely asked, boldly meeting the man's eyes.

The Emperor swirled the wine in his goblet, tilting his head to the side as he observed the Consort from his seat on the throne. He hummed, taking a leisurely sip of the drink. "Accepted. Please await me in your quarters, Consort of mine."

Bellatrix looked positively giddy, seeming to be seconds away from lunging at the man, restraining herself barely for decorum's sake. "Of course, I thank his Majesty for this opportunity!" She bowed once more, turning in a rush to head back to her palace. The party ended there, with the Emperor dismissing all gathered, Harry waving goodbye to Sirius and Remus, then joining up with the rest of the concubines, who all now had the newest gossip to fixate on.

The Emperor and the Primary Consort, and the possibility of an impending pregnancy, no matter how slim of a chance there was.

10th November 1997- Monday

Harry and Dahlia were walking in the courtyard, nearly a week after Bellatrix's birthday, when the girl finally gained the chance to voice her thoughts on the evening.

"Aunt Bellatrix may be pregnant once more, Harry! You understood what she meant by 'a night' right? This is just the right chance! With his attention upon her, all I need to do is pull some of that attention towards me, and being her niece helps greatly!"

He looked at her sideways. "Perhaps that's not how you should go about things. Gain his majesty's attention on your own merit, Dahlia, it'll keep his interest for-"

"We're not all like you Harry- able to catch his interest with a flutter of your eyes." She almost sneered at him, catching herself with a smile. "Most of us have to use our familial connections, or even, perhaps, our womanly wiles."

Harry snorted but said nothing to that.

"What?"

"Nothing, you gain his attention with all of your, ah... 'womanly wiles'."

Her voice turned sweetly sharp. "I feel like you are making fun of me, Brother."

"I would never!" He smiled. "Do as you wish, I'm not exactly going to be too upset if nothing comes of it, after all. We are fighting for his Majesty's favour."

"Don't cry if my plan works out spectacularly, Brother, and I end up stealing your rank. Now, all we need to do is find where the Emperor is now. I've heard from Theo that he often takes a break from his work around this time, and takes a stroll. Perhaps we can coincidentally bump into him."

Somehow, they managed to do just that only minutes after they set off, which lead to an uncomfortable situation- for Harry, at least.

The Emperor looked mightily amused as he stared down at Dahlia, who was almost batting her eyelashes at him. "Your Majesty, could I be so bold as to request a walk with you? Only for a little while."

The Emperor hummed, tilting his head, and sending a glance towards Harry, who shivered at the piercing stare. Their eye contact only lasted for a moment, but it was noticeable enough that Dahlia turned her head to him with an annoyed grit of her teeth. She quickly turned back in time to smile pleadingly up at the Emperor, who now looked further amused. "Alright, I suppose it is nigh time that I get to know my newer concubines better. Is there a location you had in mind that we can head to?"

"Umm..." Dahlia put on a thinking face, but she and Harry had already discussed the route she wanted to take beforehand. "Oh, how about we head to the Pavillion of Raining Flowers? It's really pretty there, wouldn't you agree, your Majesty?" Harry took that at his sign to leave them alone, bowing to the Emperor before turning.

"Noble Potter-Black, where are you going? Are you not going to be joining us?" The Emperor called after him as he took his first step. Dahlia, by the man's side and almost clutching onto the Emperor's arm, shook her head vigorously at him. 'No'.

"My apologies, your Majesty, but I have plans with Noble Diggory, we were going to take tea in the Courtyard." A lie, but he could arrange for it to happen easily enough.

The Emperor, with a sigh, turned. "Alright then, I hope you and Noble Diggory have a nice time. Come along, Miss Malfoy."

"Ah, yes, your Majesty!" She looked like a giggly child who had gotten her way, and Harry supposed that thought wasn't too far off reality.

1st December 1997- Monday

"Primary First-Class Attendant Malfoy, his Majesty comments on how you have amused him these past few weeks." Dahlia held her breath, but Bellatrix said no more, simply staring at her pseudo-niece with a mixture of triumph and pity. She seemed to droop.

After the meeting, when they were back within the confines of Harry's territory, she burst into tears in his arms, great heaving sobs that she would never usually allow herself to make echoing in the silent room. He cradled her close, brushing her silky white hair gently, and held her through her tears.

"I've 'amused' him, have I? All my efforts are to him is something entertaining- I didn't even become a Noble despite it!" Harry stayed silent, unsure of how to respond. "And I'm sure that you're laughing at me on the inside, you were so against me doing this!"

"I'm not laughing at you, Dahlia, I wouldn't do that. You are my friend, despite us fighting for his Majesty's attention."

Dahlia, with her head bowed, scoffed and shook her head. "What am I doing wrong? What are you doing right? How did you gain his attention, yet I did not?"

Harry pondered on her words, sighing. "I don't know, I just...I just be myself, I guess. As much as I can be in the Court."

"Well, isn't that just so great for you?" With little to no warning, she stomped away with a huff. Harry brought a hand up to his head, rubbing where a headache was steadily forming. He wasn't here for babysitting, he was here for his family's future.

21st December 1997 - 25th December

The Yule celebration wasn't as grand as Harry had been expecting it to be in such a place. Sure, there was the usual yule log and other decorations strung up around the Court, but any more attempts to celebrate were hushed and squirrelled away.

According to Cedric, who seemed to be more subservient towards him these days, the Emperor didn't enjoy celebrating the holiday but allowed his harem to observe it with minimal disruption in the Court. Which meant none of the lavish dinners and parties that Harry usually attended over the holiday period. It was odd to not celebrate such an occasion, and even a few days later, on the 25th, the Court was in an even less celebrative state for Christmas.

It wasn't as widely celebrated in the harem as Yule was, and Harry had to owl order a small tree quickly when he noticed that there wasn't going to be one put up for him, which he had spent the week leading up decorating.

The Emperor had holed himself up in his office for the entirety of the week, as well, leading to no interactions between them, further dampening his mood. The only uplifting moment was receiving the gifts from his relatives and friends- albeit a day later as they had to be thoroughly checked before he could open them.

His mum, apparently on a knitting rampage, had made him a sweet, baby blue blanket that he draped on one of the library chairs. His dad had gotten him a snitch with his initials engraved on it: H.J.P-B. Hermione had gifted him, unsurprisingly, books about etiquette, with little post-it notes on areas she thought were important. And from others, he had received much more, such as Honeydukes' chocolates, a hand-knitted scarf, and his own sewing set from an anonymous sender.

All in all, the Yule season wasn't at all how he had expected it to be.

31st December 1997- Wednesday

The 31st of December was an extremely important and busy day for the court- The Emperor's Birthday.

Harry was awoken hours earlier than usual by his maids, so that he could bathe in a fragrant bath for an hour, scrubbing himself raw on orders of Anya, getting out smelling like a herbalists shop. Then, he was dressed in his best robes of light blue and silver, decorated with his finest jewellery that matched his colour scheme, and paraded in front of his maids who gushed, no matter their secret thoughts of him.

Then, he was ushered out of the door, six maids in tow, dressed in specially crafted matching outfits of a darker blue, minimal jewellery on their forms. Anya stood beside him, one slight step behind, with the other five walking in a tight group. They headed out of the palace, through the front gate as opposed to normal, all gates in the court open on the joyous day.

They were heading for the Court's largest hall, aptly named Slytherin Hall, for an incredibly extravagant celebration, held in honour of his Majesty's day of birth. When they arrived, despite its huge size, the hall was already filled to the brim with important persons from all

over the world; foreign royalty and nobility, politicians and leaders of every country, and dotted around the room, death eaters with their faces covered, dressed in their usual black robes despite the occasion. Harry kept his eye on a group of them as he made his way past, meandering through the crowd to get to his seat at the table on the lower dias.

The massive table could fit the whole of the harem on it easily, and more than a few were also already seated. On the dias above was a much shorter table, only containing three people: The Consorts and The Emperor, who was sitting on a gilded throne, staring down at him. Before he sat, Harry bowed lowly. "Congratulations to the Emperor on his day of birth."

He smiled, leaning forward. "Noble Potter-Black, you have my thanks. Please, be seated, the walk from your Palace must have been a tiring one."

"It isn't strenuous to me, your Majesty, rather, I enjoyed such a long walk." Harry smiled, sitting down on the cushioned seat. He turned to face the rest of the hall, feeling multiple sets of eyes burning into the back of his head.

With a slight huff, he settled into the backrest and watched the most important people in the world mingle with each other under one roof. A little while later, the chair beside him pulled out, and unexpectedly, Erin sat herself down next to him. She looked shifty, shuffling about on her chair anxiously.

"How are you, Sister Erin?"

"Hm?" She looked up, startled. "Oh, um, I'm fine! These robes are just a bit uncomfortable." She giggled lightly, although her sickly pallor made Harry concerned.

"Are you alright?"

"Ye-Yeah, of course, why wouldn't I be?" Erin smiled, a strained thing, and quickly turned her head around when she noticed his intense stare. They didn't talk much after that, Harry giving her concerned looks throughout the evening and formalities as she picked at her food, looking squeamish, whilst she engaged in light conversation with Cedric to the left of her.

Nearing the end of the celebration, it was time for the next and final formality of the evening. The Emperor asking the highest-ranking member of his harem to 'spend the night with him.'

"My Primary Consort, as the head of my Royal Harem, I ask you to share this night with me. Do you accept?"

There was barely a pause before Bellatrix answered with excitement. "Of course, your Majesty!" They both stood, and made their way out of the hall, hand in hand.

To his side, Erin gagged into her palm, looking almost green as she rushed off towards her maids.

It was later that evening that Harry stood on the balcony of his room, counting down the seconds until the clock hit midnight, and watched as, far in the distance, the City of Honour lit up with colourful fireworks, that he came to a startling realisation.

Erin was pregnant, and she was already over three months along.

1st January 1998- Thursday

"Secondary First-Class Attendant Greengrass, his Majesty commends your usefulness this past month. You have been very helpful in securing a good and everlasting relationship and trade with your family, and the Emperor thanks you for that."

"I thank his Majesty for his praise." The woman bowed her head, and from the look in her eyes, seemed to be waiting for more, ignoring the betrayed glare Dahlia was sending her. If she was promoted, it would demote Dahlia from her staunchly held position of Primary First Attendant and decrease her already unstable standing in the harem, more so now that she hadn't been promoted even when gaining the Emperor's attention. None of the other new

concubines had been promoted, with the exception of himself, and the next to do so would solidify their presence in the harem.

If it wasn't Dahlia...

Luckily, the Consort simply moved on to the next topic of the day, and Dahlia was happy once more, although Greengrass seemed annoyed if the glare she was sending her was anything to go by.

Chapter End Notes

If you hadn't already noticed, In my profile, I'm putting the word count of my currently unposted chapters, so you can check on there to see if I'm still alive if I ever go off for too long :)

Also, can you tell I'm trying to move the plot along a bit here? 1998, from what I have planned so far, will be more adventurous than 1997, which is good. I'm betting that Harry will get to the Rank of Concubine soon enough, and that's when the real plot will start.

And, lastly- 50K WORDS!!! I have never written so much for a story, ever! And this story also has over 25k hits and 1k kudos, which is huge! Thank you all for reading :) It's crazy that I've written 50k+ for one book in 7 months!

Birthdays: [HM= Harem Member. RC=Royal Child, O=Other] [Number is age on birthday]

NOVEMBER

3rd- Sirius- O [38]

4th- Bellatrix- HM [46]

12th- Viviana- RC [13]

15th- Patricia- HM [42]

23rd- Serina- RC [4]

DECEMBER

3rd- Daphne- HM [18]

12th- Felix- HM [29]

18th- Victoria- HM [25]

31st- The Emperor- [71]

15- [Rising]

Chapter Notes

This chapter took a while to write out, simply because its contents weren't as dramatic as I wanted :(I'm trying to put more drama into this story, but I prefer my main characters not to suffer, so It's hard. I only managed to get it up to 3k, so I'll try to write more next chapter ^-^

Anyway, I hope you enjoy!

TW: Miscarriage, non-graphic depictions of birth [Two separate instances]

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

15th January 1998- Thursday

Unexpected news, so soon after welcoming in the new year, rocked the harem and put the Court on lockdown yet again. Primary Noble Erin Witt had miscarried once more, her fourth time in total, and nobody had known that she was pregnant before the news of this broke.

Well, the Emperor had, which had been the reason for promoting the woman weeks prior, and Harry along with some others had guessed, but that didn't lessen the shock.

Having received this news early in the evening, Harry, previously settled down in his library to read a book, went to his room instead, staying in there for the rest of the evening, thinking about the situation without any of his maids to witness it.

Was this a natural occurrence, or was it a sabotage from someone who had found out? Had Jasmine's been caused by the same perpetrator, or was this just a coincidence?

It could mean that there was a threat to himself, and any possible children he had, in the harem, and the thought that all of his plans could come crashing down before he even had a chance to enact them worried him.

At the current time, he had a middling standing in the harem, and only a tentatively close relationship with the Emperor to keep him in his position. He needed more powerful allies, and Jasmine and Erin's children would have created them into those strong allies, as unfortunate as he felt to use the women and their children to make his standing more secure.

They were his friends, if he could even call them that, but his life and family mattered more.

Now, that plan was gone, and his only hope was Regulus, with his steady presence as a block between Harry and Bellatrix, and Penny, who was surely soon to be a Consort within the next couple of months, for the time being.

He hoped nothing drastic would happen in the meanwhile.

16th January- Friday

The next day marked the start of the one-week of mourning, so Harry stayed within the walls of his part of the palace, his maids somberly drifting around like ghosts, all still shocked about the sudden news to begin their usual gossiping.

All apart for two of them.

"I heard the lady was screaming at her maids this morning, the Eunuch who brought over the fresh linen told me he had witnessed it himself."

"Well, the lady must have been shocked, Noble Erin hadn't told her a thing about being pregnant!"

"I know, how impudent of her! The lady is fair and would have ensured that she would have gotten the correct treatment for her delicate condition. Perhaps, then, she wouldn't have lost

yet another child. Such a shame for his Majesty."

Harry frowned at their disturbance of the peace, and at the contents of their conversation. Who were they, to gossip about a woman who had lost her child?

"Orla, June, this is a time for mourning, not for gossiping. Please reflect on your behaviour in the garden."

"But, my Lord, it's cold-"

"Maybe that will help you to realise what you have done wrong, go."

"...Yes, my Lord."

Harry sighed as he heard the front door close, Anya by his side comfortingly holding his shoulder. "Why are some people so heartless as to make such comments?"

Anya shook her head, before busying herself with sewing patterns into the cushions once more. Harry picked up his own, less perfect one- a half-sewn, imperfect sunflower staring back at him- and sighed, stabbing the needle in harshly.

19th January- Monday

As had happened before, on the fourth day, the meetings began once more, coinciding with the long, two-hour Monday session, which he grudgingly trudged to. The time in recluse had messed up his internal clock once again, and sitting in the morning meeting was something he wished he didn't have to do. Less so, he didn't want to have to put up his barriers once more in front of the other concubines.

Surprisingly, Jasmine was there, her chair scooted close to Erin's where they both sat, cradling each other in their arms. It was a heartfelt and personal moment, and Harry averted his eyes, feeling like an intruder.

Bellatrix came in with her entourage in tow in usual fanfare, dressed in black robes as expected, and gave Erin a hard stare as she sat down on her chair. "Thank you all for attending today's session, despite the recent, sad event that has occurred. Noble Jasmine, I am especially surprised to see you in attendance after so long of shirking off your responsibilities. Still, It is nice to see that you still care about the well-being of your fellow concubines."

Jasmine bowed her head with a stony expression, jaw locked. "Me and sister Erin are close, Consort Bellatrix, it is my duty as a member of his Majesty's harem that I come and attend to her whilst she is grieving her loss."

"And yet, it is also supposed to be your duty to attend these meetings and interact with the rest of us. I will be having more words with his majesty about this, not even moving down a title is surely not punishment enough if you can so brazenly stand there and defend yourself whilst you know you are in the wrong." She tossed her hair to the side, turning her head after a brief staring contest to look at the rest of them. "Now, onto more pressing matters, there has unfortunately been an altercation between his majesty and one of his previously loyal Knights, who has now been revealed as a sympathiser for rebellion groups across the globe. His majesty has invited all those who wish to attend to spectate the execution of this criminal for his treasonous deeds." There were shocked gasps throughout the crowd, Harry's being one of them.

A public execution? There hadn't been one of them since before Harry had been born. It wasn't often that someone of such a high status as one of his Majesty's Knights was revealed to be a traitor, after all. Despite his curiosity at this situation, his stomach still turned at the thought of death for simply having differing views, even though he knew even those thoughts of his could possibly be classed as treasonous themselves.

He would not be attending, although, by the scattered whispers of excitement and trepidation, many would. Dahlia, it seemed, would be joining that crowd.

They hadn't really spoken since their falling out back in early December, and Harry felt as lonely as even within the Court, not sharing many views with those present. Sure, he had Cedric who was keen to hang onto his every word, but with Jasmine in self-imposed isolation, and Erin possibly thinking of doing the same, he lacked the allies necessary to stay happy, and more importantly, stay safe within the Emperor's dangerous harem.

He wished Hermione was here, even though he knew she would curse him for even having such thoughts of her being a concubine.

"Who is the treasonous bastard being executed?" Rakepick spoke up, looking vicious.

Bellatrix, in a show of comradery, grinned back. "Fredrickson."

After the discussion settled down, they were allowed to leave, Jasmine quickly dragging a softly weeping Erin away before anyone could begin a conversation with the pair. Harry somehow found himself walking near Theodore Nott and Daphne Greengrass, who didn't seem all that pleased with his presence.

"I can't believe I'm not even allowed to celebrate my own birthday! It's not like her miscarriage directly affects me, so why should I not be allowed to celebrate?" Theo complained behind him to Daphne, who diplomatically didn't react, merely continuing to stare ahead.

Harry, his nerves already on edge, shot him a glare. "It does affect you, and all of us, Attendant Nott. His Majesty and our Sister have lost a child, do they not deserve to mourn? You will have many more birthdays, and giving up one for this is necessary. Besides, what celebration would you of had anyway? You are not an official spouse of his Majesty." Harry snapped back at him.

"You aren't either." He hissed. "Yet you got invited to have dinner with him. *What did you do to deserve that, you're not even a Pureblood.*"

"Perhaps you will receive the same invite, although, I have my doubts. Maybe, you should try and have more of a presence in the harem before complaining about not getting attention,

yes?"

"Noble Potter, don't be so rude!" Daphne snapped at him, her lip curling, ruining her beautiful features with such an ugly expression.

"It's Noble Potter- *Black* , Attendant Greengrass. I was merely speaking the truth."

"You're so childish."

Greengrass' whispered words to Nott behind his back broke his heart to hear.

" *It's no wonder Dahlia wants nothing to do with him anymore. "*

Their giggles made the pain he felt worse.

23rd January- Friday.

On Friday, the week of mourning came to an end, and the concubines were once more dressed flashily and extravagantly. It made him self-conscious, but rightful, to sit in the midst of them, wearing a muted blue robe.

Erin, who surprisingly continued to attend the meetings despite her obvious heartbreak, sent him a heartfelt smile from her seat opposite, alone this time. Jasmine had been moved back to the seat of the sixth Noble after the mourning period was over.

Bellatrix entered, and began the proceedings right away. "Thank you, everyone, for attending the session today, which I will be beginning immediately. I truly emphasise that you all should report if you are pregnant, or suppose that you are, as soon as possible. To support and

care for your pregnancies to the best of their ability, the royal healers need to know of your condition, especially if you have previously experienced a loss." Bellatrix's expression of sorrow towards Erin looked realistic enough, but there was a tinge of light in her eyes that Harry didn't like.

"Yes, your highness." The concubines muttered, none looking her in the eyes.

"It is unfortunate that this has happened, but let it be a lesson to you all. It is why I am so adamant that you announce your pregnancies as soon as possible, so that we may deal with the situation appropriately." Harry's back straightened at the glint in her eyes, feeling a shiver run down his spine. "The Emperor has announced that, from now on, he will be taking harsher measures against this. There will still be a grace period of three months before it is expected that you announce the existence of your pregnancy, however, the punishment for not doing so has increased. You shall have your weekly stipend halved, and be confined within your palace for a determined amount of time of more than a week. Depending on the context, and the amount of time passed since the three-month mark, this punishment may be harsher or more lenient. There are no excuses for not knowing, as small weekly and more extensive monthly checkups on your health are mandatory. I hope that you will all take this to heart as to lessen his Majesty's heartbreak."

"We understand and respect his Majesty's decree."

The Consort sighed, closing her eyes. "Make sure that you do. Now, please turn your attention to the folders being handed out to you." Harry received it from the maid who walked behind his row, opening it to reveal a chart. "This chart shows the concerning rise in rebel behaviour in the past few years, most rebellions focused in the United Kingdom, almost as high as the amount recorded a few years after his Majesty's reign as the Emperor began. His Majesty has asked for us to take note of this, and report to him if we notice any signs of such rebellious behaviour within our family members, the Palace staff, or even each other. The signs are as follows-"

After the long meeting had finally ended, and they were permitted to leave and get on with their day, Harry overheard Concubine Felix muttering to himself under his breath as he quickly walked away from the hall, and managed to catch some of what was said.

"...only a month...not yet...be mad..."

His eyebrows scrunched, side-eyeing Anya to see if she had heard, but by her neutral expression, she either hadn't or didn't take note of what the Concubine had said. He breathed in deeply, allowing his mind to clear.

It was none of his business. He should stop trying to get so personally involved with those he didn't have much connection with.

Not that he even really had a connection with any of the concubines, anymore.

27th January- Tuesday

Unlike when Bellatrix gave birth, unexpectedly, in her eighth month, and during the early hours of the morning, Penny was a little over her due date when her water finally broke, and her maids and nurses had been expecting the birth for a little while. Therefore, there was no mad rush to her Palace when he was half asleep- The Palace of Accumulated Purity- Instead, the news of her labour arrived with a joyful maid just after he'd finished dinner, so, already dressed, he and Anya made their way there sedately.

When they arrived, not many were present yet, but the atmosphere was calm. The Emperor, dressed perfectly in his robes, made his way into the hallway where they were all gathered, a smile on his face.

"Greetings to his majesty, the Emperor."

He nodded at them, waving for them to raise. As Penny wasn't the highest-ranking concubine, she wasn't to be treated with the same ceremony, and therefore they weren't expected to stay on the floor as they had when Bellatrix gave birth- another startling difference he couldn't help but make.

"How is she progressing?" The Emperor turned to a maid that had rushed out of the delivery room to greet him.

She bowed lowly. "As expected your Majesty, there have been no problems."

A shrill shriek came from the room, startling them. The Emperor moved forward, before stopping with a jerk before the door. As tradition dictated, he wasn't allowed within the delivery room whilst the birth was happening, something that he was regretting if his face betrayed his emotions correctly. "Go in and see if the situation has changed."

"Yes, your Majesty" The woman entered the room, and over the continued wails, they could hear murmuring. It went silent for a few moments, and they collectively held their breaths, waiting for any news. She came back out within a few minutes, a haggard but joyful smile on her face. "The Primary Concubine has given birth, your Majesty."

Pushing past the nurse with barely a second glance, the Emperor rushed into the room, the rest of them following with trepidation.

On the bed lay an exhausted but happy-looking Penny, who was cradling a small bundle to her chest, the baby making kittenish sounds. The Emperor was by her side, muttering to her quietly, the Concubine smiling giddily up at him, eyes darting between him and her child.

Sensing their entrance, her head snapped to the side, a smile still on her face, but she seemed to draw herself up more, staring a mutinous-looking Bellatrix straight in the eyes with a proud grin. The Emperor was slower to turn their way, confident that, even if they were a threat, he wouldn't be harmed, and locked eyes with Harry.

His eyes brightened briefly, before tearing away as Penny's head maid approached. She stepped forward, bowing deeply to the pair. "Congratulations, Your Majesty, Concubine Haywood, on the birth of the Thirteenth Princess. May blessings be with both you and your child."

They echoed her words. "Congratulations, Concubine Haywood."

Well, most of them. Bellatrix was still staring at the new Princess with dark eyes.

"The new Princess is healthy, yes?" She seemed to emphasise the word Princess, as if reassuring herself.

Penny looked at her, eyes darker, holding more smugness than he had ever seen them before. "Yes, and she holds lots of potential, just like her brother and sister. Me and his Majesty are very blessed."

Bellatrix's expression faltered, a sour look that Penny seemed to take joy in crossing her features, as she hissed. "Congratulations, your Majesty."

"Thank you, Bellatrix, although it is Penny, your fellow Consort, that you should be sending your congratulations towards."

"Con-Consort?"

"Yes, with the birth of our third child, Penny has more than earned her promotion, and what a joyful day her ascension ceremony will be. The newest members of my harem haven't experienced one before, yes? Make sure that it is a grand one, then." Each word of the Emperor's seemed to be piercing Bellatrix, and she was paler than before, slightly swaying on her feet despite the grip she had on her maid's arm. His words were a dismissal for her to head off and plan her rival's ascension ceremony to the same rank as herself, unknowing whether or not that would place her as the Primary Consort or not.

"I will do as you wish, your Majesty." She gave a bow to the Emperor, and they quickly followed suit as she turned around with a blank expression. "We will be taking our leave, then. Congratulations once again on the birth of the 13th Princess."

"Congratulations, Consort Penny."

Outside the Palace was where Bellatrix's control broke, and she reached into her robe's pocket, drawing out her wand with an aggressive flourish, pointing it at one of her maids. Said maid collapsed to the floor with a pleading squeal, but the Consort wasn't deterred.

Harry turned away, with tears in his eyes as the woman began to scream in agony, begging for the pain to stop, for any of them to step in, and lamented his lack of power.

Deep down, however, he admitted to himself that the sight didn't bring forth as much anguish as it would have before his entrance into the harem, not the heroic feelings that would have him flinging himself into the line of fire.

Chapter End Notes

Birthdays- [HM= Harem Member, RC= Royal Child, O=Other] [Numbers are ages]

19th- Theodore- HM [18]

27th- Cecilia- RC [0]

16 [Ceremony]

Chapter Notes

This chapter is later than I intended because It went through a lot of editing, I kept on finding things that didn't match up with my notes, so I've been having to cross check a lot. But, its finally here, at 3.7k :) I actually cut a few scenes out and chunked them into next chapter, so that's already half written now.

Also, I changed around some birthdays, because I was going through when each member joined the harem, and some of them made 0 sense, so they're either a year older or younger.

At the end of this chapter, you'll find a whole list of current rankings for the harem members, that are only relevant for this chapter since it goes through another upheaval in the next. Still, it might help put some things into perspective.

Also, If you think Harry's ranking ascension is slow at the moment, I've just had to change some chapters around because he was ascending too fast. Ive planned up to Chapter 31 in some detail, and Im guessing that'll probably be around halfway through the story. So, currently, my estimation for total chapter is 60+ ^-^

Thanks for reading :)

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

30th January 1998

When the post owl flew through the window, whilst she was reading at breakfast, Lily dropped what she was doing and descended upon the poor creature with eagerness. It squawked and pecked at her hands, but she wasn't deterred as her eyes lit up at the sight of her son's handwriting neatly scrawled across the front of one of the letters. Setting the rest uncaringly on the table, she ripped it open eagerly, scouring its contents.

As letters to and from the Emperor's court were heavily regulated, Harry couldn't contact them as frequently as both parties would have liked, but today was a special occasion. It was her birthday, and her son had sent along a heartfelt letter detailing his daily tasks in the harem, his feelings about being away from them, wishing her a happy birthday [whilst calling her old], and filled with eager questions about how her pregnancy was progressing.

Lily's due date had passed a little while ago, and it was now only a matter of time before the long-awaited arrival was finally upon them, so she could barely fault her son's eagerness.

She chuckled as she read some of his well-hidden complaints about some of his fellow concubines, concealed behind false praises and sugary words, designed so that even if those who read the letters before they were sent out saw any insults within, it wouldn't be enough to take them to the concubines in question. The most mentioned was Bellatrix, who Harry didn't seem to be fond of, especially since the birth of her baby girl and the consequential change this had on her personality, and Regulus, who was surprisingly described as kind towards him, no malice detected within the words he wrote about the man.

It was lovely to hear from him, and especially to know that he wasn't having much trouble despite being in such a dangerous, cutthroat place. But Lily knew that the peace he had been experiencing could only last for so long, and hoped that her little boy was prepared for any hardship that could come his way at any moment.

It would all come out when he received his promotion, something she knew was inevitable. The small comments he had added about the Emperor's interest in him, much more than was average, was as concerning as it was elating to hear.

2nd February 1998- Monday

The dreaded day, or greatly anticipated by some, was upon them with the coming of the first day of the month. Ranking day. It had been moved a day later since Bellatrix hadn't wanted to hold a meeting on Sunday, or possibly so that she could pretend she held the upmost, unrivalled power in the harem, officially, for a little while longer.

Today, Harry surmised, would be one of upheaval for their placements within the Harem, with Penny becoming a Consort officially, and the repercussions for Erin if his Majesty was feeling crossed enough.

Despite Harry's heartfelt sympathies for her, there was the situation that she still left her pregnancy unreported, and therefore put both herself and the life of her baby in danger, which had led to this unfortunate circumstance. There had been the week mourning, and he had worn black as was expected and kept to all of the regulations as was decreed, but yet there

was a faint feeling in the air that many did not treat this as they had when Jasmine had lost her baby.

After sitting in his seat, now in between Secondary Noble Cordelia and Noble Erin, he settled down to watch the usual procession of dramatics from Bellatrix and her followers, sans her baby for once, who she had realised was now bringing her less awe and jealousy and more annoyance from her fellow concubines. Children were not something to be paraded in such a way, despite their royal status and the benefits they brought to their parent.

Bellatrix began the meeting as usual, greeting them, expecting a formal one back, and then talking about whatever passed her mind until she finally decided to open the scroll at her side, much to his aching legs' relief. "I will begin with the changes his Majesty has made to the rankings. Please remember to note that any movement within the mentioned rank will also affect your own rankings, so take this into account and remember your new rank before the next meeting so that you do not sit in the wrong place. Noble Witt." Bellatrix stared down at the woman, who surprisingly didn't back down despite the glare that was being sent towards her. "His Majesty has generously declared that a miscarriage is far more enough punishment for the mistake you committed, for not announcing your pregnancy to even his Majesty, who was intelligent enough to deduce it on his own. His Majesty was so happy that you were pregnant, that he decided not to confront you with it, and instead wait until you told him. Yet, you betrayed that goodwill by not informing anyone even after that grace period of three months. Therefore, his Majesty simply declares that you are to reflect on this and that he is deeply saddened by this loss you have experienced."

"I will ensure to do so." Her voice was hoarse but firm as she stared into Bellatrix's eyes with her own bloodshot ones, gaze unwavering despite the scorn sent towards her. Bellatrix broke their staring competition before it could even become one, meanly dismissing her fellow concubine despite the feelings she had just dragged up.

"However, there is still the case that he moved you further up in the ranks due to this pregnancy, therefore, as should be expected, you are to resume the position of Seventh Noble. Noble Rosenberg is therefore reinstated as Primary Noble, and the rest of you will shift ranks accordingly." Here, she looked towards him and the rest of the Noble's, ignoring the shocked stare of Erin, and her slightly watery eyes. "His Majesty had been considering allowing you to remain within your rank, however, with further consideration and consultation with myself and his advisors, he concluded that this would be unfair to the rest of his harem." Despite the choked noise Erin made, she looked back to her scroll.

Harry...felt conflicted. This would make him the Third Noble, and it also followed previous protocol, however, it was rather harsh to demote someone because they had suffered.

Bellatrix's lips pursed as if she had eaten something incredibly sour, hesitating to read whatever was written next. "His-" She cleared her throat, expression darkening. "His Majesty declares that Concubine Haywood is to ascend to the rank of Consort, due to the birth of their third child together, and her ascension ceremony is to be held within the next few days. She is to be known henceforth as Her Highness, Secondary Consort Haywood."

The hall burst into a cacophony of put-on happiness and calls of congratulations.

"Congratulations, Consort Haywood!"

"Congratulations, Sister!"

"Oh, what an honour!"

The rest of the concubines tittered as the woman preened regally under their attention, her usually genial and soft expression twisted with smugness.

Harry gave his own congratulations from his place, the space of three seats in between them drowning it out under the noise of the rest of the room.

By his side, Cordelia looked mutinous, and looking around, many others also had twisted expressions that weren't even veiled. Isla, her role as the Secondary Consort being usurped without prior warning, looked seconds away from tears. Rakepick, Snyder, Nott, Rosier, and, shocking him to his core, Dahlia too, was staring at Penny with hatred in their eyes.

The twisted look of utter derision on her face, directed towards a woman who was supposed to be a sister to her, clicked something in Harry's mind, and the realisation *hurt*.

This was no longer his childhood friend, tiny and oh-so-adorable, but *an Emperor's concubine* .

Looking away from the sight, Harry concentrated his vision once more on the smiling, happy form of the new Consort, plastering his own smile onto his face, but he was anything but focused on the sight.

6th February 1998

In the early hours of the morning, Harry was unfortunately wide awake, being pulled and pushed about by several of his maids as they got him ready for the day.

Which was, of course, the day of the first-ever ascension ceremony he would attend. In a few hours' time, Penny would formally be recognised as the Secondary Consort of the Emperor, and would be only a step away from claiming the title of the most powerful concubine of the Harem.

She already held the favour of the Emperor, the awe of many of her fellow concubines, and the support of many in the face of her having a son and two daughters to her name.

She was, to Harry, a tentative friend, and a bitter rival, a wall that he would have to overcome on his way to the top. Not that she would be seeing him as such, at the moment- she had all he didn't, after all. Status with their fellow concubines, seniority and children, the most important factors.

He wondered, how did the Emperor's favour of him contend with hers? On paper, there was no question, however, in more recent weeks, Harry had been spending more and more time with the Emperor, and Penny had only regained his full attention with the recent birth of her daughter.

Harry digressed, however, that currently, she was no threat to him, and he not to her. So, they were sort-of friends.

A harsh tug to his hair made him grunt, and Amari immediately apologised, which he waved off. They were all excited and eager to dress him up for such a big occasion, one where he was allowed to dress up in his finest clothes with no repercussions- within the allowance of his status, however.

Finally, it was time for him to leave, and, half asleep, he climbed into the sedan that would take him to the Hall of Ascension, one which he hadn't been permitted to enter before. It was lavish and huge, an elegant display of wealth with its Grecian pillars and fine marble work, the flowers surrounding it brightening the dull, winter day.

The inside was even more beautiful, with artworks depicting the great war and the ascension of the Emperor to his position lining the hallway walls, and the main hall was even more stunning- painted ceilings and decorated pillars holding it stable.

Already present were many of the lower-ranked concubines- all the Attendants and his fellow nobles, and Concubine Felix. He noticed how the Attendants were seated on floor level, whilst the Nobles and Felix were sat on a raised platform. There were several more platforms- three chairs on the next, obviously for the three Consorts- and on the top one sat the Emperor's throne, who would be able to survey the crowd from that position. The throne was empty for the time being, but he knew it wouldn't be that way for long. It brought Harry back to the memories of the second time he had lain eyes on the Emperor, all those years ago when he was still naive and filled with fanciful ideas.

He was led to his position by Anya, the only maid of his allowed inside the hall, which was on the first dias amongst the other Nobles and Concubines. He sat in between Cordelia and Jasmine, smoothing out his robes as they scrunched under his legs, and turned to the left when Cordelia cleared her throat.

"Noble Potter-Black, how are you today?"

One of his eyebrows twitched in surprise. Was she being cordial?

"I am well, Noble Rosenburg. And you?"

She searched his face for a few moments, a slight frown wrinkling her forehead. "I'm not pleased, but in a general sense, yes. Sister Penny, as much as I am loathed to say it, deserves this promotion, for fulfilling her role to his Majesty in a way only one other has so far. And she's no longer here to compete."

Harry nodded, feeling a little awkward about having such a conversation when they were surrounded by so many listening ears. "Yes, she does, having given his Majesty three Royal children-"

"A boy, especially. But her daughters will be useful once they're of marriageable age." She interrupted, smiling still despite the blase way she was talking about children, especially since she had a daughter herself. "I hope to have a boy one day, as well. His Majesty only has four."

He hummed, but luckily the uncomfortable conversation was cut short as the Emperor stepped into the room, followed at the heels by Bellatrix, Isla and the remaining Concubines. He looked as handsome as ever, dressed in black and dark green robes that shimmered in the bright light of the chandeliers, his red eyes piercing and filled with a myriad of emotions.

He gazed upon his concubines, blank expression not twitching even as they stood and bowed, greeting him. "We greet his Majesty, the Emperor." He stepped forward, followed by his Consorts and Concubines, and settled into his throne without fanfare.

"Thank you all for gathering here so promptly, to watch as your fellow Sister is promoted due to her services to myself and the Empire." His voice was husky, lip twitching as he found amusement in his words. "You may be seated. It is scheduled to begin soon."

Only a few, mere minutes later, the doors of the hall opened, and in swarmed Eunuchs and maids carrying banners and ribbons of yellows and greens, marching in unison in a revelry of colours. Behind them, on an open sedan, sat Penny.

She looked beautiful in her citrine yellow ceremonial robes, the brightness of her whole outfit lighting up her already exuberant expression, practically shining with happiness. He watched

in awe as she elegantly stepped down from the sedan and knelt on the marble floor, her head bowed in deference to the Emperor, who was watching her in entertainment.

"I greet His Majesty, the Supreme Emperor of the Slytherin Dynasty. May His Reign last forever more, immortalised both in Body and in Mind."

The Emperor straightened himself, looking imposing and powerful on top of his gilded throne, so out of reach that Harry was almost breathless with the realisation that this, *this man*, was his *husband*.

"Penny Haywood, Daughter of the Haywood Family, concubine of mine for nearly a decade now, Mother to three of my Imperial children, including two Princess' and one Prince, an heir to my throne. You have served me loyally for all this time, fulfilling your role as was expected, and even more so than that. With this edict, accepting the responsibility this role contains, I formally proclaim you; Her Highness, Secondary Consort Slytherin-Haywood."

Penny, who was still knelt on the floor, raised her head, tears of happiness shining in her eyes. "I am eternally grateful to Your Majesty for the position you have bestowed upon me, and endeavour to uphold your wishes for my role as long as I hold it." She stood then, raising her head high, and they followed suit, bowing as she clambered each day until she sat on the only chair left open, to the right of Bellatrix.

"We greet Her Highness, Secondary Consort Slytherin-Haywood. May her time as a Consort be a prosperous one." The chorused, heads still bowed in her direction, apart from Bellatrix and Isla, who stared at her head-on.

She smiled sweetly, chirping out a: "Thank you, Brothers, Sisters, for your congratulations. Please, be seated.", still acting as lovely and genial as she had whilst being a Concubine.

To his side, Cordelia scoffed as she sat, and even Jasmine grumbled at her cheer, the unanimous feeling in the harem one of grudging acceptance of the situation.

The gathering afterwards was a grand affair, formal to the point of it being stifling. There weren't many people other than him and his fellow concubines in attendance, but the

presence of the Emperor caused a stir, each concubine raving at the presence of the man that could grant them unimaginable power.

Penny was sitting next to the man, the three Consort's chairs having been moved to the higher dias after the formal event was over at the request of the Emperor. They were having an intense conversation from the looks of it, the newly named Consort leaning into him conspiratorially, whispering something into his ear that made his lips twitch up into a mocking smile.

Bellatrix was fuming in her chair to the right of the Emperor, studiously ignored by the man despite the grip she had on his arm as if she could physically pull his attention away from the woman who held it.

And Isla, for all that she was usually a calm, but cold figure by the Emperor's side, now sat to the side of Bellatrix, her spot on the left of the Emperor now filled by the new Secondary Consort. And she looked *furious*.

He didn't doubt that this was the start of a new group in the Harem, which had previously been unanimously split down the middle between those supporting Bellatrix for the most part, and those hiding behind Isla from the reign of terror that was the Primary Consort. Now, however, there was a third option.

Sweet, neutral Penny, favoured by the Emperor, mother to a Prince and two Princesses', and only a single step away from taking Bellatrix's metaphorical crown. In all honesty, it was tempting to swear allegiance to the woman, as she would surely continue to grow, unlike the other two who were stagnated by age and unwilling to bend to new ideals.

However, he would not allow himself to be controlled like that. It was his goal, after all, to become a leader of such a group himself, and it would be detrimental in the future having to leave Penny's to do so.

Whilst heading for the appetiser table, Harry overheard a hushed conversation between Rakepick and Snyder, who had their heads bowed together, hovering suspiciously in the corner.

" Since it's only been ten days since she gave birth to the Princess, His Majesty has reportedly declined to spend the night with her, as is traditionally done. " Rakepick snickered meanly into her hand, and Harry's eyes widened.

" Or perhaps, she has irritated him in some way. Who knows? But it seems that Sister Isla is eager to capitalise on that. "

" Won't it just be so poetic if she also falls pregnant? "

They cackled with each other, sounding like the evil witches he had heard Muggles stereotyped them as.

Harry didn't like to admit it, but the knowledge that the Emperor wasn't going to be spending the night with Penny was relieving to him. She had enough power for now that it was doubtful he'd be able to call her an equal any time soon, and yet another pregnancy, no matter the unlikeliness of that happening, would ruin any chance he had.

He watched her interaction with the Emperor with jealous and anxious eyes.

9th February 1998

"Master! Master Harry, a letter from your mother has come!"

Harry dropped his lumpy, misshapen, knitted monstrosity as June rushed into the room, his stand-in primary maid for the day as both Anya and Kia were busy on the opposite side of the Court, haggling for better materials to make his robes with, and Tabitha was helping out in the garden.

He tore open the letter with eagerness. He had a feeling he knew what it was going to contain- he had already received his usual monthly letter on the first, so for them to have sent a new one so soon meant the information it contained was important.

And, as expected, his day was brightened by what it contained.

In the early hours of the morning, his mother had given birth to a baby girl, named Florence. She was healthy, lively, and a little bundle of joy with beautiful red hair and bright, baby-blue eyes. Included with the letter was a moving photo of his mum holding his little sister, and he melted at the sight of her.

She was as sweet and cherubic as had been described, her hair a shock of colour on top of her head, perfectly matching their mums. She was beautiful, and Harry adored her at first sight.

He looked up, wanting the precious photo to be framed and placed in a position of pride, however, there was only one maid in the room with him, as June had wandered off whilst he was reading the letter. "Orla, please can you frame this for me? Place it on the mantelpiece."

The woman turned from her place organising his books, her dark eyes sparkling. "Of course, Master."

Hesitantly, he handed it over, pulling himself away. He had other things to do today, and he had to learn to trust his newer maids with personal jobs at some point, otherwise, he'd never gain a relationship with them.

A dramatic gasp from the living room had him rushing towards the noise, alert for any indication that there was danger. The sight that met him instead, however, broke his heart.

There, in the fireplace, was the slowly smouldering photo of his baby sister, Orla sitting in front of it with a rod, poking it hesitantly as if she was attempting to retrieve it. Her guilty

face further upset him, and with one last blurry look at the photo, he turned on his heel and stormed up the stairs.

Anya rushed after him, hot on his heels. She had arrived only minutes earlier, and they had been in the front room, discussing the materials she had managed to acquire before the noise had disturbed them. "Master-"

Without turning his head, he spoke to her in a stilted tone. "Contact my family and ask for another one. Tell them that there was an accident."

"That was no accid-"

He closed the door on her before she finished her sentence.

Chapter End Notes

CONSORTS

-Bellatrix Slytherin-Black - Primary Consort - 46 [1951] - Palace of Univeral Desire

[][][]-Delphina Slytherin - 12th Princess - 0 [1997]

-Penny Slytherin-Haywood - Secondary Consort - 25 [1972]- Moves to Palace of Infinite Purity

[][][]-Aurelia Slytherin - 9th Princess - 4 [1993]

[][][]-Rastus Slytherin - 4th Prince - 1 [1996]

[][][]-Cecilia Slytherin - 13th Princess - 0 [1998]

-Isla Slytherin-Laurier - 3rd Consort - 33 [1964]- Palace of Eternal Spring

[][][]-Silas Slytherin - 2nd Prince - 5 [1992]

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CONCUBINES

-Alecto Slytherin-Carrow - Primary Concubine - 35 [1962]- Palace of Charmful Grace

[][][]-Flora Slytherin - 5th Princess - 12 [1985]

[][][]-Hestia Slytherin - 6th Princess - 12 [1985]

-Regulus Slytherin-Black - Secondary Concubine - 36 [1961]- Palace of Alluring Grace

[][][]-Carina Slytherin - 3rd Princess - 13 [1984]

-Felix Slytherin-Rosier - 3rd Concubine - 29 [1968]- Palace of Beginning Auspiciousness

[][][]-Elias Slytherin - 3rd Prince - 3 [1994]

-Patricia Slytherin-Rakepick - 4th Concubine - 42 [1955]- Palace of Great Brilliance

[][][]-Daniella Slytherin - Previous 2nd Princess - 0 [1982-1983]

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NOBLES- Reside in either the Palace of Noble Beauty [Female] or Palace of Noble Handsomeness [male]

- Cordelia Rosenberg - Primary Noble - 33 [1964]
- [][][]-Odelia Slytherin - 7th Princess - 12 [1985]
- Pippa Macmillan - Secondary Noble - 25 [1972] - Revealed to be pregnant
- Harry Potter-Black - 3rd Noble - 17 [1980]
- Emma Vanity - 4th Noble - 39 [1958]
- [][][]-Sylvania Slytherin - 2nd Princess - 14 [1983]
- Jasmine Lafington - 5th Noble - 31 [1966]
- Cedric Diggory - 6th Noble - 20 [1977]
- Erin Witt - 7th Noble - 34 [1963]
- [][][]-Serina Slytherin - 10th Princess - 4 [1993]

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FIRST-CLASS ATTENDANTS- Reside within either Palace of Gathered Beauty or Gathered Handsomeness

- Dahlia Maloy - Primary FCA - 16 [1981]
- Daphne Greengrass - Secondary FCA - 18 [1979]
- Lukas Erikson - 3rd FCA - 23 [1974]
- [][][]-Aloisa Slytherin - 11th Princess - 2 [1995]
- Luna Lovegood - 4th FCA - 16-17 [1981]
- Theodore Nott - 5th FCA - 18 [1980]
- Zacharias Smith - 6th FCA - 17 [1980]

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SECOND-CLASS ATTENDANTS- Same Palaces as FCA

- Penelope Clearwater - Primary SCA - 22 [1975]
- Victoria Brennan - Secondary SCA - 25 [1972]
- Adrian Pucey - 3rd SCA - 20 [1977]
- Cassius Warrington - 4th SCA - 20 [1977]
- Merula Snyder - 5th SCA - 25 [1973]

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PAST HAREM MEMBERS/PARENTS OF ROYAL CHILDREN

- Evangeline - Primary Noble Consort - 30 [1960-1990]
- [][][]-Evana Slytherin - 1st Princess - 17 [1980]
- [][][]-Viviana Slytherin - 4th Princess - 13 [1984]
- [][][]-Alexus Slytherin - 1st Prince - 7 [1990]
- Emily Tyler- SCA - 27 [1963-1990]
- [][][]-Amelia Slytherin - 8th Princess - 7 [1990]
- Unknown Maid- [?/?]
- [][][]-Jacinda - Previous 8th Princess - 0 [1987-1987]
- Maya- SCA - 25 [1958-1983]
- Archie Severn - Noble - 22 [1964-1986]
- Jane Court- SCA - 29 [1961-1990]
- Angelina Cole- FCA - 22 [1967-1989]

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Birthdays-

30th Jan- Lily [38]

4th Feb- Merula S [25]

Chapter 17 [Refusal]

Chapter Notes

I just HAD to post this on the 13th since that's a) Today in real life and b) Luna's birthday, which is the first scene shown. :) In the end, this chapter ended up at 4.2k AND I've written quite a bit for future chapters.

Also, very important: I've created a wiki fandom page for this fic, since I know how hard it can be to keep up with all the rankings changing, and I can't really give out all of my notes. Here's the link: <https://intimacy.fandom.com/wiki/Special:AllPages>

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

13th February- Friday

Luna sat in front of Harry, sipping her tea, looking for all as if she had no cares in the world, her robes colourful and glittery, shining in the weak, wintery sunshine. His lip twitched upwards as she hummed happily at the taste, even though she had already taken a sip only moments before and done the same thing.

They were sitting in his private garden, Harry having invited her around for her birthday, with the invitation to bring along anyone she wanted. The only person who had arrived with Luna, however, was her personal maid.

She stood off to the side, twitching every time she glanced towards the girl, her muted blue robes a direct contrast to the brightness of Luna's. Harry watched her from the corner of his eyes, cataloguing her reactions and sussing out her feelings towards his friend.

"This tea is wonderful, Harry, although, it could do with a bit more sugar." Luna reached forward for the sugar pot, as she had done three times before, and Harry quickly pulled it away, shaking his head.

"No more sugar, you'll rot your teeth."

"Sugar doesn't rot your teeth, silly. The tooth fairies do, so that they can steal them away" She giggled, reaching once again for the pot, and Harry vanished its contents, humming disbelievingly.

He wondered how Luna had entered the harem in the first place. She didn't come from a prominent family, despite her status as a Pureblood. She held above-average magic, although so did many others in the harem, and Harry knew that the Emperor surely didn't believe half of what came out of the girl's mouth, so it wasn't for her Ravenclaw intelligence. He could admit that she was very pretty, but in a cute, small-animal-like way. Luna, from what he knew, held no ambitions for power as he did, so it was perplexing as to why she had chosen to be a concubine. There was magic in place that disallowed anyone from being coerced by third parties into joining- their application had to be created of their own free will, so it could only have been her own intention.

"Luna?"

"Hm?" She looked directly into his eyes, the pools of swirling blue gaining clarity at his attention, and Harry lost his nerves in the face of their intensity.

"Nothing. Here," He plucked a cupcake off of the tower instead to distract her. "Eat this."

She tilted her head. "But sugar rots your teeth, Harry, and I've already had my daily maximum." Luna leaned forward conspiratorily. "The Emperor ordered for me to only be allowed a certain amount each day." She pouted. "He said it makes me even more insufferable than usual." Giggling, she sipped once again at her tea.

He brought the cupcake up to his own mouth with a frown, biting into the sugary goodness and groaning at the taste.

17th February 1998- Tuesday

"-your Majesty, I implore you to think of lowering the age to join your illustrious harem. My daughter, Elisabeth, she is eager to join, however, she would not have met the age requirement by the next selection, by only a small margin-"

Tom harshly slammed his pen on his desk, stopping the man halfway through his speech, lifting his head to glare at the wretch in front of him. He was a balding man of fifty, the Lord of a Noble house that didn't deserve the taint he placed upon its name, neither did his nine daughters that he tried to marry off at any opportunity. The eldest was only sixteen and already betrothed, as was his fifteen years old, thirteen-year-old and now, he'd obviously moved on to his eleven-year-old.

And, lower the age limit? It was already lowered enough! He had wanted none under the age of seventeen at first, even higher if he could, but at the staunch requests of many of his advisors and Noble families, he had decreased it. He would not do so again, not after over twenty years. "I will not. It is already low enough, I have no want for there to be children within my harem. I have already made modifications to what I had previously wanted." Tom stated bluntly in a no-nonsense tone, going back to his writing.

Yet, the man seemed not to have any sense and continued to bug him. "But, your Majesty, surely fourteen is old enough-" He raised his hand, silencing the man.

"Absolutely not, get out of my office."

The man fell to his knees, clasping his hands together dramatically. "Your Majesty, she is beautiful beyond compare, she would be a shining jewel in your harem. If not, then how about one of my older daughters-"

"Begone!" The man, cowed, scampered out of his office, bumping into his head Eunuch on the way out, who was entering. Tom sighed, rubbing his forehead, already feeling a headache coming on. "What is it, Elson? It better be good, I am in a foul mood."

He bowed lowly, grey eyes sharp and cool. "Noble Potter-Black has made a request to take lunch with you in the gardens of your choice this afternoon, your Majesty. What shall I tell his maid?"

His headache receded slightly at the thought of spending time with one of his newest, and most intriguing harem members. The man was powerful and engaging, yet willing to defer to him, which soothed him enough to find amusement in his actions. Yet, Tom could feel his need to defy him despite that. He was headstrong and bold enough to joke with him, cunning and resourceful despite his status as a Gryffindor. It was the breath of fresh air that he needed in the midst of his bad mood.

"Tell him that I accept, and to meet me within my personal gardens at eleven thirty."

"Yes, your Majesty."

For a change of pace, Harry sent Kia to the Emperor's Palace to request if he could meet with the man which, surprisingly, was accepted. Harry would have thought that he'd get many propositions, and his request to be moved to at least a few days' time.

They were having tea in the Emperor's garden, which was as spectacular as ever, even on a mild, winter's day. Flowers were blooming, and the whole garden seemed to be placed under its own sphere of influence, feeling more like a late spring afternoon.

He sat on the cushioned seat, fiddling with his fingers under the unwavering stare of the Emperor. Despite having called for him, he had no idea what to speak about with the man. Surely, not any topic would do, it'd have to be one about something of significance, such as the Empire, or the happenings of the harem. However, there had been nothing much as of late, so Harry was stumped.

Seemingly having had enough of his silence, the Emperor spoke, his tone smooth, yet heavy with authority. "What concerns you, to be so quiet, my Noble?"

Harry hesitated to speak his mind, but since he had been so bold as to arrange this meeting, sighed instead. "I'm... I think that it is partly because I am missing Hogwarts. Learning, whilst I didn't enjoy it sometimes, was interesting. It was easy to get absorbed in, and

knowing things is, in some way, thrilling. I don't seem to hold much enthusiasm to open up a book whilst there is no need to do so, and there being no structure to my day makes it even harder."

The Emperor hummed, his red eyes gaining a knowing glint. "I will see if I can sort something out for you."

He bowed his head, breathing out a sigh that his words hadn't offended the man in any way. "Thank you, your Majesty."

"Although I suppose, since the tours will be starting up soon, you will have more to do than currently. I hope that preparing for these will alleviate some of the monotony you feel."

"Tours, your Majesty?" Harry questioned. He hadn't heard anything of 'tours' from either his maids or the other concubines.

"Trips outside of the harem walls to attend events such as foreign weddings, political gatherings, or simply to reside in another palace for different scenery for a little while. After you have been in my harem for over a year, you may be granted permission to attend these events with me, granted that you attain the rank of Concubine by then. You may not have known this since there have been no trips as of late, with many of my upper harem falling pregnant, and I did not want to leave in case there were any complications. As you know, Bellatrix has suffered a lot with carrying children, and this had been the longest she had carried, and Penny's delivery with our son was traumatic, to say the least, so our travels had to be placed on hold. I hope that by the time these begin once more, you will be able to join me."

Harry's spine straightened, and he blushed slightly at the insinuation that he would be promoted. "I hope so too, your Majesty."

The Emperor's expression changed then, a smouldering look entering his eyes. "Call me Thomas. However, I only permit this when it is solely the two of us."

Harry's mouth gaped open. Call him *what* ? "Oh, I wouldn't dare call you such an informal title, your Maj-"

"Harry, call me Thomas. That is a demand, not a request." His gaze sharpened, making Harry's heart race in trepidation and fear.

He spluttered once again at the casual way he was addressed. Did the Emperor, ruler of the *entire world* , just call him *Harry* . "Um, of course, your- Thomas."

"Better." He looked amused. "Now, I am afraid that I have things to do, and whilst I have enjoyed our time together, I must go now."

"Thank you for your time, your- Thomas."

He smirked. "It was my pleasure. Until next time, my Noble."

25th February- Wednesday

Aoife entered the room and gave him a low bow. "Master, there is someone at the door asking for you."

Looking up from his book, Harry hummed. "Bring them in."

"Yes, master."

An older woman entered a few moments later, dressed in long, black robes that covered even her shoes and dragged on the floor, the cut unflattering and bulky with no patterns. She looked to be around the age of sixty to seventy years old, eyes rimmed with round spectacles,

not unlike his own old ones that had long been discarded since he had his eyesight magically corrected. She carried a black briefcase, which she held in front of her as she bowed.

"Greeting to you, Noble Potter-Black. I have been assigned by His Majesty to tutor you in subjects of your choice, which he has informed me included Defense against the Dark Arts and Charms."

Harry blinked in surprise, turning his face away from the woman. The...Emperor had sent her? A pleased smile grew on his face, and he faced her once more.

"I am grateful for His Majesty's thoughtfulness, that is correct. Are we to begin today?"

She continued to bow. "If that is what you wish, your Lordship."

"It is. Do you have your materials with you?" The woman nodded. "Excellent, then please, join me." He waved his hand for her to sit across from him on the sofa, and she bowed once again as she sat. "What is your name?"

"Professor Bailey, your Lordship."

"Do you mind if I simply refer to you as 'Professor'?"

"You may refer to me as you wish, your Lordship."

"Then, Professor, what did you have planned for today?"

Her eyes grew stern, and she drew herself up proudly, the mask of Professor taking over any deference she previously showed. "I was thinking of beginning with Defense, specifically, a lesson that will allow me to evaluate your current knowledge of both Defense against the Dark Arts and the Dark Arts themselves."

"Then, I can say now that I know little of the Dark Arts, since my parents tend to shy away from that topic, and Hogwarts only teaches it in the seventh year, which I missed out on."

"Then that shall be our focus for tomorrow, but for today, let me assess your knowledge of other magics, starting with the basics."

2nd March 1998- Monday

After the previous month's major upheaval, no one expected there to be any movement within the rankings, however, the Emperor was, as ever, notoriously hard to predict.

"His Majesty writes that he is currently in a good mood, and therefore declares that all of his concubines with who he currently disfavours in any amount are in luck. Sister Cordelia and Brother Lukas, his Majesty says that you will remain within your positions despite this, however, Noble Jasmine, you are to become Secondary Noble, and Attendant Snyder, you are to become Fourth Second-Class Attendant."

Harry sighed to himself as Bellatrix moved on after that, bemoaning that he was, once again, relegated to the position of fourth Noble. It seemed that every time he made a move up the ladder, he was pulled down once more as another Noble outpaced him. He was beginning to understand how it had taken Penny nearly a decade to become a Consort, despite being another who had been given the position of Noble from the selection ceremony.

Walking out of the hall, he was startled by an arm linking with his own, turning to face none other than Penny, who was smiling up at him fondly. "Hello, Brother!"

He hesitated momentarily on how to respond but decided on following her lead. "How are you today, Sister?"

"I'm brilliant! And you?"

"Well."

"Good! Anyway, I was wondering if you would like to take tea with me today?" She beamed at him, still clinging hold of his arm, and he couldn't find it in him, not that he had much choice, to say no.

"Of course, Sister."

Her new palace, the Palace of Infinite Purity, given to her by the Emperor when she ascended to Consort rank, was twice as large as the previous one, and much more luxurious. Sprawling gardens, fenced in by white walls, surrounded a large palace made of white stone, shining brightly in the soft sunlight.

She led him towards a round table for two, near a marble fountain that's water sparkled, the droplets glittering as they rained down into the pool at the bottom. Harry observed his surroundings with awe and jealousy, voicing this to his companion.

"Your new palace is beautiful, Sister. I am very jealous."

She giggled sweetly, still holding onto his arm. "Oh, don't be, Brother. I have no doubt that, soon enough, you will have a beautiful palace of your own. His Majesty seems to have taken a liking to you."

Harry blushed. "I think that, if that happens, it won't for a little while yet."

She hummed. "Hmm, I don't know about that." Her secretive smile grew hope within him that he refused to show on his face, studiously keeping his expression neutral. He pulled out

the chair for her before her maid could do so, who looked at him in displeasure. "Oh, thank you, Brother! Mandy, could you fetch the tea and cakes for us? Ask Chloe to help you bring them all out."

"Yes, Madam. And what tea will his Lordship take?"

"Mint, please." He answered, and the woman bowed, turning with a swish of her sage green robes. Harry shifted his attention back to Penny, recognising the chance for what it was- a time to gain information. "Sister Penny, you have been in the harem for nearing a decade now, right?"

"Yes, although, it seems like just yesterday I first laid eyes on his Majesty. He looks as handsome as ever, perhaps more so." She gushed, and Harry nodded along.

"Then, you would know about the tours and events outside of the Court."

"Oh, yes." She breathed breathily, an almost awed expression on her face that made him burn with jealousy. "It is almost intimate, heading out with the Emperor for trips, despite most of them being formal in nature. It is only a selection of us, after all, as sometimes, his majesty decides to only take a few of us Concubines, and Consorts along. It's been a little while since the last one, however, maybe even over a year now."

"Do you know when the next one will be?" So that he could ensure he'd be a Concubine before then, if it was possible.

"Oh, not at least for another few months! I haven't heard anything about one as of yet, and they wouldn't give us less than two months' notice."

Then, Harry had time, and he'd use that to his advantage.

9th March 1998- Monday

Harry used his free time to write both Remus' and his Dad's birthday letters, having to fit all his thoughts, congratulations and questions into two pieces of parchment being one of the hardest tasks he'd had to complete in a while.

Sure, now that he had a tutor, his days passed with a little more activity, but it was still a mind-numbingly boring existence he was living as a concubine with little to no official duties. Even the reason he was here had yet to be fulfilled- gaining a high enough rank to protect himself and his family.

On the first of the month, it had been a disappointment to once again resume the position of Fourth Noble, but he hoped soon he could be promoted to Primary or Secondary Noble, or even to a Concubine.

He was beginning to grow comfortable with the Emperor and more receptive to the man, which he seemed to enjoy. There had been another meeting between them after the one in which he had complained about his homesickness, the Emperor asking for his progress in his lessons, and seemingly pleased with himself when Harry had given him a grateful smile.

Since that fateful Halloween night, there had been no moves by the Emperor to further their intimacy, and Harry was slowly growing impatient. He was on the fence about whether or not to force the Emperor's hand and initiate it himself, but he was worried that being rash would come across as being pushy instead of endearing him further to the man. Sure, he was now allowed to refer to the man by his name, yet there was still a certain distance between them that Harry thought could only be lessened by a few options. One of them was spending the night with him, which there had, so far, been no known intention by the Emperor to do so.

He didn't know what it was that was stopping the Emperor, but soon enough, he'd find out when he next met up with the man.

26th March- Thursday

"You do understand that you have passed the three-month leniency period, correct, Brother Felix?" Consort Isla's tone was biting, her lips twisted downwards in displeasure. Felix shuffled where he stood, a protective palm laid over his slightly swollen stomach. How none of them noticed, even the Emperor, was startling.

However, despite his defensive stance, Felix still looked proud of himself, his chin tilted upwards as he stared Isla down with scorn. "Yes, I do. I conceived on the twelfth of December, and it is now the twenty-sixth of March. However, I was-"

Bellatrix, who had remained silent so far, held up her hand to cut him off. "No matter the excuse, the Emperor expects there to be repercussions. Despite my fondness for you, I agree with his Majesty, and therefore, you are to be confined to your Palace for the remainder of the month. Congratulations on your pregnancy, Brother. You're second child, how prosperous!"

Penny stood, a frown on her pretty face. "But that's much too lenient, Sister! His Majesty stated that those who go over the time frame must stay within their palace for at least a week, depending on how long they disregarded the decree, and their weekly stipend is to be halved. What you are suggesting is for Concubine Rosier to only be confined for five days and with no monetary penalty. He went over by two or more weeks, surely it stands that he should be punished further-"

She stood, her magic flaring outwards in a burning wave that had Harry's own lashing out in defence. "Silence! I am the authority here, I make the decisions, as has been decided by his Majesty when he made me his Primary spouse! If I say as such, it shall be done." Bellatrix screeched, staring down at Penny with a murderous gaze. "If you don't like it, then you should take it up with his Majesty." Penny's gaze gained a steeling glint, and she span on her heel, heading for the doors with a dramatic swish of her pale yellow robes. "Where do you think you are going, Consort Haywood?!"

"To see the Emperor. And it's *Slytherin* -Haywood, *Sister* ." She coolly snapped, the doors closing behind her with a deafening thud. On the dias, Bellatrix seethed, gripping the sides of her chair with clawed hands. Her fist connecting with the armrest made Harry flinch back, but the Consort made no move to grab at her wand, content to stew in her violent thoughts.

What consequences would this bring, Harry thought to himself?

27th March 1998- Friday

Concubine Felix had promptly been confined to his Palace for two weeks- the amount of time he had gone over the grace period, with his weekly stipend halved for the duration. It had caused a stir within Bellatrix's palace, the Consort throwing a fit over her authority being overruled, even if it was by the Emperor.

Harry had heard about this from June, who had whispered it into his ear with vicious satisfaction. The maid was becoming his chief confidant for the gossiped information making its way through the Court, giving Harry an in into knowledge he'd previously be oblivious to.

Later on in the day, a Eunuch arrived to inform him that the Emperor had requested to spend lunch with him, and invited him to his private gardens once more.

Harry, dressed in robes that bordered on white, they were such a light blue, stood before the Emperor and bowed.

"Greetings, your Majesty."

"Harry, what did I say last time? You are to call me Thomas when it is only us."

"Yes...Thomas."

"One day, I hope that you will be able to say my name comfortably, but I suppose that is a long while off yet."

Harry hummed, sitting in the seat that was already pulled out, noting the steaming cup of mint tea placed before him and the tower of sweet treats off to the side to allow them an uninterrupted view of each other. "How are you, Thomas."

"Well enough, however, recent circumstances have left me saddened. I am fine with my concubines keeping their pregnancies a secret up until the end of the first trimester, when they are most vulnerable, but I know that I'd then have to deal with the tantrums from other concubines if a child suddenly pops up without prior knowledge. It's happened in the past, and it has never ended well. Bellatrix has always had a rather... explosive reaction." He smiled meanly. "She is so easily riled, although, it is an enjoyable sight to witness when her ire is not targeted at that which I have permitted." Harry didn't know how to reply to that, so he simply sipped at his tea once more, noting how Thomas gazed at him intently. "Enough about me, how are you, my Noble?"

"I'm good, especially now that I have a tutor. I've also been meeting up with my fellow concubines more recently, now that the weather is growing warmer."

"Good, I'm glad that you are fostering closer relationships. I've never enjoyed all that drama, despite how entertaining it can be sometimes."

They continued to talk on this line for the rest of their time together, until it was time for the Emperor to leave, his day still filled with meetings and political documents to sign.

Harry cleared his throat as he stood, hesitating for a moment, before pushing on. "Your Majesty-"

Thomas frowned. "Har-"

"No, please, let me say this." Thomas' eyebrow raised, and he waved his hand for him to continue. "Your Majesty, may I be so bold as to request to spend the night-"

"No." The quick rejection hurt, and he couldn't help but let this seep into his voice.

"Why not?" Harry's voice cracked slightly, and he reddened in embarrassment, his eyebrows still scrunched in hurt.

The Emperor was quick to placate him, head tilted in empathy, and visible, unexpected amusement. "My apologies if I have upset you, my Noble, but you are simply too young for me to see you in that way."

"But I am an adult!" It sounded petulant even to his own ears, but it was the only thing he had.

"An adult you may be, but only just so. Perhaps, past your eighteenth birthday, I may find your request more acceptable, however, as of the moment, I simply find no such attraction towards you."

Harry only allowed himself to break down in the privacy of his bedroom, the door locked, silenced and warded.

What were his chances looking like, now?

Chapter End Notes

In case you missed it at the start of the chapter: I've created a wiki fandom page for this fic, since I know how hard it can be to keep up with all the rankings changing, and I can't really give out all of my notes. Here's the link:
<https://intimacy.fandom.com/wiki/Special:AllPages>

Chapter 18 [The Beginning]

Chapter Notes

I adore this chapter, and I don't think I've ever said that! Seriously, I put so much emotion into some of these scenes, because I was drawing on personal experiences, and it somehow made it so much easier to write ^-^ It got to 5k words in the end! Anyway, I've got two mock exams tomorrow [today], but I just wanted to get this out now whilst I remember.

Trigger Warnings- Mentions of body modification [Side character], Mentions of Miscarriage [Past], Mentions of Suicide, Mentions of Death.

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

1st April 1998- Wednesday

"-Despite Concubine Felix's lax in informing His Majesty, and the harem as a whole, of his pregnancy, he still receives the Emperor's sincere congratulations on conceiving a royal child, and therefore, his Majesty graciously promotes him to the position of Primary Concubine." Bellatrix looked undeniably *smug*, her voice dripping with haughtiness and superiority. After all, Concubine Felix was firmly within her camp- his promotion was a boon to her own status and position as the Harem's most powerful member.

Harry's eyebrow rose in disbelief, however, at the situation. Despite going against the Emperor's decree so blatantly and knowingly, the Concubine was still receiving the boons that his pregnancy brought? He looked around the room, noting by their stunned faces that many agreed with his thoughts.

Felix was currently not in attendance, his isolation also extending to attending the daily meetings, which Harry thought was more of a blessing. He was growing tired of the uselessness and the monotony of them, the talks dominated by Bellatrix, his personal opinions washed away under the sea of voices talking over one another. It seemed that all decorum vanished from the concubines when they stepped within these walls, and they became snide, gossipy animals.

"That is to be expected, a second child is a rare occurrence here. Only three of us have ever given his Majesty two or more children. Sister Penny, with two daughters and a son," Regulus sent a genial glance towards the proud-looking Consort. "Sister Alecto, with her twin daughters," Alecto looked ruffled at the mention of them, but pleased to be put in the spotlight, "And the Late Noble Consort Evangeline, with her two daughters and son. With Brother Felix already three and a half months along, the chances of his child being born are incredibly high. This is something to be celebrated."

And now that his pregnancy was out in the open, it would be incredibly suspicious if he suffered a miscarriage, especially at over fourteen weeks along. It was smart, and Harry was sure that's why many were so against others hiding their pregnancies, despite changing that opinion the moment it involved themselves.

Erin piped up. "Still, with only a pregnancy, Concubine Rosier has been given the Primary position, which has a lot of responsibilities, whilst still being in isolation? I mean, surely that isn't-"

Bellatrix cleared her throat, a frown on her face, dark eyes glaring down at them from the dias. "Silence. We are not here to question his Majesty's decrees, only to accept them for the gifts they are. Be happy for your Brother and his growing child, Noble Witt."

"My apologies, this news is greatly welcomed." Never had Harry heard such *sarcasm* from a member of the harem, and tried his hardest to stifle his amusement. However, he wasn't lucky in that endeavour.

"And what about this situation amuses you, Noble Potter-Black? Do share." Bellatrix's snide comment brought him right back to Hogwarts and the pompous attitudes of some of the students and teachers. His lip twitched at the comparison, holding back further slips.

"I was smiling in agreement with Sister Erin, Consort Bellatrix. It is, after all, a great occasion- the Emperor will have yet another child in a matter of months, perhaps even another son. After all, Concubine Rosier has given him one once before."

Her lip pulled up into a snarl. "Yes, I suppose there is a chance. Well, no matter the gender, we should all pray for the health of Brother Felix and his child. Please make sure that you do so. This meeting is adjourned."

"Please don't rile up Bellatrix any further-" Harry startled at the unexpected voice, his head snapping to the side to meet the unimpressed stare of Regulus. The man had obviously followed him all the way to his palace unbeknownst to him or Anya, whose surprise and worry were palpable. "-You don't want to face the consequences whilst you still hold little of your own power." Regulus' tone was chiding and sharp, and it made Harry's teeth grit.

"I wasn't riling her up. If anything, she was trying to antagonise me!"

"That may be so, but you still made a statement by mentioning that Felix already has a son, and may yet have another. My cousin-" Here, he heaved out a sigh. "Is admittedly getting older now, and is approaching fifty quickly. Our family has always had decreased fertility, and it only grows worse with age. She desperately wants a son, so please don't use something like that against her."

Harry turned to fully face Regulus, a frown on his face. "If she didn't want to be hurt, she shouldn't hurt others. She had most likely done more harm to our Brothers and Sisters, the maids and Eunuchs, and his Majesty than I ever will." He span on his heel and began walking towards the Palace of Noble Handsomeness, ignoring Regulus' calls.

"Harry, I'm only trying to help you out!"

"Master, that was unwise of you. Please don't alienate yourself from such a powerful ally. Go back to him and apologise." His head maid spoke into his ear, and Harry shot her a glare.

"I can do as I wish, I'm following my morals." Turning to face her just before they entered the gate, Harry leaned closer, cupping his hand to obscure his words. "And don't order me around. You may be precious to me, but my reputation...my family's reputation isn't to be tarnished by me being seen to be chastised by a *maid*."

Her eyes widened in understanding, head whipping around, noticing the eyes of passing Eunuchs and fellow maids on them. "My apologies, Master. I didn't think."

"I need you to be strong for me, Anya, the perfect maid. You are the head of my staff, please continue to meet those expectations. I can't trust many, and I will continue to trust you without a doubt until you give me a reason."

8th April- Wednesday

In a change of pace, Harry was invited for lunch with Attendant Lukas, who he had yet to have any meaningful interactions with. The Attendant, whilst not exactly standoffish, came with the unfortunate position of being close to Concubine Patricia, who Harry was avoiding as much as he could. He was, admittedly, afraid of the woman, more so than he was of Bellatrix. The Consort could be controlled by Regulus, talked down by her fellow Consorts into a more mellow mood, and didn't often resort to violence towards her fellow concubines. Patricia, however, was reported to have done many violent things towards many different people, including concubines. Harry couldn't help but think of the suspicious circumstances her daughter died every time he looked at her.

In attendance were other First-class attendants, such as Zacharias Smith and Theodore Nott, Second-Class Attendant Merula Snyde, who was sat next to the man, and, unfortunately, Concubine Rakepick, who was glaring daggers into Harry from her seat opposite.

It became clear as to why this unusual gathering was called for when Lukas, after having spoken with everyone around the table for a little while, trying to appear innocuous, smirked suddenly. "On my birthday, I requested to spend the night with the Emperor, which he agreed upon. Hopefully, my darling daughter should expect news of a little sibling soon."

"Oh, that's amazing, Brother!" Attendant Snyde gushed, leaning into him and holding onto his arm. Lukas looked at her with a smirk, then let his eyes wander to take in the reactions of the others.

Patricia gritted her teeth and didn't offer any congratulations of her own, despite Lukas' searching look.

Harry smiled wanly at the man. "Congratulations, Attendant Erikson. I hope that your wish will come true." He did not. The more power that went to Erikson, the more chance he had of overtaking Harry, and since he was an ally of Patricia's, it meant she would also be attaining some of that extra power.

The man seemed to accept his congratulations with no hidden agenda, lip twitching slightly as if he didn't know how friendly he should appear to Harry. "Thank you, Noble Potter-Black, you are kind."

Patricia then stood, startling the table's occupants as her chair screeched on the pavement. Her cheeks were slightly flushed, and her hands were shaking slightly under the tight grip she had on the tablecloth. "Apologies, Brothers, Sisters, but I have somewhere to be."

Harry later found out from June that the woman, after the tea had ended, had approached the Emperor, and had asked to spend the night with him in a fit of jealousy over her cousin's flaunting.

It made Harry laugh at her childishness, but fear what would happen if she didn't get her way in the future. There was discontent stirring in the harem these days from a variety of sources, although, at what, Harry couldn't quite pinpoint.

What was startling, however, was the malice he could feel seeping out of Dahlia whenever their paths crossed, her baby blue eyes no longer staring up at him with friendliness, but blankness. It was a startling change from just a few months ago, and Harry couldn't help but worry about what had made her act in such a way. He had done nothing of note to offend her to such a degree, not that he could recollect, so it stood that she was being influenced by another concubine. His bets were on Bellatrix, who was her pseudo-aunt, and who Harry had spotted her hanging around more in the past months.

It concerned him, both that Bellatrix was gaining allies and therefore power, but also that this was his friend, yet he couldn't do anything about it unless she wanted him to. Which, decidedly, she did not. Dahlia seemed content in her current position as her aunt's lackey, and who was Harry to judge?

He was going to win the Emperor's unanimous attention no matter who stood in the way, for both his family, and for himself.

25th April- Saturday

To Harry's surprise, he awoke in the morning to discover that Pippa had gone into labour during the night and delivered a healthy baby girl, who the Emp- Thomas had named Melina, unknowing that she had even been in labour.

Later, when he asked Cedric why they hadn't been expected to pray for the health of both mother and baby, as well as wait outside the palace for news of the birth, he informed him that such a spectacle is only done for the children born to the Emperor's official spouses, who have their own Palace's. There was no need to 'disturb the peace' of the Consorts and Concubines.

"Did you know this, Anya?" He asked his head maid as they sat in his private living room, him sewing pretty patterns- still slightly wonky, despite the days of practice he had put into them- onto a piece of scrap cloth, whilst she was finishing off the final decorations to his newest robe, made from the materials the Emperor had gifted him when he first joined the harem.

Anya looked up from her work, a surprised look on her face. "I did not, Master, otherwise, I would have surely told you."

The constant reminders that those who were Nobles or below weren't considered as the Emperor's legal spouses jarred Harry, and he vowed to become one as soon as was feasible. However, his attempts to grow closer to the Emperor, mainly by propositioning the man, were simply met with rebukes and amusement.

It was frustrating now more than it was disappointing, his attention focused on getting the Emperor to accept. However, he didn't want to push the matter too much in case it backfired on him and ended with ire instead of entertainment.

The robe Anya was currently making him was an attempt to gain *something* from the Emperor, whether that be only more attention, or what Harry really wanted. It was a lot more flashy than his usual outfits, a light blue bordering on green, which paired handsomely with his eyes. It was more cinched at the waist to show off his figure better, and the slits at either side revealed more of his legs when he walked. It was a bold robe, made less so by the more modest shirt he wore underneath, a white turtleneck revealed by the opening. No trousers were needed, as the robe tied up at his middle, held shut by a bejewelled clasp.

It only needed a few finishing touches, and it'd be ready for the next time he met with the Emperor.

29th April- Wednesday

"Greetings, your Majesty." Harry bowed, feeling the slits on his robe shift with his movement. He battled down the instinct to clasp it together, hands twitching at his sides with slight discomfort. He was really pushing himself doing this, and he hoped it was worth it. He also hoped it didn't get back to one of the more antagonistic of the harem, which would be disastrous.

The Emperor, who was busy working at his desk hummed, not glancing upwards. "Thank you for coming, my Noble."

Harry continued to bow, feeling his back and arms start to ache at holding the position for more than a few seconds. His earrings were also starting to irritate him, the silver strands tickling his neck when he breathed, enticing him to break position and brush them away. "I thank his Majesty for inviting me here."

Thomas' lip twitched, and he placed his pen down, looking up at last. His eyes dilated when they took him in, widening slightly in shock, wandering over his figure with interest. It made pleasure unfurl smugly in Harry's chest, fighting the grin that wanted to stretch across his face. The Emperor visibly gulped, turning to his head Eunuch and waving him out. The man exited with visible reluctance. He turned to Harry once more, eyes roving up and down his figure as he began to sway nervously, as if he was a criminal awaiting a verdict. "Harry," The

Emperor's voice was thick with emotion, staring at him with lidded eyes. "That robe suits you well."

"Thank you... Thomas." He finally straightened from his bow, smiling bashfully at the man.

"Come, sit." He gestured to the sofa off to the side, nearby a side table that contained a myriad of different foods, such as fruits, thin slices of meat, cheese, bread and sweets. Also on the table was a teapot and two teacups, along with a small jug of milk and a bowl full of sugar. Harry eyed it with interest, but his gaze was ultimately drawn back to Thomas, who was still intensely eyeing him. "How are you today, my Noble? Is there a special occasion that warrants such a change in your attire?"

"I simply felt that today was the time to wear one of my newest robes. My maids have been hard at work, and I thought that you may appreciate this one."

"I do, it is a very bold choice, but you suit such boldness well."

Harry busied himself with making them both tea, tilting his head to hide his grin, but he couldn't hide the emotions betrayed by his voice. "Thank you." The only noise was the clinking of cups and saucers as he finished off making the teas, picking up one to pass it to the Emperor, startling when his eyes met burning red. He drew back slightly, unsure, but Thomas grabbed his wrist and took the tea, continuing to hold on as he took a gulp. His eyebrows raised.

"You know how I like my tea." It wasn't a question.

"Yes, your Majesty. I have been observing." Thomas hummed, looking amused as he finally released his wrist, which Harry drew back to his side slowly. He cleared his throat anxiously. "Thomas?"

"Hmm?"

"Why have you called me here?"

The Emperor's head tilted, a superior look in his eyes, challenging him to argue. "Can't I simply want to see you, my Noble?"

Harry spluttered a little, feeling the hotness of a blush on his face. "Yes, of course, but, well...I assumed..."

Thomas chuckled, the sound resonating in his brain, sending tingles down to his toes. *Merlin*. "Not to worry, I simply wished to know how you are faring. I haven't seen or heard from you in a few days, since I've been busy sorting out arrangements for my newest daughter."

Harry's next question was an innocent one, filled with a longing to know the Emperor's thoughts, and the emotions he was currently feeling. "Are you pleased to have another daughter?"

Thomas seemed to search his expression intently for a few seconds before the crease at his brow relaxed, and he sipped at his tea ponderingly. "I have grown to find a special joy in holding my newborn daughters, mainly in the disappointed face some of my concubines pull with the knowledge that they cannot use their daughter in the way they could a son." His dark smile sent shivers down Harry's spine, but his trepidation was soon replaced by intrigue as the expression morphed into fondness. "I had hope that, perhaps, my daughters could be equal to my sons, but it seems that many of my concubines don't view them as such." His face contorted once more as he spoke his next words. "It is strange, considering how, as I am immortal, I won't be handing my throne down to my children any time soon, perhaps not even within the current generation's lifetime. Therefore, why is there so much competition to bear me a son?"

"It would be an honour to have a child of yours, no matter the gender, and no matter the position they would end up within," Harry replied, truthfully. Admittedly, now that he looked into it, he did want the position of the Emperor's most honoured spouse, being Emperor Consort for his own personal satisfaction, but he held no ideals that any children he could possibly bear would become the next Emperor. Perhaps his grandchildren would have a chance, no matter how many greats would come before that.

The Emperor laughed softly, a teasing lilt to his tone. "I thought you would say that. Still, I can see in your eyes, and in the tone of your voice, that you are telling the truth." Before Harry could retort, Thomas held up his hand, and it took Harry a few seconds to realise that he was waving in a Eunuch standing to the side, who was holding a box. It also startled Harry to see that the man's lips were sealed together with crude stitches, making him look disturbing. "I have prepared a gift for you: Materials that your maids can use to craft you new robes and accessories, in various shades of blue. I hope to see another variation of the one you are wearing, it suits you well." Thomas ignored Harry's uneasy look, smiling at him instead as if the man to the side of him didn't look like a mockery of a scarecrow.

Harry watched as the man hobbled closer, disturbed and feeling his heart begin to race in fear and disgust. He tried to not allow it to show on his face, but with the hawkish way the Emperor was staring at him, eyes roving his features, absorbing every little twitch his face made, he knew it was futile. "Thank you, your Majesty." He bowed his head and stood to receive the box from the Eunuch, noting how the Emperor didn't correct his address. He placed it on the table, and steeled himself, watching out of the corner of his eye as the frightening Eunuch disappeared from sight. "May I...kiss you? As thanks for this thoughtful gift." And to get his mind off of what he had just seen.

And, admittedly, for much more selfish reasons than he would allow himself to think on.

Thomas hummed, tilting his head in mock thought, before beckoning him forward with a satisfied smirk. "Of course, my Noble."

It was soft and sweet, barely a brush of lips, until suddenly, it wasn't. A hand twined roughly into his messy locks, the tight grip drawing a startled shout from his lips, and the Emperor struck. Teeth clashed roughly, and a tongue invaded his mouth skillfully, Harry struggling to even think, let alone match the man in his aptitude. He felt inexperienced, lost for what to do, and drowning further as the kiss prolonged. It panicked him, the roughness, the passion, the intensity, yet it also further endeared him to Thomas, the thumb stroking at his cheek relaxing him.

They parted unexpectedly, the Emperor looking pleased with himself as Harry drew in deep, gasping breaths, hair mussed and lips swollen and red.

"I apologise if that was sudden, but it came to me then that the only previous experience of kissing you have had was me was on All Hallow's Eve, and I couldn't bear to leave that as the

impression you held of my affection. Are you agreeable to another one?"

All Harry could do was nod, still breathless and overwhelmed, yet so accepting of everything the Emperor would give him at the moment.

The robes, seemingly, had been a success. He'd have to see if Anya would make him a few more with his new materials.

1st May- Friday- Pippa Macmillan

"His Majesty congratulates Noble Macmillan on the birth of her daughter, and praises her for creating a steadfast link between the Royal House of Slytherin and the Noble House of Macmillan." Pippa's breath grew still as Bellatrix stopped there, waiting anxiously for the news of her promotion, or even a title such as 'Honoured Mother', but she simply stared down at her with a superior glint in her eyes. She deflated internally, yet kept a brave front in the face of the scorn she could hear. "Your Sisters and Brothers also congratulate you, Noble Macmillan."

Cordelia tittered about how even the birth of her first child could not shift her rank, and she shifted in discomfort.

Nobody seemed sorry for her, their faces blank or scornful.

It was then that she realised she had no true allies in the harem, even those who she had hung around for years didn't send a sympathetic glance her way. Pippa had thought her pretentious attitude would endear her to at least a few of the more old-fashioned ones, but... Granted, she couldn't see the face of those further down the line-

Shifting in a way that seemed inconspicuous, Pippa glanced around and shrank back into herself as she realised they *weren't paying attention*. They'd already moved on to the next

topic, talking about the next item on the agenda, despite the fact that she'd just given birth to his Majesty's newest daughter.

Where were her congratulations? Her praise, her fawning, her *attention* ?

Sleeping with the Emperor had elicited a crowd gathering around her, gushes and coos about the possibilities of another royal child (no matter how fake she knew them to be), but now that the princess, her princess, had been born? Nothing.

And she was still a Noble. Not even Primary Noble, or even Secondary Noble, but *Third Noble* .

"And his Majesty would also like to announce-" Bellatrix's teeth audibly clashed. Pippa perked up, leaning forward eagerly. Anything Bellatrix was annoyed about could only be good. Perhaps, she had gained a title after all- "That Noble Potter-Black is a... precious concubine whose example the Harem should follow... observing the Emperor's interests and acting on them... Noble Potter-Black! What is the meaning of this?! What does the Emperor indicate by 'observing his interests'?!"

Noble Potter-Black, a boy who had been on her radar, yet dismissed for being lower-ranked despite his quick promotion, looked up at the Primary Consort with a sweet, *vicious* smile that didn't suit his young face, green eyes blazing with smugness. It set her heart racing, hands shaking slightly where she gripped the hand rests of her chair despite her attempts to still them. "His Majesty liked that I had noticed how he liked his tea- without milk. I had no idea that would leave such an impression on him." Here, he tilted his head, a confused expression plastering itself on his face as he surveyed the room. "Did nobody else think to know such things about His Majesty?" At the lack of response, he smiled again, tauntingly harmless. "Well, now that you know, you may all endear yourselves further to his Majesty with this, Sisters and Brothers!"

Pippa's teeth gritted, her hands clenching, hidden by the sleeves of her robe. A few looked similarly annoyed- Bellatrix, Patricia, Aleto, the Malfoy girl and her little group- but the general consensus seemed to be begrudging acceptance that the Noble, the *boy* , had bested them. Concubine Regulus and Consort Penny even looked amused!

Her anger grew, festering in her heart and settling at its centre with viciousness. How dare he overshadow her!

3rd May- Sunday

Harry relaxed onto the bench, sinking further into it with a sigh, enjoying the warm sunshine on his face that spring had brought along. He had been in the harem for nearly a year now, and at times like these, he couldn't help but reminisce.

Thinking back on his previous naivety, Harry scoffed, folding his arms. Those he had been warned about, such as Regulus' personality and Penny's power, had proven to be great friends, and friends had turned to enemies. Dahlia was growing worse these days, instead of ignoring him as she had previously, she now stared at him coldly, waiting for a moment to strike. They hadn't spoken for months, nor did he want to. She had proven herself to be childish, and most of all, unneeded for his rise to power. She clung to the robes of those more powerful than her, allowing herself to be manipulated in their clutches and used for their own gain. It was her own fault for deciding by herself that he wasn't worth her time, despite their long friendship. Greengrass and Nott were deeply on her side, which was expected, and Smith had gone and gotten himself involved with Patricia's group. It was only Luna, out of their selection, who remained steadfast by his side, and he couldn't feel more grateful for her loyalty.

Loud shouts of horror from outside the walls disturbed his peace, and Harry sat up with a frown. He was turning towards Anya to ask her to go and find out what all the noise was about when the gate to his garden opened, and in hurried a harried-looking Eunuch, his face pale. At seeing him, his expression seemed to crumple further. "Your Lordship! Noble Potter-Black! Terrible, terrible news!"

"What? What is it?!"

"Second-Class Attendant Brennan has committed suicide by drowning!"

Harry felt his blood turn to ice, face draining of colour as Anya gasped at his side.

What?

"I- What did you just say?"

"Attendant Brennan has been found de-dead in her bathtub. The suspicions so far lean to-
towards suicide."

He felt his body go weak, gaping up at the Eunuch, who also seemed so shocked to the point he had yet to bow. Not that formalities were on Harry's mind at that moment, however. His thoughts were racing, turning the words over and over again in his head, yet still failing to compute them.

Attendant Brennan- Victoria...was dead?

He barely knew the woman, but she had been nice, caring for him in little ways such as pushing the nicest cakes towards him, poring his tea and adding a sprinkle of sugar just how he liked it, smiling at him with no hidden agenda, yet keeping her distance despite how he would readily accept her. It was these little things, so unworthy of mention in the moment, that came to him then.

Harry made a choked sound, his chest tightening with distress. "An-Anyia."

"Master, I-I shall get you some tea. You are dismissed, Eunuch." The man, realising his lack of formality, bowed deeply, but Harry was already being led to sit on the bench, his thoughts swirling manically.

Victoria was *dead* ? By *suicide* ? No, no, he didn't believe it, he wouldn't! She had been... his thoughts were fuzzy, but Harry was sure she'd been settled, uninvolved in any drama, content to stand on the sidelines and simply observe. She didn't even vie for the Emperor's attention or seem to want any children from the man. Her only desire, which she had whispered to him when she had noticed his soft gaze aimed at the man, was a comfortable life of simple luxury, which she was afforded as a Second-Class Attendant.

Then, *why was she dead* ?

10th May- Sunday.

Her funeral was a sombre and dull affair, with no pageantry or grand ceremony, simply the Emperor, his concubines, a few of his older children and the Lady's maids in attendance, standing before the dark coffin before them. There were no sniffles, weeps or tears in sight, although Harry's vision was blurred as he stared forwards, blending into the crowd around him in his black robes. He wished he had a veil, to hide his expressions as the Concubines and Consorts did.

Victoria would be transported back to her home city at the end of the day, where her parents would bury her wherever they wished. As an unofficial spouse, she wasn't granted the honour of being buried within the Royal graveyard, although Harry was undecided if that truly was an honour.

The Emperor was immortal, so he'd never be joining them there anyway. What use was a Royal Graveyard if all it would contain is the souls of the waiting, possibly never to be joined?

The mourning period would carry on for another week, and then, they'd be expected to carry on with their lives as usual, as if a member of their group had not died merely two weeks before, that there was a gap in the rankings until it was rectified in the next ranking day. As if even he, who hadn't yet been here for a year, didn't remember all the memories he shared with her, little as they were, every hour of the day.

Chapter End Notes

I really feel like Harry is transforming and realising his true thoughts in this chapter. I hope you managed to pick out bits and pieces of foreshadowing, but if I'm being completely honest, I don't think I even managed to dissect all of what I wrote. I think a ghost possesses me at times when I write because half of this chapter felt like a fever dream that the current me wouldn't dare to write ^-^

Anyway, hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I did when I wasn't sleep deprived, and please leave a comment if you feel like it :) They give me such a confidence boost!

Expect a chapter of two for the first anniversary of this fic on the 13th of March *-* Bye for now :)

Chapter 19- [One and Eighteen]

Chapter Notes

Happy one year anniversary to this fic! I am very surprised with how consistent I've been, and that I've written over 70k words! Anyway, I hope you like this chapter, but I'm sure you'll like the next one even more ;) Hoping to post it sometime within the next few days if I can.

This chapter is 5.3k words, and I wrote 1.6k of it in 2hrs last night...but I needed sleep so I only posted it in the morning.

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

20th May 1998- Wednesday

"-is a complicated art, driven by emotion and- your Lordship, please pay attention."

Harry, at the sharp, disapproving tone, jolted out of his thoughts, his hand slipping from his face, and straightened from his slouch. Turning to face the irate-looking woman in front of him, he gave a sheepish grimace. "My apologies, Professor. Please continue."

Her ruffled feathers soothed with his attention, and she turned back to her chalkboard- magically conjured onto a plain wall in his back rooms- beginning once more. "As I was saying, to cast the Dark Arts, a certain amount of emotion is needed-"

He zoned her out once more, unwillingly. He was just too caught up in his own thoughts at the moment. The sudden death of Victoria was a shock to both him and the Court as a whole, and despite the fact he barely knew her, he felt affected by her death. It revealed the darker side of the harem, whether it had been by suicide or, if his gut feeling was correct, by murder. He had witnessed more of the darkness than he expected he would within his first year in the harem, the two miscarriages also weighing heavily on his mind, which he also saw as being caused by outside sources.

Professor Bailey cleared her throat again, having caught his mind wandering once more. Her tone was stern like McGonagall's had been whenever she caught him 'up to no good'. Harry liked to think he was a perfectly well-behaved student, thank you very much, it was just her bias towards anything Potter that got him into trouble. "Your Lordship, I am here to-"

Sensing the direction she was about to head in based on the tone of her voice, he interrupted before she could say something damning or rude. He didn't want his maids that were milling about to interpret her words as rude and report the woman for 'undermining a concubines, and therefore the Emperor's, divine authority', or even worse, spread rumours that could cause him scorn for being weak towards those who are 'lesser'. "Professor Bailey, may we end our session early today? I feel as though I am too distracted to take in the lesson."

The woman frowned slightly, a noise of discontent at being interrupted bubbling in the back of her throat before she bowed stiffly. "As you wish, your Lordship. Shall I come back tomorrow at the same time?"

"Yes, please." Harry smiled, smoothing out his robes for something to do, watching as she vanished the chalkboard and began to put her equipment away. She left swiftly after packing her bag, glancing in his direction as she went, a severe crease to her brow. He could only hope this didn't affect her opinion of him, Harry quite liked the no-nonsense but fair woman, but he knew how slights were taken within the Court. Even the way he drank his tea in the presence of others was examined with great scrutiny, most so bored that they would go so far as to start petty squabbles over perceived slights.

Such as how Noble Cordelia tried to have him punished for such a thing as his 'tone'. Luckily, Harry had yet to be further involved in situations such as that one, but with his slow realisation that, perhaps, he had the ambition to take the top position as well, he was beginning to grow bolder in the presence of those he'd previously avoided.

Harry sighed, relaxing on the sofa and closing his eyes, feeling a headache beginning to form behind them. This was all so tiring. His previous notions that, whilst the harem wouldn't be a walk in the park, he'd at least enjoy it to the fullest, were beginning to sound like the childish dreams of a starry-eyed child who'd looked upon the Emperor all those years ago and greedily *wanted*.

Anya paused at his side, hearing his sigh. "Master, did you want another tea?"

He looked at her then, properly *looked*, and saw, not the strong and capable maid he'd thought he'd brought with him nearly a year ago now, but a young woman who was just as much out of her depth as he was. He took pity on her, and lifted his lip into a smile, although they could both tell that it didn't have its intended effect. "Please."

1st June 1998- Monday

"It is my wish that I did not have to be the one to announce this, but with the unfortunate death of the previous Secondary Second-Class Attendant Brennan, Attendant Pucey is to attain the vacated position. Attendant Warrington is to move to Third Second-Class Attendant, and Attendant Merula to Fourth."

Harry took this in with a blank expression, disgust filling him at the happy faces of the Second-Class Attendants, pleased with their promotion despite the circumstances it came from.

"Please ensure to enter the Hall of Worship to pray for our Sister's sanctity in the afterlife, as it was her passing that entitled you to these promotions." Bellatrix's lip twitched as she stared down at them from her chair, whether in disgust or approval, Harry couldn't tell, but her tone wiped the smug expressions off of the Attendant's faces, leaving them stony-faced and serious.

"Of course, Sister." Pucey demurely bowed his head, hands clasped on his lap, and it seemed to settle Bellatrix's ruffled feathers.

"Ensure that you do. Now, may I please call your attention to the parchments that were handed out at the beginning of this meeting. It is a list of the current events scheduled for the remainder of the year. Now, his Majesty has confided in me that there is to be an upcoming out-of-Court trip-" Harry's spine straightened. "But he has yet to disclose when that will be. All I was told is that it is to be a formal one. As many of you already know, but I am iterating for those who haven't been with us for long-" They were coming up on a year, soon. "But it is only his Majesty's legal spouses that are allowed to accompany his Majesty outside of the Court."

Harry, already knowing this, simply deflated a bit, but from the slight gasps and groans of others, they haven't. Dahlia looked as if she had swallowed a lemon, for all that she used to crow to him about knowing all about the activities of the harem, and Nott, Greengrass and Smith all looked similarly put out.

"Why is that so, Sister?" Dahlia questioned, a pout of her perfect, rosebud lips. Such a face would have melted him previously, enticed him to coo and pinch her cheeks teasingly until she swatted him away with a huff, moaning about his 'lack of decorum', but now, after the harsh words she had uttered at him so rashly, it sent a twinge of annoyance down his spine.

"Because his Majesty wishes so, to make travelling easier, and as to not leave the Court abandoned of its main inhabitants for the duration of the trip. Don't be so put out, Dahlia." Here, Bellatrix's lips twitched. "Didn't his Majesty find you entertaining recently? Perhaps, by the time the trip comes around, you will already be a Concubine."

The stare Dahlia sent him afterwards, filled with petty smugness and superiority, set his temper alight, and his want for the Emperor's attention to soaring.

27th June- Saturday - Tom's Pov

His children entered the gates of the Court with a mixture of emotions. Some wore happy smiles as they greeted their parents, others shied back in the backdrop, grimacing when their overbearing or downright antagonistic approached them.

He stood at the front of the group, the area around him devoid of people, wary of coming close unless invited. He watched as his children milled about, their excited energy from being let out for the summer almost contagious, his lip twitching in amusement at the lack of decorum some of them were showing. He'd allow it, for now. After all, it was only his Harem and children's staff in attendance, he could trust them for now not to ruin his image, if only to save their own.

His childless concubines stood off to the side, fidgeting awkwardly, their eyes shining with jealousy. Thomas felt further amused as their eyes flittered to him, full of longing and hunger. He knew he was a physically, and objectively attractive man. His father, as much as Thomas hated to think about his Muggle namesake, the bastard had at least given him one good thing, which was his face. Merlin knows how he'd have gotten even half the enthusiastic support he had if he wasn't conventionally handsome. And now that he held the power of being the world's most powerful, magically and politically, person, well, it was no wonder he had hoards lining up for a chance to join his Harem.

At that thought, his eyes flitted down the line, seeking out the newest face to join it.

His gaze locked on to Harry when he found him, who was watching the youngest children run around, happy to see their older siblings again despite the admonishments it gained from their parents. The content smile on his face was breathtaking, lighting up his eyes until Thomas was almost certain that they were shining emeralds, blessed upon the man by Magic itself to ensnare his greedy attention. He had always adored green, even before he had come to know his true heritage.

It was the shade of nature, the only splash of colour that he'd witnessed within the dreary, grey walls of the orphanage during his youngest years. Through the small window in his cramped room, brushing at the window had been a great tree, always covered with green, green leaves that he so adored. Young Thomas, Tom then, had coveted the sight until he was finally allowed outside, met with the sight of yet more green trees. Ever since the colour had held a spot within him.

Those emerald eyes looked up then to lock with his own, and Harry smiled at him shyly, dipping his head in greeting, before turning away to continue talking to Noble Diggory, who was staring at Thomas with awe, barely paying attention to his Brother.

He frowned at the lack of attention before it was stolen by Bellatrix at his side, who was tightly holding on to their chattering nine-month-old daughter.

"Delphini, sweetie, say hello to your father~" The woman cooed as she jostled the girl slightly. Delphina waved her hands about, gurgling as a trail of spit slid down her chin. Bellatrix's nose scrunched at the sight, and she made to give their daughter to her nursemaid, but Tom swooped in and scooped her up.

"Hello, Delphina. How are you today?" He spoke softly, wary that his voice could have grown men in tears. His daughter, however, simply giggled, reaching up to tug at his hair whilst babbling nonsense into his ear. "Hm, interesting. Would you like to come with me and meet your Aunts and Uncles?"

Bellatrix was ferociously protective over her little darling, and as soon as the Princess began to babble and recognise those around her, she sequestered her into her private Palace, only those closest to her allowed to lay eyes on the child. In fact, this was the first time in a while Thomas had seen her outside, so he was going to take advantage of that fact.

"Your Majesty, I'm afraid Delphina is quite moody today," He looked down at the happy baby in his arms. "So perhaps another time-"

Thomas was already walking to where Harry and Cedric were standing, the concubines around them beginning to fizz with excitement at his approach. He greeted Jasmine and Clearwater first, then Malfoy, Nott and Greengrass who failed to draw him into a conversation, before he finally stood in front of the man he'd been aiming for. Cedric spoke first, bowing in sync with Harry.

"Greetings, your Majesty."

"Noble Diggory, I hope you are well?" Thomas asked to be polite, although his true goal was just off to the side, anxiously patting down his unruly hair, an action that further endeared him.

"Yes, your Majesty." He bowed his head again, fiddling with his sleeves, Thomas taking in the action with scrutiny. "May I ask, what is it your Majesty wanted?"

"I wished for my daughter to meet her Aunts and Uncles now that she's more lively and inquisitive." He jostled the girl in his arms, who was watching the proceeding with wide but unnaturally intelligent eyes. His blood shone true, although he couldn't entirely rule out Bellatrix's blood as a cause. The woman was frighteningly intelligent, although most rarely looked past her insanity at the forefront.

"That's wonderful! Hello, Princess Delphina, I'm Cedric, one of your Father's concubines." He greeted the little girl with a charming smile, his voice pitching higher to seem more inviting.

The girl clung to his neck with a hesitant pout on her lips, eyes uncertain, before the dark orbs lit up with interest. "Ah, ah bah!"

Thomas followed her gaze to see her reaching for Harry, who was looking at her with bewilderment, hesitantly meeting the gaze of the Princess. He smiled. Perfect. "Would you like to hold her, Noble Potter-Black?"

"I don't think-" The man began.

"The Princess is comfortable with her father-" Bellatrix protested.

"Nonsense." Deftly, he passed Delphina over to Harry, who cradled her gently as if she was a piece of precious china. The Princess was immensely fascinated by him as soon as they came into contact, and gurgled happily in his arms, staring deeply into his eyes. She didn't leave them until Bellatrix got too defensive to ignore.

Thomas felt a sense of camaraderie with his daughter, then.

1st July- Wednesday

"His Majesty hails the endurance of his Harem for yet another year and asks for us to reflect on the occurrences we have faced over the past year. We are here today to reminisce, not just on the ones we have lost over this year, but on the Brothers and Sisters we have gained. Noble Potter-Black, First-Class Attendant Malfoy, Greengrass, Lovegood, Nott and Smith, the Emperor notes his appreciation for your stellar behaviour and quick integration into his

Harem, and gifts you each double your weekly stipend and a choice fabric from his personal tailor's collection."

"We thank his Majesty for his thoughtfulness and appreciate this opportunity," Harry uttered, although he had no idea why the eyes of many concubines widened at the mention of the reward. Luckily, Bellatrix explained it without prompting.

"This is a most fortunate honour from his Majesty. Choose wisely, as the chances of this being permitted for each of you again are low. Only me and my fellow Consorts, on our ascension to the rank we hold, were allowed in there once again."

Penny piped up then with a smile directed at Harry. "Oh, it is beautiful in there, Brothers and Sisters! His Majesty's collection is large and lavish, you will find whatever you desire within it. However, do be careful with your choice of colours and patterns."

Because the wrong colour for the rank you hold, and the wrong motif that could signify you as a different house, could cause slights and feuds like no other. That had been hammered into Harry from a young age, despite how his Father moaned about traditions. He was still a Pureblood that had been raised in that society.

"Yes, thank you for reminding them, Sister Haywood. Furthermore, his Majesty decrees that Second-Class Attendant Clearwater is to assume the rank of Seventh First-Class Attendant, for her loyal service of seven years. He recognises that you have remained in the position of Second-Class for long enough, and that you are deserving of this long-awaited promotion."

Clearwater looked shell-shocked, eyes wide and filled with tears. "I-I thank his Majesty for his thoughtfulness, and am grateful for this honour he has bestowed upon me!"

"Congratulations, Sister Clearwater."

"Well done, Attendant Clearwater!"

"How wonderful of his Majesty!"

Harry smiled, clapping his hands, but his heart twisted. He was happy for her, she deserved it for her long service to his Majesty, six more years than him yet stagnant in the same rank, but it still hurt that the attention the Emperor had been showing him in all of his time as a concubine still didn't earn him a promotion in rank within a year.

Just how much longer would it take?

3rd July 1998- Friday

Penny sighed as she watched her daughter run around the garden, shrieking in delight as her younger brother slowly toddled after her, his little legs wobbly but gait determined. The baby in her arms, another little girl, soothed her uneasy thoughts slightly, but the knowledge that, soon, her eldest would be out of her reach was overwhelming.

"Mama! Mama, look, butterfly!" Aurelia called out, drawing her attention to where she was running after a butterfly, stopping to point at it as if she couldn't see it.

"Hm, oh, how pretty, Aurelia!" She cooed, smiling when her daughter giggled and rushed off to chase it, Rastus looking around confusedly at her quick speed, before tottering after her again. Penny leant back, closed her eyes and simply basked in the happy giggles of her children, humming softly to soothe the sleeping Princess in her arms when she shuffled.

"Madam, Nobles Lafington and Witt have arrived, along with tenth Princess Serina."

Her eyes blinked open at the voice of her head maid, and Penny stared up at the woman with resignation. "Did you forget, Madam?"

"Perhaps."

"Shall I send them away?"

"No, no, there's no need for that. Let them in, however, please entertain them for a few moments while I refresh myself. Gemma, please can you take Cecilia, I believe she'll be needing a feed soon."

"Yes, Madam." The maid who had been shading her as she sat on the bench put down the umbrella and leant down to take her daughter, which Penny resisted for a moment before relenting. She had somewhere to be, and a baby had no place being involved in political battles.

Phoebe helped her up and led her inside, before diverging at her door to head for the entrance room. Penny entered her room, met with Kate who was already holding a robe for her to change into. She smiled at her, slipping out of the robe she was wearing and putting the new, cooler one on, shivering as the silk brushed against her skin. "Thank you."

"My please, Madam. Will you be wanting to wear different jewellery?"

"No, what I have on is sufficient. They are only Nobles, after all. There's no faux pas I can make that would set them against me to a degree that they could alter my reputation." She tied the belt at her waist with a smile, admiring the way the golden robes brought out the brighter tones of her blonde hair and highlighted the blues in her cornflower eyes. Perfect.

"Lead me out to the garden again, I would like for us to take our tea out there. The children are enjoying the warmth, and I would loathe taking away their fun by forcing them inside."

"Of course, Madam."

It seemed to have grown hotter in the time she had spent inside, and she smiled at the sight of her daughter and son laying next to each other on the grass, watched over by their nanny. Further into the garden, under the gazebo, Penny could see another couple of her maids prepping the table for Tea.

"Greetings, Consort Haywood." Came two soft voices from behind her, followed by a warbled third, and Penny spun elegantly, keeping that warm smile on her face as she observed the awed expressions on the Nobles before her.

"Greetings to you as well, Sisters, Princess Serina." She dipped her head slightly whilst greeting the Princess, who continued to stare up at her with big, brown eyes. "Would you like to go and play with your Sister and Brother? You might not remember, but you and my Aurelia liked to nap together when you were really little. And you haven't met your brother, Rastus, yet, have you?" The girl shook her head, adorable black ringlets following the movement. "Run along then, they're just over there." Penny pointed at the two shapes on the grass, Aurelia now up on her elbows and staring over, having noticed the newcomers.

"Okay!" The little girl giggled, before running over to them. Well, she tried to.

"Serina, no running! You must walk!"

Looking dejected, the girl stopped with a pout, before carefully walking towards her half-siblings, who greeted her with babbled hello's.

"Now, Sisters, should we discuss the goings of the Harem over Tea?"

6th July- Monday

Penny leaned closer, a happy grin on her lips as she whispered. "I asked His Majesty to spend the night with me on my birthday, so I will find out within a matter of days whether I have conceived again or not! Oh, it will be a joyous moment if I can give his Majesty another child once again!"

"I hope that is so, Sister."

She smiled at him, beautifully. He felt breathless in her presence, her beauty otherworldly and her personality so, so *perfect* that he couldn't help but be drawn in. "I have always wanted four children, it just seems like such a perfect number. Whilst three currently feels right, I just know that once my little Cecilia is out of her baby days, I'll once again want to hold another within my arms. But, five feels considerably too much, for me, at least!" She giggled, leaning back finally. "How many are you wanting, Brother?"

Harry hesitated. He...didn't want the woman to know such a personal detail as that, even though she had revealed her own desire. Perhaps it was because he was yet to have a single child, but he wanted to hoard his desires close to his chest. "I think three is a beautiful number, although I wouldn't be opposed to any amount. Any children the Emperor blesses me with will be enough."

"Oh, Brother, you are so sweet and considerate! Three is a good, auspicious number. I believe, if I do not have a fourth, I will be content with my three, beautiful children." He hummed, listening to her prattle on about how her children were progressing. "Aurelia's fifth birthday is coming up soon, I can't believe she's already that age! It's not all a wonderful occasion, however." She sighed, eyes slightly watering. "After all, since she's five, she'll be moving into the Children's Court. I know this is by order of his Majesty to keep our children safe, and socialised well with the other children, but it's still upsetting that I have to let my babies go. It's stupid of me, she is only going to be a five-minute walk away from me, but-" She made a choked noise, and Harry hurried to console her.

"It's understandable to feel this way, Sister. She will be away from you, no matter how close she'll be. Will you be able to visit her whenever you like, still?"

"Oh, yes, his Majesty isn't so cruel as to deny us that, only in the twins' case, as Concubine Alecto isn't the best influence on them. However, she will no longer be under my roof, and that enough is ruining my mood. Apologies, Brother, but I will be taking my leave for now. I wish to spend more time with my daughter whilst she is still within my Palace."

14th July 1998- Sunday

A year ago today, Harry had entered the Emperor's harem, full of optimistic ideals, unrefined mannerisms, and confidence he'd be totally fine remaining in the background, a side

character to the future main spouse of the Emperor. Now, as he looked back at his past self, he scoffed at those thoughts.

The Harem was not something to join on a whim, with hopeful aspirations of glory and contentedness. It was a battlefield of the worst types, sly, deceitful, unforgiving and most of all, ambitious concubines, plotting the downfall of those they were supposed to see as fellow spouses, only focused on their own gain, their own power, and the Emperor. Allies mattered, although that wasn't a guarantee for not coming into conflict with those same people who called you their 'Brother'. In the Harem, it was yourself before anyone else, and above all, your ascendance over others.

And, he could see now how he'd become just like them, as he brewed a potion to increase his fertility with the intention to use it the moment the Emperor accepted him.

31st July 1998- Friday

Harry's 18th birthday came around quickly, and he was filled with trepidation as the day progressed, yet no invitation from the Emperor came as last year.

He paced his front room anxiously, biting at the skin around his nails so as not to ruin them, Anya anxiously hovering around him, assuring him that the Emperor would call on him.

"He calls upon you for much less, and regularly. I am assured he will do the same this year."

"But, what if he doesn't? What if, when I have to attend the meeting tomorrow morning, I am subject to the quips of the others, knowing that the Emperor didn't call on me?"

"Master, no, Harry, his Majesty will call upon you. Trust me, why would he not?"

Harry opened his mouth to retort 'how could you know that?', but a knock on the front door stopped it in his throat. He shared a look with her, before gesturing for her to open it. Behind was a formal-looking Eunuch that sent Harry's heart beating with trepidation.

"Noble Potter-Black, his Majesty invites you to dine with him this evening. He implores you to wear whatever you feel most comfortable in. Please make sure that you are at the Palace by six o'clock."

Harry couldn't hold back the smile that spread on his face. "Of course, please tell his Majesty that I am eager to accept." When the door shut behind him, Anya gave him a knowing look, and Harry sheepishly rubbed the back of his neck. "Could you help me choose what to wear?"

"Of course, Master."

Once dinner was over, a lovely three-course meal of all his favoured foods, they retired to the Emperor's living room without the presence of any staff, which is why Harry felt bold enough to ask the Emperor his wants once again. "Your Majesty, now that I am eighteen, would you consider spending the night-"

Tom let out a ragged sigh, bringing a hand up to his face. "Harry, you are simply not ready for that. Please, give it a few more months before you ask such a thing of me. I will not spend the night with you in such a way only because you have turned eighteen."

Harry felt his heart clench at the rejection, gritting his teeth as he felt his temper unwillingly flare. "And why do you get to decide when I'm ready? I am an adult, I have been an adult for over a year now, so when do I get to decide what I want?"

Thomas' smile grew teasing. "My, your temper is rather volatile today."

"Thomas, I'm serious, I'm ready!"

He sighed again, his teasing expression fading into solemnity. "You may be, but I am not, not yet, anyway. I feel that you are too young and naive to what you are asking for, as I have said before."

"But-"

"Harry, I assure you, It is for the best to wait a little while longer. Then, when the time comes, I will do so, and you will recognise the merit in delaying. I am not doing this to punish you, I am simply taking your best interests into consideration, despite what you may think or say."

Harry stood, sending a glare the Emperor's way, internally berating himself at the way he was treating this powerful and vicious man. "Fine. But I will not be letting up on this. I will convince you, soon enough, that I am ready!"

"You may do so, Harry. However, I assure you, I can also be rather stubborn."

He exited the Palace with a huff, ignoring the incredulous stares sent his way by the Euncuhs and maids milling about at the way he stormed down the path, obviously agitated with what the Emperor had spoken about.

1st August 1998- Saturday

"His Majesty declares that, due to his currently pleasant mood, all concubines who he currently disfavours in any amount are formally less so. However-" Here, she stops, glaring at the parchment. "Due to this, he announces that Noble Rosenberg is to be promoted to the rank of fifth Concubine."

The blonde woman looked exuberant, a smile splitting her face with intense happiness. "I thank his Majesty for his graciousness, and vow to uphold his honour as his legal wife."

Harry's stomach dropped. He and Cordelia weren't on the best of terms, and with her promotion, she was now considered a true spouse of the Emperor. This would mean that she now had even more power over him, and was a bigger threat than he was prepared to deal with.

Murmurs of congratulations echoed through the harem, although many of them sounded as dejected as he felt. Cordelia didn't hold many allies in the harem, if at all. If it wasn't her Muggle-born status that put off the blood supremacists, it was her rotten personality and self-superiority, flaunting her title as a Muggle Princess to everyone who would listen and deprecating those who she saw as lesser.

"Thank you for your congratulations, Brothers and Sisters! I am extremely grateful for this opportunity." She flipped her blonde hair over her shoulder, blue eyes shining with smugness.

"His Majesty has already contacted the necessary individuals to organise your wedding, but he will be sending a company to your rooms later on to discuss preparations. He has selected your palace to be the Palace of Gathered Elegance. He hopes that such as Palace will continue to reflect you as a Concubine. This meeting is dismissed."

Cordelia barely waited for their formal farewells to be finished before she bounced out of the hall, her arm wrapped around her maids as they hurried for the Palace of Noble Beauty.

15th August 1998- Saturday

After two weeks of intense preparations- in which Harry was caught up in the whirlwind, having to help design a lantern that would hang over his gate as a sign of his blessing for the marriage- the day of the Emperor's and now Concubine Rosenberg's wedding was upon him.

He was dressed in a light blue robe, lacking in any patterns, matching the other Noble's. He was lined up in procession behind the bride, along with the other Nobles and Attendants. The

Concubines and Consorts were sitting upon the dias alongside the Emperor, who would soon formally declare her to be his wife, and bestow upon her the Slytherin name.

"I declare you, wife to the Emperor, Cordelia Ulyssia Slytherin-Rosenburg. May you serve your role as Concubine well, and your marriage be blessed by Magic."

"Before the Emperor, my fellow Brothers and Sisters, and the citizens of this great Empire, I promise that I will uphold my duty as Concubine to the highest degree." She uttered breathlessly, staring up at the man with twinkling eyes. This was fulfilling every dream she'd had as a young girl, the youngest Princess who had little chance of marrying higher than her current position as a daughter to a king. Now, she was a wife to an Emperor, *the Emperor*.

"Blessings to the Emperor, blessings to Concubine Slytherin-Rosenburg."

Chapter End Notes

We're getting very close to the part I've been waiting for~ I am so glad this fic is currently my obsession, the plot is actually moving!

[Decided to place the Intimacy Additions scene '3rd July' into the main story. I might do this with any in the future, because they actually fit and it helps move the plot along]

Chapter 20- [Ambition]

Chapter Notes

I love this chapter, and I think you'll like it too ;)

Word Count: 4.7k

Also, Intimacy Additions has a new chapter, and another will be posted later today ^-^

My Twitter- @xStrawberryJam_

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

22nd August 1998- Saturday

"It's lovely that his Majesty-" Penny's voice cut out suddenly as a gasp sounded through the hall, and Harry lifted his head up in alarm. "Are you alright, Brother Felix?" Concern was palpable in her voice, and it drew his attention to where Felix was sitting on his chaise, clutching hold of his heavily pregnant stomach and panting heavily. The Concubine looked flushed, hair sticking to his skin as his maid fanned him concernedly.

"I'm-I'm unsure, Sister. It-" The man scrunched up his face, wheezing slightly as he panted. "It hurts- I'm, I think I've entered labour-"

Bellatrix was quick to her feet, striding over to the man with concern clearly showing on her features. "Sofia, quickly, go and fetch the Royal Healer!"

"Anjani, go and inform his Majesty that Concubine Felix has entered labour!" Regulus called out as well, although it was mostly lost in the raucous noise that now enveloped the meeting hall.

The hall was in a hubbub, maids rushing here and there on the orders of their lords and ladies, concubines fluttering in panic as they watched the man being lifted to lean on the shoulders of his two present maids, his pained pants echoing in the hall as he was led towards the exit.

Harry hoped they'd make it to the man's Palace in time.

Hours later, the Fifteenth Princess, Fiona Rosaline Slytherin, was born. Harry and his fellow concubines knelt on the floor as her screams rang through the Palace of Beginning Auspiciousness, the coos of the Concubine echoing out from within the room, signifying that there was nothing amiss. It went much the same as when both Bellatrix and Penny had given birth to their daughters, a certain amount of ceremony and tradition being expected, although the suddenness of the situation allowed for some lenience. The Princess hadn't been expected until late September.

Once they were allowed within the room to pay their respects and be present for the naming, Harry laid eyes on the newest Princess, and his eyebrows rose at the startling red of her eyes, so vibrant and bright despite only being mere minutes old. Whispers ran around the room as others noticed as well, and Thomas seemed to be preening with pride as he stared down at his daughter.

Harry couldn't truly match this man in with the rumours he'd heard about him. He seemed caring, he allowed Harry to call him by his first name and be casual to an extent with him, and Harry had yet to see him physically hurt someone, despite the signs that he wasn't as kind as he presented to him. It confused him, lulled him into a sense of security when around the man despite knowing that he was the man who had ordered the deaths and killed thousands to get where he was today: the most powerful man in the world.

Harry hoped he'd never have to come face to face with the illustrious, ruthless side of the Emperor. He was content not knowing, despite having been fed all sorts of horror stories by his parents since he was young. It was for the best of all involved.

Now, with the birth of the fifteenth Princess, there were no known pregnancies within the harem, and they entered into a strange lull.

1st September 1998- Tuesday

Meetings , Harry surmised as he looked back at the one he had just attended, *were going to get interesting. And perhaps even a little dangerous.*

-An Hour Ago-

"Once again, our children have headed off to Hogwarts for another year, this time without Princess Evana. His Majesty is currently discussing with the Princess her options for the future. The First Princess' results were stellar, as is to be expected, so his Majesty is looking into many different bright paths for his daughter, including sending her to the newly established Imperial University." Shocked whispers were shared around the hall, each turning to another to discuss the unexpected announcement. "As you all know, the Imperial University was created by his Majesty as another option for Magical students who didn't want to go into either an apprenticeship or work, and its facility finished construction only earlier this year."

Yes, Harry had heard of it, but he hadn't taken much notice. He knew that Hermione was aiming to join, however, she had told him as such when the news had first broken. Apparently, according to the Emperor's plans, it would usher in a new wave of Magical scholars, which is why it was so surprising he wanted to send his daughter there. Many thought he was going to arrange a marriage for her for more political ties, but if he was going this route...

"Princess Evana would therefore be in the first year, a figurehead to younger generations. His Majesty has asked for us to help the First Princess in any way we can if she decides to take this route."

"His Majesty also sends his congratulations to Concubine Rosier on the birth of the Fifteenth Princess Fiona, and thanks him for giving birth once again to a child of their union." Felix sat up straighter, but Bellatrix smoothly moved past the topic after giving her own congratulations, much to his dissatisfaction. "And-" She frowned, a sleek, dark eyebrow raising in disapproval. "His Majesty comments on how Noble Potter has entertained him with his wit and contagious enthusiasm in the past months, and therefore, as befitting of such praise, raises him to the rank of Primary Noble."

His mind blanked, and Harry slouched as eyes turned to him, searing into his body with jealousy and suspicion.

"Promoted for being witty? Preposterous!" Felix called out. "Sister, surely this must be a mistake!"

"It is written and signed by his Majesty, Brother, please do not cast doubt upon his Majesty's judgement. However, perhaps Noble Potter-Black may enlighten us as to why his Majesty bestowed upon you this unexpected promotion. After all, the role of a Primary ranked concubine comes with its challenges and responsibilities, and you have only been with us for a little over a year now."

Harry raised his head and looked into the eyes that were full of jealousy. "I am as unknowing to His Majesty's inner thoughts as you are."

Bellatrix visibly bristled. "Noble Potter-Black, don't speak to us in such a tone!"

Penny leant forward to obstruct her vision of Harry. "Sister, peace! Brother Harry was simply responding in kind to your question."

"Yes, but he insinuated that I'm not close to his Majesty!"

"My apologies if you took my words in such a way, Consort Black. I was simply saying that I am not bold enough to assume his Majesty's thoughts." *Like you just insinuated*, went unsaid. "I don't understand why his Majesty has blessed me with this promotion, but I am incredibly thankful for it."

Harry was now merely one spot away from being a Concubine, one of the Emperor's legitimate spouses. And the stirrings of jealousy were already beginning to show, if the way the room seemed to bristle at the reminder that *he* had been promoted yet again.

9th September 1998- Wednesday

Harry was again spending time with Consort Penny, who was quickly becoming one of, if not his closest, confidants in the Court. She was patient and understanding with him, but also didn't treat him as a child despite being several years younger than herself. Therefore, he hadn't expected to be so left out of the loop by the woman.

It had come up naturally, as if she hadn't thought he didn't already know.

"I'm busy packing for the upcoming trip in a week's time, which will-"

"What? When was the timing confirmed?" Harry interrupted the Consort carelessly, blushing as she turned cornflower-blue eyes over to him, expression startled. "My apologies, Sister. That was rude of me, I was simply worried that I had missed something in the Meeting."

"Ah." She stopped, a pensive look on her face. "It was told to those of us who are permitted to attend a week or so ago, Brother. It's to meet with King Daran of the magical community of Greece."

"And... how long will you be gone for?" He questioned hesitantly, dreading the answer.

"Two weeks, we arrive back on the morning of the 30th. It's quite a short trip, we've been gone for over a month sometimes, when his Majesty grows tired of the Court's scenery and wishes to visit his Summer Palace, which resides on an unplottable Island."

"I hope the discussions go well."

"Yes, It will bring peace to his Majesty. He has been planning these discussions for a while now. Anyway, I will dearly miss my sweet children, Ceci is still a young babe, even! I hope

you'll manage the harem well in our stead, Brother, it's quite the responsibility, especially as you're still so young."

He bowed his head demurely, hiding the way his eyebrow twitched. "I will endeavour to do my best until you all return." Was his answer, and the rest of the conversation was comprised simply of the expectations they had of him whilst he was away. Harry couldn't wait for it to end.

When he got back to his Palace, the first thing he did was call over Anya to discuss with her what he had found out. Then, it was to ask her to arrange a meeting for him with the Emperor.

"Anya, will you please inform a Eunuch that I would like to speak to the Emperor? Tell them that it isn't urgent, but it's something which I would like to discuss."

"Yes, Master."

Unfortunately, however-

"The Emperor sends his apologies, but he is busy today. He remarks that he is, however, free to speak tomorrow." The Eunuch bowed, his expression blank. Harry had never seen him before, he seemed young, yet experienced. The colour of his robes denoted him as one of the Emperor's Eunuchs.

The grip Harry had on his quill faltered slightly before he gripped it tighter. "Of course, his Majesty is a busy man, I can't expect to meet with him on a whim. Please tell him that I will be eagerly awaiting our conversation tomorrow."

Harry spent the rest of the evening, and part of the night lost in his own thoughts. This...was a lost opportunity. Two weeks, yes, spent with the Concubines and Consorts, five and three of them respectively, but that was a significantly decreased pool of concubines than the twenty-

four of them in total. If only he'd been promoted just that little bit more, he'd have been able to attend the trip.

Alas, the Emperor's thoughts were unknown to him.

10th September 1998- Thursday

"What was it that you wished to discuss, my Noble?" The Emperor asked him as Harry straightened from his bow, staring at him from behind his desk. He seemed busy, the towers of paperwork and slight ink-stained fingertips telling, and it made Harry internally preen that he'd been granted an audience even when Thomas was so obviously busy.

"Thomas...I... you're going on a trip soon."

His eyes lit up with understanding, placing the quill down on the desk to regard him with seriousness. "Ah, yes, the one to go and see Greece's King. I am sorry, but I cannot invite you, it will incite mutiny in the rest of my concubines, most of all from Bellatrix and Patricia. They would see it as a breach of conduct, and whilst they could say nothing much to me, they could still cause trouble for you that would have disastrous consequences."

"I wasn't here to request that," He wasn't suicidal. "I simply wanted to know what I'd be missing out on."

The Emperor laughed at his tilted head and wide eyes, manipulation so obvious that it was purposefully shown. "Not much, only a bit of politics. The King of Greece is dreadfully old, and dreadfully boring. We will simply be discussing a mundane deal for more trade, which will benefit him rather than I. It is, however, important enough to warrant an official trip."

"I was never the best a politics." Harry sheepishly admitted, to the Emperor's obvious amusement.

"No, you don't seem the type to enjoy that sort of subject, despite your future as a Lord of two houses."

Harry smiled as he settled in the chair in front of the man, getting comfortable. "A future that I hope is far off. After all, my parents had me young, and Sirius himself is the same age."

"Yes, they did, not far off your current age now."

Harry straightened at the mention of age. Age was currently a constraint for him, the Emperor fixating on it as a reason to not spend the night with him. But, his Mum and Dad had only been twenty when he was born, only two years older than he was now, and that wasn't factoring in that he'd been conceived when they were even younger.

It was a hope, If Harry ignored the glaring issue that the Emperor's misgivings were more likely due to their own age difference.

"I will ensure that, by the next time a trip occurs, I will have an excuse to promote you to the rank of Concubine, so that you may join me on my travels." His lip twitched in amusement as he stared at him, and Harry's mouth dropped open slightly. Had he... had he just admitted that he'd make Harry a Concubine, and soon?

"And when will that be? The next trip, I mean. I know that you must already know that."

Thomas' lip twitched further into a teasing smirk, and he leaned back in his chair even more. It allowed Harry to admire his frame without obstruction, noting that his wand wasn't visibly strapped to his side as most wizards wore it. "Ah, now that would be telling."

Harry's eyebrow rose at the teasing tone but bulldozed on. "Anytime in the near future?"

"Let it be, Harry. It will be when it will be." The words were firmer, so Harry dropped the subject and smoothly moved on to another, the Emperor noticing the transition but not commenting.

16th September 1998- Wednesday

The group left in the early hours of the morning, before Harry even woke up, and Harry was left as the highest authority in the harem whilst the Emperor's legal spouses were gone. With authority came great responsibility, and for the first time, Harry led the morning meeting.

"As you all know, his Majesty and our more senior Brothers and Sisters have left for Greece to meet their Magical society's King. Whilst they are gone, I have been left with the responsibility to take care of the management of the harem, whilst The Head Eunuch will be taking care of the Court's affairs."

He spoke clearly, but a large majority of the harem wasn't paying attention to his words, simply talking amongst themselves. Jasmine sent him a bashful look as she, too, was drawn into a conversation.

Harry huffed, leaning back in his chair. He wasn't up on the dias, but a chair had been placed at the front so he could speak to the others whilst in their view. He didn't have the status permitted to step onto the dias.

"The Emperor announces also that the First Prince's eighth birthday celebration will be postponed until his Majesty and the upper Harem arrive back. However, that does not mean that preparations cannot begin, so the hall where celebrations are held will be out of bounds until the celebration."

"It's not as if we'd be invited to it, anyway. Only *they* get to go, so why do we need to discuss it." Came the snide comment from Dahlia, who was staring at him with a furrowed brow.

Harry raised his eyebrow at the tone. No one would have dared say such a thing if the Concubines and Consorts were present, but obviously, his position as the Primary Noble, despite only being one rank lower, didn't bring about the same amount of respect.

"That does not mean that it doesn't need to be disclosed, Attendant Malfoy." He reminded her neutrally, turning back to his scroll. Her giggle had him peeking up again to see Greengrass whispering something into her ear. Registering that, he also noticed that none of them were in their correct seats, only vaguely separated by rank.

Harry sighed, mentally rolling his eyes at their childishness. How was he the most law-abiding one here?

30th September 1998- Wednesday

Great fanfare welcomed the group back through the City of Honour, the Grand City and into the Court. The public lined the streets of the first, loyal supporters of the second, and the Court's inhabitants of the third. Despite the rain, the streets were packed, all vying to catch a glimpse of the world's illustrious leader

Harry waited at the front of the group, bowing low as the Emperor's carriage came to a stop in front of him, the door opened by the Head Eunuch. A pale hand, laden with rings, gripped the doorframe, and Thomas stepped out into the light.

The Emperor was a sight to behold, draped in black robes of fine silk, etched with silver flames that licked its hems, moving as if truly alive. The aura he gave off was heavy, filling the air with an oppressive yet enticing feeling, and Harry felt breathless under his direct gaze. The Emperor stared down at him, red eyes glowing with emotion.

He straightened into a less taxing bow, still keeping his head lowered. "Greetings to his Majesty, the Emperor. We welcome you back from your journey."

"Thank you, my Noble, my concubines, for waiting despite the rain."

In the carriages behind, the senior members of the harem clambered out, filing behind him, tutting and tittering to themselves about the rain and cold as their maids hurried about to open umbrellas. The Emperor knocked away any attempt to shelter him, the droplets making him look even more ethereal, despite that comparison being a juxtaposition to his ruby eyes.

Instead, Thomas continued to look down at him, the other concubines shifting at the direct, public attention. "Noble Potter-Black, I would be pleased if you could join me tonight." He spoke in that low tone of his, but the words drifted around the square as if they had been shouted. Nobody dared to whisper, although Harry could spot them twitch and stiffen around him, the most obvious being the high harem, who stopped in their tracks to stare, baffled at such a public announcement.

His eyes lit up, and he felt a buzz of adrenaline buzz up his spine as the implied meaning clicked in his mind. "Of course, your Majesty, I would be honoured!"

The Emperor smiled, indulging, revealing a smidgen of exhaustion through the way his shoulders slumped ever so slightly. "Excellent. Then, please arrive for dinner at six o'clock."

Harry nervously fidgeted as Amari clasped yet another pin into his hair, this one a detailed flower made from diamonds, the light blue contrasting with his black locks. Personally, he thought that the colour clashed with his eyes, but he didn't have much choice in the matter. "Are you sure this isn't too much?"

"Nonsense! His Majesty has invited you to dine with him, and furthermore, spend the night with him. I will make sure you look so marvellous that his eyes will not stray from your being the entire night! Not that you aren't already beautiful, you are breathtaking without finery, your Lordship." She complimented him, and Harry blushed at her words, reaching up to fiddle with the dangling droplets on his lobes.

"Thank you for your compliments, Amari."

She grinned. "You will be irresistible, your Lordship."

He hoped so. The robes he was wearing were finer than he'd ever worn, the material and construction of them costing more than two weeks' worth of his stipend. They were light blue and embroidered beautifully, and Harry had never felt more attractive.

"Right. Anya, please can you call on a sedan for me?"

"Yes, Master."

He was left at the steps of the Emperor's Palace by Anya, who gave him an encouraging smile as he stared back at her anxiously. "I will be back for you in the morning, Master."

Harry bit his lips, nodding his head slightly, although his hands shook a little as he waited for the doors to open, which they did promptly.

As he entered the Emperor's Palace, Harry was met with the Head Eunuch, who was standing to the side, surveying his every move. Just as he was going to step past him, the man moved closer, remaining half a step behind him. "Noble Potter-Black, the Emperor has asked me to bring you to the dining area."

"Ah, yes."

"It is just through the doors on the right. His Majesty is already seated." He didn't turn his head to look at him, focused simply on bringing him to the Emperor. Harry rushed after him and thanked him gently as he held open the doors for him, but after that, his breath was stolen from him as he laid his eyes on the Emperor.

The man was stunning even when dressed more casually, his exotically good looks drawing Harry's attention even in the bright splendour of the dining room.

"My Noble, thank you for coming so promptly."

"I could never be late to something your Majesty has invited me to."

The Emperor smiled, fondness curling his lips. "I would forgive if you were, as long as you arrived eventually and had a good reason, Harry." Harry matched his smile, approaching him to bow, before sitting at the chair next to him as the Emperor gestured him to. "Dinner will be served shortly, but I had a few questions before we begin."

"Of course, Thomas."

"How has the Court fared in my absence?"

Harry answered honestly, he had nothing to hide. "Well, your Majesty. There have been little mishaps, simply a few misdyeed fabrics and an ill-pruned tree, but nothing of note."

"Excellent. And my harem?"

Harry drew in a shallow breath, dropping his eyes to the desk. "There had been a few... ill-contented comments whilst I read out your decrees on the day you left, but other than-"

"What was said, and by whom?"

Harry hesitated.

"My Noble, my word is law, inside and outside of this Court. If anything was said, I must know of it, either by you telling me, or through other methods."

Harry shrunk slightly at his frosty tone, daring a quick glance up. His eyes were like icicles despite their burning red colour. He shivered as he glanced away again. "Um, it was Da-Attendant Malfoy, your Majesty. She was displeased that we weren't permitted to attend the First Prince's birthday celebration, and Attendant Greengrass seemed to share her views."

The Emperor straightened, that cold look in his eyes vanishing to be replaced with fondness. "I will have both of them reprimanded for questioning me. Don't fret, my Noble, it will be as light as their misdemeanour was, and you have done well for telling me as I asked. Now, it seems our food is here."

As if summoned by his words, the doors to the side opened, and in filed a row of maids, each laden with steaming dishes that they placed on the table with a wave of the Emperor's hand. They disappeared the same way after everything was placed, barely having made noise as they did so.

The plate that was set in front of him was so detailed and meticulously put together that he barely dared to spear it with his fork, dabbing at the salad that looked much too fancy for what it was.

The Emperor ate slowly, so Harry attempted to match his pace, but the food was so good that he couldn't help but finish the small portions soon after they were brought out. The Emperor seemed amused, calling for more to be made each time, until Harry waved him off, the small sizes contrasting to how filling they were.

The Emperor smiled at him as he leaned back, stretching out to ease the ache of his stomach. "Perhaps we should go for a short walk." Harry nodded eagerly, his jitters still not soothed, and he hoped that some fresh air would relax him. Besides, he still didn't truly know if the Emperor had invited him here for what Harry hoped.

Their walk lasted a half hour before the Emperor led him inside once more, bypassing the living area and office, waving off any maids and Eunuchs who passed by, and Harry's nerves grew. Thomas' grip on his hand tightened, and he spared a glance up to see him fondly glancing down at him. "Do not fret."

He didn't refute the question in Harry's eyes.

Harry nervously fiddled with the clasp on his robes, watching the Emperor's back as he poured two glasses of wine, deep red in colour. He turned, handing one of them to him. "For confidence, which you will surely need." Harry received it anxiously, sipping at the wine which tasted much nicer than he had expected it to. It had a fruity taste that was pleasant on his tongue, so he gulped it down, delighting in the amused chuckle he drew from the man. "I thought you'd been eagerly awaiting this, yet now you're trying to get drunk on me?" Thomas practically purred, a teasingly lilt to that sultry tone.

Harry set the glass on a nearby table so quickly he was surprised it didn't smash into tiny shards. "No, no, of course not! I was just, It tasted good!"

"I'll be sure to remember that you liked it."

Harry flushed further, averting his eyes, mumbling that it was 'alright'. When he dared to glance back again, his blush deepened, blood rushing to his head at a pace that left him dizzy.

Thomas' shoulders were broad and smooth, and Harry couldn't help but ogle his perfect visage, tracing his eyes slowly down the pale, lightly muscled back in front of him, a swimmer's physique. He lacked any blemishes, a blank canvas of perfectly smooth skin that flexed when he lifted his arms up into the air. The shirt dropped to the floor then, startling Harry into snapping his eyes up, met with amused red eyes staring back at him over his shoulder. "Sorry." He blurted out on reflex, butterflies erupting in his stomach at the smile it drew from the man in front of him.

"I am delighted that you find me so attractive that you can't help but to stare, my Noble." Harry blushed, averting his eyes, but his gaze wouldn't stop straying back to the man, much to his clear amusement. "Now, don't be shy, weren't you keen to lay your eyes on me before I left? Has our time apart dampened your feelings for me?"

"No, no, of course not! I was just... I've never been in this sort of situation before."

"One would hope, at the age you joined my Harem. But that's fine, If you would prefer, I can leave my robe on, although it might get in the way a bit in the grand scheme of things."

Harry felt his cheeks burn at the hint, clearing his throat, wishing he hadn't gulped down that wine so quickly. In the midst of his embarrassment, Harry decided to dive onto the bed, only realising the connotations of such an action when the Emperor chuckled something about him being 'eager'. He hid his face in the pillow and groaned.

A hand stroked through his hair then, and he grasped at it in reflex. "Harry, tell me now whether you wish for us to continue or not. I don't want to do anything you are uncomfortable with-"

Harry had never moved his head so fast in his life. "No! No, I'm totally, really fine with this! More than fine, actually, I'm ecstatic! I've been waiting for this for a little while now, which you know already, and oh Merlin I'm rambling, aren't I? I'm so sorry!" The Emperor chuckled, still keeping a hand in his hair. "Please don't misunderstand!"

"It's alright, I already know of your intentions. You want power, right, Harry? For your family, of course, but more importantly, for yourself." Harry's breath caught in his throat, and he stared up at the amused man with wide, green eyes. "I've always admired ambition."

Chapter End Notes

Soooooooo.....

That happened. I know, half of the chapter shocked me as well, but I surprisingly had that part planned ^-^ It won't be expanded on unless I add an extra scene in Intimacy Additions at a later point when I have the mental strength to do so, but at the moment, I hope I've written enough for you to infer what happened :)

Thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you think, so please leave a comment ^-^

Harry is now Primary Noble as of 1st September!
15th Princess Fiona was born on the 22nd of August 1998

I can confirm that there are no confirmed and unconfirmed pregnancies in the harem *^*

The next chapter will probably be out on the 16th, and I'll probably get another out after that, but I have important exams late May- Mid-June so I might not post around that time ^-^

Chapter 21- [Promotion]

Chapter Notes

A 3.9k chapter for you all :) I'm so glad that the previous chapter was so well received, it really pushed a lot of the narrative and scenes for this chapter ^-^

A reminder, I post almost daily on my Twitter: xStrawberryJam_ , So go check that out if you want polls and updates of how the next chapter is going.

Also, Intimacy-Additions is going to be updated approx once a week with background, past and future scenes, and has a new update as of a week ago, so go check that out if you want :)

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

1st October 1998- Thursday

Harry awoke the next morning feeling stiff and sore, wincing with every shift, but wholly satisfied. He allowed a pleased grin to grow on his face as he stared up at the decorated ceiling, covered in intertwining snakes and vines.

When Thomas saw his smile, he snorted, seeming mightily entertained from his spot next to him, looking as ruffled as Harry felt with tussled hair and blemishes covering his upper body. Harry felt flustered at the sight, knowing that those who helped the Emperor change would see his handiwork and know exactly what they had done. Not that they didn't, anyway. The Emperor had announced his intentions quite clearly in front of the entire Court, which Harry was torn about. It was good to be seen to have the Emperor's attention from a standing perspective, but this now left him vulnerable to jealous retaliation, which he had yet to face in any severity. Harry would have to deal with it, somehow.

The Emperor hummed, drawing his attention. His lip quirked up. "You seem pleased, my Noble." He drawled as he stared up at Harry lazily, tracing his features with lidded, red eyes. It was a soft sort of observance, unlike the piercing, assessing stares he was usually exposed to, and Harry melted slightly.

"I got my way, of course, I am pleased." Harry honestly replied, basking in the amused laugh he received for it. This was nice, simply talking to one another in the private comfort of the Emperor's Palace, where no one would dare to make a scene. It almost made their circumstance seem normal. However, Harry knew that he'd soon have to face the harsh reality of what he'd brought upon himself by so eagerly accepting the Emperor's invitation. He could have refused at any time, that would have been noted and hoped for by the others, but he'd chosen not to. He never would have, this is what he'd been aiming for.

"Of course, although, may I remind you that I also got mine?"

Unthinkingly, Harry shoved him in the shoulder playfully, freezing when his actions registered. "My apologies!" He sat hurriedly, ignoring the pain that twinged up his spine from the harsh movement.

Thomas waved him up as he attempted to clamber out of the bed to bow, simply dragging him closer with a huff. "None of that, now. It was in jest. I am more lenient with my concubines than is rumoured outside of the Court, as you know."

Harry went still in his arms, holding his breath as the Emperor relaxed back into the pillows. "Your Majesty?" He breathed hesitantly.

"Hm?"

"Don't you need to be awake for your meetings?"

The man huffed, looking over at him with an irked stare, tutting as he sat up and climbed gracefully out of the bed, and Harry blushed at his naked form, turning his head as Thomas slipped on a robe. "I suppose I do, unfortunately, as much as I want to stay." Harry hesitantly looked back at him, meeting the man's stare head-on as he tied the robe closed. "You may stay here until the morning meeting begins. I will request for your maids to bring clothes here and dress you."

"Thank you, Your Majesty." He dipped his head in a shallow bow.

"None of that." He waved his hand flippantly. "I won't have you kicked out of my room after I've so thoroughly ravished you, hm?"

Harry turned a bright scarlet, grabbing hold of one of the many decorative pillows with the intention of throwing it at the man, before reminding himself of his position. "Have a nice morning, Your Majesty." He practically hissed, only turning a darker shade as the Emperor laughed on his way out.

"You as well, My Noble."

Grudgingly, he was still expected to attend the morning meeting despite feeling as if a car had hit him, the aches in his thighs only now making themselves known. It was a blessing that the seats were cushioned and soft. As he settled down, Harry could feel the burning stares directed at him, resolutely trying to ignore them.

However, his promotion to Primary Noble also came with a change in place, so he was unfortunately sat next to Concubine Rakepick, who he knew wouldn't stay quiet, nor civil, for long. The two weeks they had spent sitting next to each other before the trip had been filled with malice from the woman, and a resolute standing to remain as neutral as possible from Harry.

"*Noble* Potter-Black, how wonderful of you to join us." Her tone was biting, slathered with an unhealthy coating of nastiness that sent a shiver up his spine. Harry turned to face her haltingly, plastering a sweet, unassuming smile on his face. That, however, only seemed to deepen her ire.

"Of course, Concubine Rakepick. The daily meetings are important for the functioning of the harem, I wouldn't miss one if I could help it. Besides, now is the time to welcome you and our Sisters and Brothers back from your trip." He would miss one. Maybe if he asked nicely enough, he could get the Emperor to shorten the hellish torture down to half an hour or less. It'd be good for all of their sanity not to be berated first thing every morning. Maybe the days could also be changed? One day on, the next off.

Rakepick's sneer grew. "You know just what to say, don't you."

He batted his eyelashes at her slightly, before humming with yet another sweet smile. Her teeth gnashed. Harry's smile grew that much more genuine.

"Silence!" Came Bellatrix's commanding call from the dias, the Consort staring down at them with more malevolence in her eyes than usual. The hair on the back of Harry's neck stood on end, and he slightly reclined back into his chair. He had an inkling as to why she was so royally annoyed so early in the day. "I will be keeping this meeting short, as I am still quite fatigued from the return yesterday. His Majesty was successful in-" A loud rap on the Halls' double doors cut her short, and with a frustrated huff, she waved her hand, slamming them open with a burst of magic. "What-"

Once again, she cut off, but this time it was due to shock, as the one standing at the door was none other than the Head Eunuch, dressed in his elaborate robes. With his dark eyes gleaming, the man stared disapprovingly up at the Consort, making his way into the hall and up the walkway until he stood before her with a shallow bow. "His Majesty requests for you to read out another scroll he has recently finished transcribing, Primary Consort." He held out the scroll loftily, drawing back with another bow when the Consort accepted it hesitantly, her dark eyebrows scrunching. "This one bids a good day to His Majesty's Harem." He turned on his heel and left as quickly as he had arrived, catching Harry's eyes briefly on his way out.

There was a shocked silence for a few moments once the doors had slammed shut before Bellatrix cleared her throat, settling back into her chair, visibly brushing off the interruption. "His Majesty must have something urgent to express to his harem." She unfurled the scroll hastily, scanning the words Harry knew were in the Emperor's signature slanted script, before scrunching the sides with a noise of anger.

"What is it, Sister? Is something wrong?" Penny asked carefully as the Consort shook, her blue eyes wide a slightly fearful.

"Noble Potter-Black," Bellatrix began with a hiss, and all eyes landed on him. "-has been promoted by his Majesty-" He drew in a hitched breath, echoed around the room. "-to the rank of Sixth Concubine." Her cheeks hollowed as if tasting something sour. She licked her lips before continuing to read from the scroll. "His Majesty sees Concubine Potter-Black in a

favourable light, and acknowledges that he has earned this promotion despite his short time in His Harem."

Silence met the woman's words, even from Harry himself. He was too stunned to react further, simply staring at her with his lips parted. He'd been promoted to... Concubine?

Never had someone been promoted to the role of an official spouse so fast, not even late Noble Consort Evangeline, who had been a Noble for over two years before promotion, so what did this mean for him-

He choked slightly, feeling his lips twitch up into a slight grin. "I-I thank His Majesty for this opportunity, and vow to uphold my new status with poise." No congratulations met his vow, but saying the words out loud felt enough for Harry. It felt like a promise to himself, and a challenge to those who looked down on him for his family and still did.

He had the Emperor's clear favour, or, at least, the beginnings of it.

Bellatrix's lips twisted. "Brother, you forgot to inform me that you were spending the night with the Emperor. This is a serious breach of protocol, what do you have to say for yourself?" She hissed, trying to put him in a bad light so soon after his promotion because she obviously had little control over the current situation.

It was Brother now, was it? "Sister-" He practically simpered, lips twitching in an attempt to hold back the grin that wanted to show. "His Majesty publically invited me to spend the night with him, I was sure that was enough, was it not?"

The Consort visibly bristled but seemed to bite her tongue. "I may have known, but the formality is still required, please remember that for next time." She glanced back down at the crumpled scroll with a heavy sigh, eyes darkening. "His Majesty also announces that First-Class Attendants Malfoy and Greengrass-" Harry felt the pulse of excitement that seemed to emanate from the pair at their mention, and felt dark satisfaction with the knowledge it wasn't pleasant recognition. "-are to head to Concubine Potter-Black's Palace after his promotion to kneel for forgiveness." Bellatrix stopped there, stunned, her eyes widening slightly.

A ripple of whispers passed through the room, the air turning cold. Patricia turned to him with a dark stare, seemingly amused as she regarded his rigid features. He kept them stony, but internally, he was also shocked. Kneelings for forgiveness? That was a humiliating punishment, not physically harmful, but it would knock their position in the Harem on its head, and also be a knock to their pride. "As reported by a reputable Eunuch, they disrespected the Imperial Authority gifted to Concubine Potter-Black by His Majesty, and also made dissatisfied comments about their position throughout his absence. His Majesty furthermore announces that those who were observed not to be within their correct positions in the Meeting Hall are to have their allowances docked by twenty-five percent for this slight against His authority. His Majesty regards that he is dissatisfied with how his Harem has acted in his absence, and rewards Concubine Potter-Black and those who acted honestly with a share of the docked allowance. Those involved will know who they are."

A stony silence met the proclamation, and Bellatrix slammed the scroll shut with a snap. "What-" She hissed, her ire almost rolling off her in tangible waves of magic. Harry blinked up at her, glad that he wasn't the one on the receiving end of it. "-is this? Why has His Majesty personally had to reprimand you for your- for your *disrespect*? !"

Dahlia's mouth opened and closed, a blush spreading across her cheeks as she was assaulted with disapproving stares. On the opposite row, Greengrass was similarly flushed, her blue eyes wide, filled with terror. "Aunt-"

"You are not to address me so familiarly, Attendant Malfoy! Explain to me, *now*, why you thought to act in such a way alongside Attendant Greengrass? You are Attendants, what gave you the gall to behave so- so-" Bellatrix slammed her fist on the armrest of the chair, and the lower end of the room seemed to jump in unison. By his side, Rakepick snickered nastily. Carrow looked frosty, glaring down at the Nobles and Attendants balefully. Regulus was examining his nails as if nothing was happening, and Consort Laurier was boldly reading another book, as she did in a lot of the meetings. Rosier was silent and still, disapprovingly scowling, and Penny's cornflower blue eyes were fixed on Harry, observing his reactions.

Harry felt his heartbeat jackrabbiting in his chest, fighting to keep his expression neutral. Why had he never noticed this before, the way None of them seemed overly baffled by Bellatrix's outbursts? Did he look scared? Was he failing this test Penny was seemingly putting him through?

His only consolation was that, across from him, Cordelia looked a moment away from fainting. She was staring up at Bellatrix with wide eyes, shivering slightly. Harry looked

down at his own hands, clenched in his lap, white with strain but not a tremor in sight, and *breathed* .

He was shaking as he left the hall, Anya hovering anxiously behind him as he was swarmed by many of the other concubines, faces such as Cedric, Jasmine and Erin notable in the crowd. They looked shaken, but that didn't stop their need to cling to him and the power he had just acquired.

Cedric stepped up to the side of him, smiling from ear to ear as if he was the one being promoted. "Congratulations on your promotion, Brother! It seems that I'll be alone in the Noble Palace for another while now, at least until another of our Brothers is promoted or more are brought in." Or from being demoted from Concubine to Noble went unsaid whilst the news of his promotion to Concubine was still fresh.

"Oh, I am so jealous that you have caught the favour of His Majesty, Brother Harry!" Erin simpered from his other side, looping their arms together as if it was a normal occurrence when Harry hadn't so much as touched her in the year he had been in the Court.

Harry smiled shakily at them, thanking them for their congratulations cordially, but as they began to ask more personal questions, such as if he was expecting to spend another night with the Emperor any time soon, and If he could mention them to the man, he backed up into the midst of his maids, who covered him protectively. "My apologies, but I would like to be left alone for the time being. I am rather tired."

"Of course, Brother! This must have been unexpected for you, and you must still be feeling last-"

"Goodbye, Sister Erin. Brothers, Sisters." He nodded his head, flinching slightly at the eager bows they returned, and fled down the path.

"Master, there is a Sedan coming-" Anya called after him as she trailed behind, flanked by Tabitha and Kia who looked worriedly at each other.

"I want to walk." He curtly stated, rushing down the path, breathing heavily. He could still feel eyes on him, scrutinising his every move, and all Harry wanted was a *calm day dammit* -

He sucked in a deep breath as he rounded a corner, feeling the grass crunch beneath his feet, still slightly wet with morning dew. He allowed the gasp of fresh air to wash over him, closing his eyes as he basked in the moment of respite.

"Master?" Anya hesitantly spoke, and Harry opened his eyes, noting that his hands were no longer shaking.

"Let's head back. I think I need a tea."

He entered his living room still in shock, led to the sofa by Anya. She fussed with him for a few minutes, fluffing up the cushions he was leaning on and making sure he didn't rumble the pretty robes the Emperor had gifted him this morning.

Now that he looked at them, he could see how they were more green than blue, and how that would have looked to the other concubines during the meeting before and after the announcement-

"What is wrong with Master, Anya?" June approached them, staring at him with concern and barely veiled *hunger*. All his maids had congregated in the living room by then, each with their own agenda and hope.

Anya turned to her with a blank expression. She didn't trust June, and reminded Harry repeatedly to do the same. Harry knew that, of course. She was a gossip, and whilst it benefitted him, he knew that she also talked about his movements to others as well. She was a double-edged sword, but undeniably helpful within the Court. "His Majesty has graciously promoted our Master to the rank of Concubine."

"Oh!"

"How wonderful!" Came the awed voice of Amari.

"Congratulations, Master!" Another called out- Aoife, surprisingly.

His other maids called out further congratulations, coming closer to fawn over his promotion, eyes glistening with sincerity and greed.

Harry waved them off, flustered and overwhelmed in equal quantities, just wanting a moment alone. He'd been bombarded ever since he'd woken up, and he was exhausted from it all. He was annoyed at the Emperor for promoting him so suddenly, on a day when all he wanted to do was rest, but it was a promotion all the same. Harry was thankful, but his feelings felt justified.

A sudden knock on his door, the one that was connected to the inner courtyard, startled him. He looked to Anya, who made her way over to open it, revealing a pristine group of ladies standing outside, dressed in white robes that shone in the morning light. They bowed at the sight of him.

"We greet Concubine Potter-Black, and congratulate him on his promotion." The one at the front spoke, echoed by the rest.

Harry stood despite his protesting muscles and plastered a smile on his face. "Thank you for your congratulations. May I ask, what is it that you are here for?"

"We are here to help Your Highness plan your wedding to His Majesty in two weeks' time, as the Royal wedding planners. May we enter?"

Taking a few moments to process what she had said, taking note of his change in formal address so as not to be surprised in the future, he smiled wanly. He was exhausted, but this must be the Emperors doing. "Of course, please, have a seat."

Obviously the leader of the group, the elder lady at the front spoke directly to him as they all settled into the sitting room. "The wedding will be done traditionally, as always, however, His Majesty does allow some leniency in matters of decoration, guests and wardrobe. Does Your Majesty have any personal requests?"

Harry hummed to give himself a moment to think, his mind going a million miles a minute. "I would like for my family to be invited, my parents, my little sister, and my Godfather and his husband. I also request for my friend, Hermione Granger, to be invited."

"Your family will surely be permitted, Your Highness, however, the matter of your friend will have to be checked by His Majesty."

"Very well." He hoped that her status as a Muggleborn wouldn't get her denied. She was his closest friend, and with a pang, he realised he hadn't seen her in over a year. He wondered how she was, outside of writing on a piece of parchment. "As for decoration, I'd prefer the flowers to be pale colours. The guests should wear the colour permitted for their rank or black and white if they are a guest."

"Yes, Your Highness. I will make sure your requests are taken into consideration. "

2nd October 1998- Friday

After the exhausting day Harry had previously, it was with reluctance that he peeled his way out of his bed, and with even more that he asked for Amari to get him presentable enough to meet with the Emperor.

An important discussion was needed.

He sent along Kia with instructions to request a meeting with the Emperor, preferably one in a secluded, relaxing environment such as his garden, somewhere they wouldn't be disturbed by other concubines. Luckily for him, a Eunuch was sent back almost immediately with instructions to meet in the Emperor's personal garden in half an hour's time.

As he was already dressed, he headed out nearly immediately, the walk taking up a good chunk of the time. He was invited into the garden by a guard, taking a seat at a bench in a shaded area, shivering slightly in the cold.

It wasn't long until Harry heard familiar footsteps, and he turned to face the Emperor. The first thing Harry noticed was the smudge mark on his cheek, and he fought down the swell of fondness that tried to rise in his chest.

"You wished to meet with me, my Concubine?" The address sent shivers down his spine, and with a gulp, Harry stepped closer to the imposing man. He smirked slightly, leaning down.

Before the man could react, Harry sent a stinging hex towards the hand that was aiming to cup his face. Thomas reared back, the smirk wiped off his face, staring at him like he was crazy. "Don't touch me."

"Why not? You called on me to thank me."

Harry gritted his teeth. "I called on you to speak with you, but now all I want to do is hit you."

One of his sleek eyebrows raised. "You are not pleased with your promotion? I thought that was what you wanted."

It burst out of him in a rush, the gravity of his situation finally weighing down on him. "I do want it, but not so suddenly. I was in that meeting room with no idea what to expect, suddenly promoted with everyone's attention on me, and I hadn't an idea what to do! Do you know how scared I was? I didn't have a plan, I still don't, and I've been getting letters for Tea ever since. Consort Bellatrix has invited me to join her and Concubine Alecto for a walk in

the gardens! How am I, you could have given me some warning, at least! Now they're all focused on me-"

Thomas' gaze softened, and this time, when he reached up to cradle his face, Harry allowed it, too focused on getting his breathing stable again. "Harry, I'm sorry you had to experience that." Harry's jaw slackened, panic taking a back seat at the unexpected apology. "I hadn't planned to promote you so suddenly as well, but it felt right to, when I was reflecting back on our time together the past year. But I didn't think of the repercussions it could have for you. I know my Harem is a ruthless place, and I would personally have it no other way, but I don't enjoy seeing you in distress." The Emperor's tone was soft and filled with understanding, and despite alarm bells going off in his head, screaming at him that *this wasn't the man from the rumours, surely they held a lot of truth since his parents personally attested to their validity-*

A thumb stroked gently over the side of his face, and Harry leant into the unexpectedly warm touch. "I'm- I didn't expect you to apologise."

"I felt that I needed to. Despite my intentions, I caused you distress. I hope that you may forgive me for this, if not now, then eventually?"

Harry smiled up at him, took a dive into the deep end, and fell into his arms.

Chapter End Notes

Oh Harry, you poor, sweet darling.

You may be wondering "This is Voldemort/Tom Riddle, right?"

Yep. There may have been a deviation, but this is still Riddle we're talking about, Harry's just an unreliable narrator and I want you all to take everything he says with a pinch of salt ^-^

Summary of the Chapter: Harry wakes up and has a bad day, but hey, he's a Concubine now :)

Chapter 22- [Official]

Chapter Notes

I have no idea why this took so long to edit, It's been ready since Saturday :/
Anyway, it's a good thing, because I had the inspiration to add an extra scene which wasn't planned ^-^

I managed to hit 4k words~ The next chapter has been started, and the chapter after that actually has more since it was the original chapter 23. I managed to create another chapter in between, which is happening more often now that I'm planning far ahead in detail- I'm up to chapter 45 or so :)

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

10th October 1998

Planning a wedding was one of the most exhausting things Harry had ever done. There was so much to do and think about, from the guest list, down to how many golden stitches his tailors could get away with on his ceremonial robes.

The worst were the fittings he had to go to constantly, at first for the detailed and multi-layered robes, then for the many pieces of jewellery such as emerald earrings and hair adornments, and finally for his Concubine crown. It was silver and small, embedded with little emeralds that shone even in dim light, but it was beautiful and intricate all the same, and Harry was in awe of it every time he glimpsed it.

Every official spouse of the Emperor got one when they became a Concubine, and for every rank they ascended, they got another with stones that matched their new rank. He had spotted Noble Consort Evangeline's orange topaz one in the Hall of Worship when he visited a while back, its surface still as shiny and unblemished as the day it was made. It had never been worn, after all.

What furthered his exhaustion was the constant invites from other concubines he was receiving. He had met with Nobles Cedric, Jasmine, and Erin for Tea on the third after receiving three eager invites, their time spent gossiping and cooing over his and the

Emperor's supposed 'whirlwind romance'. Then, he had strolled uncomfortably with Consort Bellatrix and Concubine Alecto on the fourth around the Pavillion of Raining Flowers, talking only when spoken to as the pair walked ahead.

On the sixth, Harry had had an incredibly awkward lunch with Concubine Patricia, Noble Lukas and Consort Penny, an unlikely trio that got along surprisingly well. On the seventh, Concubines Regulus and Felix invited him for tea at the same time, so he had invited them both to his garden, and their time together was tolerable.

He'd been surprised, yesterday, to have been invited to have lunch with Dahlia, Daphne, and Theodore. Harry had used his new powers as a Concubine to refuse that, now being two ranks instead of one higher than them all, sensing that the invite wasn't done out of the goodness of their hearts. And that Dahlia and Daphne were likely more than a little bitter about the demand they had to fulfil in another week's time, which Harry wouldn't put past them to try something.

However, he couldn't quite avoid the summons from Consort Isla an hour later, so they spent the afternoon in companionable silence, reading in her garden. It was a confusing few hours, but Harry was glad there hadn't been a verbal spat between them as he had been expecting or any uncomfortable questions.

Today, once again, a maid arrived at his doors with a request for Tea, this time from Concubine Cordelia.

Harry felt trepidation. He and Cordelia definitely hadn't had a neutral relationship, especially since her daughter's birthday last year when she'd openly disparaged him, and he would even go as far as to say that it'd been antagonistic. Harry did not trust the woman, and the other Concubine looked down on him for reasons he couldn't gather.

He dressed in a simple, black, and green robe, foregoing any hair adornments that Amari wished to put on him but allowing other jewellery such as simple earrings and bracelets. Harry didn't want to set her off, not today when he was already having such an exhausting time.

Damn the Emperor for promoting him so suddenly. Harry had wanted a summer wedding.

He headed for her palace, the Palace of Brilliant Charm, which she had moved into after her formal promotion. It was a beautiful, spacious place that drew a sound of amazement from him. He'd soon be moving into somewhere similar, out of the eleven currently uninhabited Concubine Palaces. The gardens, where they were set to have Tea, were equally as beautiful, even in the barrenness of Autumn.

The maid who had come calling led him and Anya, who he'd brought along as usual, to the centre of the garden where Cordelia was sitting primly, sipping a cup of tea.

She seemed in her element, poised and elegant in her sage green robes that brought out the blue of her eyes and the golden hue of her hair. She made Harry feel plain in comparison as he bowed his head slightly.

They were of the same rank now, but he was still a newcomer compared to the woman who had spent sixteen years at his Majesty's side.

"Concubine Slytherin-Rosenberg, thank you for inviting me for tea."

The woman looked up at him, blue eyes cool and searching, roving over his outfit, and nodded her head. "Thank you for coming." She replied curtly. "Please, call me Sister, we are both His Majesty's official spouses together now, after all."

Harry smiled at her stiffly in response, sitting down as Anya pulled out the chair opposite. "Of course, Sister. Then you should also call me casually."

She observed him as he shuffled, thanking her maid for pouring him tea, and settled into his seat. "How are you finding being a Concubine so far, Brother? It has been over a week now since His Majesty so graciously promoted you."

"I haven't noticed much difference, honestly, but I suppose I'm yet to have an official ceremony."

She hummed. "Ah yes, you've yet to move into your new Palace. Have you been informed which it is to be yet?"

"The Palace of Radiant Allure. I'm fortunate, it is quite near the Meeting Hall, so I won't have to travel far in the mornings."

"I am jealous, my Palace is quite the trek, but I suppose it leads me past His Majesty's Palace, so I may have the honour of seeing him in the mornings." She snapped her fingers then, startling Harry, who jumped slightly. "Margaret, we need more pastries, go and get some," Cordelia ordered the maid who had brought him to the gardens, and she bowed lowly.

"Yes, Your Highness."

Her departure left him and Cordelia with only Anya for company, and Harry realised why when she leaned forward, clasping her hands on the table as she observed him neutrally.

"Have you tested for pregnancy yet, Brother?"

Harry froze, before continuing to sip his tea, taking a moment to compose himself before placing his cup back on its saucer. "I have not."

The woman eyed him stonily. "You should as soon as possible. There is a high chance that any child you produce with His Majesty will be magical, as you both come from magical lineages, and the magic of the baby might react negatively to your own as it develops. Monitoring would be needed then." She stated. "It happened to me when I was pregnant with my daughter, but the issue was fortunately resolved."

Harry was surprised that she offered such information so readily. "Thank you for your advice, Sister. I will do so, although perhaps not until after the wedding."

She hummed, still regarding him disapprovingly. "I want the best for His Majesty and his children, even those who haven't yet been born or may not exist."

Harry blinked at that, tilting his head slightly. He caught her eye, and she held contact for a few moments, before looking away. He saw the sincerity of her words in her eyes and their intention.

She was trying to tell him something.

Perhaps, had Harry been wrong in his assuming that she was the perpetrator of Jasmine's, and possibly Erin's miscarriages?

15th October 1998

Finally, the big day was upon him, and Harry couldn't feel more conflicted.

This was what he'd been aiming for- Being the Emperor's legal spouse. Gaining more power. Attaining more favour. Ascending in the ranks. All, to protect his family.

Yet, as Harry stared at himself in the floor-length mirror, watching as his new dark green robes swished gently around his form and green emeralds twinkled from the crown on his head, all he saw was a stranger. A little boy, playing dress up in clothes much too expensive and far too detailed to flatter his still developing form. A young adult, still lanky, wearing robes with room to fill. A cunning lion dressed up as a snake, an oddity that startled and confused him.

His eyes were gleaming as they'd never done before, emerald- no, Avada Kedavra green and practically glowing despite the brightness of the room. The colour left him gasping, and he approached the mirror, bringing one hand up to stroke over the reflection's image.

This is what he had been aiming for, for himself more than anything else, and he preened under the sharp gaze reflected back at him.

Harry looked powerful, and he was almost breathless in anticipation of the future. What it would hold, he didn't know, but fortune was telling him it would be fulfilling.

"Mum, Dad!" Harry breathlessly exclaimed as he spotted his parents entering the room, his Mum's fiery red colour and Dad's mop hard to miss.

He was engulfed in a firm, warm hug from his dad, who pressed his face onto Harry's shoulder. It was with a pang that Harry realised he had grown much taller since their last meeting, now the same height as James rather than at his eye line.

His Mum's hug was equally as warm as she gently held him, carefully keeping a little distance between them so as not to squash the little girl in her arms. He stared at her, and she stared right back with wide, doe-like eyes the same shade as their fathers. They had obviously darkened over the past few months, but her bright hair remained the same shade from birth.

Lily noticed his attention elsewhere, and pulled back, a bright smile on her face as she looked down indulgently at her daughter when she made a questioning noise.

"Say hello to your big brother, Flo."

His little sister stared up at him curiously with round eyes, reaching out with one chubby fist to wrap around the lapel of his robe. He chuckled wetly, sniffing slightly to hold back the tears that wanted to escape. "Hiya." He whispered gently, cooing as she smiled up at him gummily. "She's so sweet." He aimed at his mum, who was watching their first interaction fondly.

"She is, she's just like you when you were little. Flo," She called out, and the girl turned her head to stare at her. "This is Harry, your brother. You remember me telling you all about him, right?"

The girl blinked a few times, before turning back to him with a gummy smile. "Hawwy!"

He chuckled at her lisp, gently brushing back her red locks when they fell on her face. Harry lifted his head to say something to his Mum, the smile falling at the serious expression on his parents' faces.

"Harry, you know that we're very proud and grateful for you, right? What you've done, I doubt many children would. Although we may not... approve of the Emperor wholeheartedly, we are proud of what you have accomplished. That's why, I want you to have this." His dad passed him a small, black box, their family sigil engraved on its lid.

With trembling hands, already having guessed what was in the box, Harry pried it open and stared back at the simple ring within. He stroked its silver surface gently, feeling the engraving of antlers that were wrapped around its band. It was the Potter Family's Heir ring, which his dad had been holding on to until the time was 'right'.

Harry looked up at him, his heart swelling at the love in their eyes. "Can you put it on for me?"

"Of course," Carefully, James plucked the ring from its cushion and slid it onto Harry's hand, holding it softly for a few moments, before letting it drop. Harry brought his hand up to his face to observe the way the small, red gemstones within glittered.

"Thank you, Dad. Mum."

James cleared his throat, shifting. "Sirius is also going to give you the Black family's heir ring today when he sees you next. It goes on top of our one since you're Potter by blood. Needs to be closer to you than the other." He breathed in deeply. "I'm proud of you, Harry. Do our family name proud."

Before the formalities began, there was time to socialise briefly without the Emperor present, the hour left open for the Lords, Ladies and Ministry Officials to greet the Emperor's newest official spouse. It was then that Harry first saw Hermione in over a year as she wandered over, bowing to him.

Harry went to give her a hug, but she stepped back, dodging the embrace.

Instead, she greeted him stoically. "Your Highness, it's an honour to meet you again."

"Hermione?" He questioned, hurt.

She met his eyes, full of regret and pleading, and Harry glanced around the room, finally spotting the stares directed at them, or more specifically, Hermione.

Some were leant close to each other, hands covering their mouths conspicuously as they whispered, their jeers clear in their eyes. He looked closer and saw how venomous some of the stares were, drawing his attention back to where Hermione was twirling her hair nervously.

He drew in a breath of realisation. "It's good to meet you again as well, Miss Granger."

Her eyes softened, filled with so much love that Harry felt content to let her walk past him as she offered a final, deep bow, and another eager guest took her place.

"Your Highness, it is an honour-"

He swallowed the lump that had formed in his throat heavily and plastered on a smile.

The walk to the dais was suffocating, so many scrutinising eyes upon him, dissecting his every twitch and glance, noting even the way he blinked up at the Emperor's form, who looked stunning. The man was wearing obsidian robes, shot through with streaks of green and silver, his head adorned with a crown- far more bejewelled than his own, but still managing to not look gaudy.

Thomas smiled down at him slightly, nothing more than a subtle twitch of his lips, but it relaxed Harry, nonetheless.

He came to a stop at the bottom of the steps, and knelt, bowing his head before the man who was about to become his husband. "Your Majesty, I greet you today as your Concubine, Concubine Slytherin-Potter-Black. It is a title that I receive with the greatest honour, and thank His Majesty for the promotion into the ranks of his official spouses."

The Officiant began. "We are gathered today in the presence of His Majesty, The Supreme Emperor of The Great Slytherin Dynasty, and His Highness, Concubine Potter-Black-"

Thomas stood from his throne, holding out a gloved hand, and Harry climbed the steps until he was standing on the dais as well. He looked up at the Emperor, meeting his burning eyes, before turning his attention to the Eunuch who was officiating again. He had nearly reached the end whilst Harry was entranced.

"I declare you, husband to His Imperial Majesty Emperor Slytherin, Concubine Harrison James Slytherin-Potter-Black. May you serve your role as Concubine well and uphold His Majesty's will through yourself until forever more."

Harry drew in a deep breath, closing his eyes for a moment before opening them to stare sincerely into burning scarlet. "Before the Emperor, my fellow Brothers and Sisters, and the citizens of this great Empire, I promise that I will uphold my duty as Concubine to the highest degree. I promise my life to serve the Emperor, and to ensure his reign will be a great one, remembered until the end of time. I swear this in the name of Black, most Ancient and

Noble, and that of my blood, the Noble House of Potter." He bowed lowly, clasping his hands in front of him as his magic rippled with the vow.

"Blessings to the Emperor, blessings to Concubine Slytherin-Potter-Black." At his fellow concubine's chorus, Harry looked up once again, meeting the eyes of his husband. Thomas was staring down at him as well, a possessive gleam in his eyes, smugness practically radiating from his form. It made the corner of Harry's mouth tug up into a small smirk, matched by the man's answering one.

The ride back to the Emperor's Palace was a pleasant one, silent but comfortable. Harry glanced at the Emperor, now officially his husband, occasionally, admiring his strong jawline and bright eyes, observing the way the slight wind ruffled his hair until it was the perfect amount of windswept to look seductive.

Harry let his mind wander in the silence, thinking back on their ceremony. It had been shorter than he thought it would be from all that had happened, only lasting under an hour before the Emperor stated that they would be heading to his Palace.

He had seen his family in the crowd, quite near the front, with Sirius and Remus sitting next to them. Sirius looked more put together than Harry had seen him in a long time, and Remus looked livelier, his cheeks finally having filled out. Even his parents, who had always tried their hardest not to show how society's scorn got to them, looked brighter.

It relieved him to see the results of his hard work firsthand.

"Harry, we have arrived." A delicate shake to his shoulder brought him out of his thoughts, and he glanced up at the Emperor, who was staring down at him softly. "Are you ready to go in?"

"Um, yeah, sure."

The door to the sedan popped open, a Eunuch standing on the other side, bowing when the Emperor stood. "Your Majesty, Your Highness." Thomas, paying no attention to the man, stepped out, turning back to hold out a hand to Harry with a soft smile.

Harry gently took it, allowing the man to help him out of the sedan, and then lead him up the steps and into the Palace whilst still holding it. Harry huddled closer to him as the personnel of the Palace, awaiting the Emperor's return, stared at their joint hands unabashedly.

"Are my quarters prepared?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. We replaced the bedding as you asked."

Thomas hummed, showing no more attention to the maid as he turned back to Harry. "I noticed that you ask for the softer blankets, so I thought you'd appreciate the change."

"You didn't have to, Your Majesty, but I appreciate the thought."

He received a toothy smirk in response as he tugged him forward. "I did not, but I did so anyway." Behind them, the doors slammed shut, leaving them alone in the bedroom. Harry blushed as the Emperor beelined for the bed, sitting down on it whilst Harry still stood. His eyes were serious. "Have you had a healer check you for pregnancy after we spent the night together?"

Harry fiddled with his fingers awkwardly. "Not yet. I-I kind of forgot? But then Sister Cordelia reminded me, but I didn't want the result to distract me from today, so..."

Thomas stared up at him with smouldering eyes, amusement dancing in them. "Then, perhaps now would be the time to try once again?"

This time, Harry didn't shy away as Thomas' hands began to wander, simply basking in the attention he was being shown.

16th October 1998

Harry was shown to his new, private palace in the morning, the Palace of Radiant Allure. It was much closer to the Meeting Hall and to the centre of the Court, where the Emperor's Palace was situated.

It was an exceptionally beautiful Palace, only a single floor yet more extensive than his rooms in the Palace of Noble Handsomeness doubly. It was designed to replicate the infrastructure of the Forbidden Palace, perhaps an amusing decision on the Emperor's part. The Court was, after all, his own version of the walled city the old Chinese Emperors had used for their own Harems.

The Palace was not like his previous one, instead a collection of buildings connected with hallways and bridges rather than a single building. Harry walked up to its front entryway in awe, glancing appreciatively at the decorations that adorned even its doorstep.

His Palace was close to Felix's one, within the same group of Concubine Palace's that made up the South-East portion of the Court. There were four in each section, rounding at sixteen in total, to prevent an over-indulgence of promotion. Once the spots were filled, either someone had to be promoted or demoted. Not that the Emperor was anywhere close to that happening.

Anya held open the door for him to enter, and he did so with a sigh of awe, craning his neck to look at all the detail that covered the ceilings and walls. A slight noise to his left had his neck snapping in that direction.

With his promotion to Concubine, came the addition of more maids. One of his own, sent by his family, and two assigned by the Palace.

Hannah had yet to arrive, however, his two new maids were standing by a sofa at the side of the entry hall. He stopped dead in his tracks as he spotted them, before schooling his face into

a mask of welcomeness.

Harry had seen them before.

They bowed to him deeply, identical down to the way their hair was swept and clipped to the side.

"What are your names?" He asked, despite already knowing. He saw them milling about the Emperor's Palace on occasion, after all.

"I am Enid, Master." The twin on the right spoke, eyes darting up quickly before looking back to the floor. Confident.

"I am Ellie, Your Highness." The twin to the left softly whispered, wringing her hands slightly. Demure.

His lip ticked up. "It is nice to meet you. What jobs do you both tend to?"

"Ellie tends to the gardens, Master, whilst I am more suited towards textiles and general chores."

"Perfect, then I hope I can rely on you, Ellie, to make my new garden beautiful, and for Enid to assure that my wardrobe is up to my new Status' standard.

"Leave it to me, Master."

"I will do as you say, Your Highness."

They exited the room as he dismissed them, and Harry let out a heavy, exhausted sigh as he sat heavily on the sofa. Only his personal maids were present to see the way he let his guard down and relaxed into the plush pillows. He slung an arm over his eyes and closed them.

"Wake me up if I'm needed."

"Yes, Master."

Extra Scene: 15th October- Penny's POV

"-I greet you today as your Concubine, Concubine Slytherin-Potter-Black-"

Penny observed the scene in front of her with gleaming eyes, watching as one of her newest Brothers knelt demurely at the foot of the dais. She took in the way his robes flattered his Elfin form, the way his crown glittered with diamonds none of theirs held, and how the Emperor received his words with a pleased smirk.

He stood then, an imposing figure that drew the hall's attention with every shift of his black robes. The Emperor held out a gloved hand, staring down at the boy at his feet with far more tenderness than Penny had seen directed at any of them, even herself, the proclaimed favourite.

She frowned as her hackles rose defensively, chiding herself to abate such an action.

The boy was not a threat to her, he was simply a passing fancy. As soon as a child was born from their union, the Emperor would lose interest as he had to the majority of his Harem. Only a chosen few, herself included, were favoured enough to bear another.

Penny relaxed back into her seat, icily observing as the pair stared at each other, ambition meeting obsession.

She would have her husband back soon enough. She needed her fourth child before she, too, was cast aside.

Chapter End Notes

I know some people want some detail into Harry and Tom's.... private time, but that takes guts to post and I'm currently short on them :)

Anyway, if you want regular updates on how the next chapter[s] are coming along, want reference photos for robes and crowns and stuff like that, or want to participate in polls that I post from time to time, follow my Twitter ^-^: xStrawberryJam_

Anyway, I think I might manage to get another chapter out before my exams start, and then I'll see how things go once they begin and how that'll effect my schedule ^-^
Thanks for reading~

Chapter 23- [Breaking Point]

Chapter Notes

At 4.3k words, this is one of the longer chapters, and I still had to cut off 2 scenes at the end and place them in the next chapter *-* I hope you enjoy this chapter, and please try not to feel too disappointed at some things.

This chapter was really hard to write for some reason, but once I got going, I could write hundreds of words at a time, it's just the study breaks and relaxation breaks I took in between that made it take so long. Also, the fanfiction Author curse struck me, and I ended up getting an ear infection day before my first exam! A lot of things have happened since my last update, actually, but the most significant has to be that I got more chickens! They're very sweet, and it's inspired me to give Harry a new pet ^^

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

16th October 1998- Friday

Hannah arrived later in the afternoon, just after Harry had sent Anya to get a healer. She arrived in a flurry of motion, brown, waist-length hair fluttering behind her madly as she raced into the entry hall, arms laden with bags. Her eyes lit up when they landed on his form, dropping her load to the floor.

She greeted him with a short but low bow, and then launched herself into his arms with a breathless laugh, burying her face in her neck. "Harry, it's been so long!"

"I'm glad to see that you're well." He fondly spoke, reaching up a hand to smooth down the stray curls that refused to lay flat. She squeezed him again, holding him in that firm, reassuring embrace of hers, before retreating with a happy sigh.

"And you seem to be as well. You look as fresh as a daisy; royal life is treating you well." She observed with a sly smile.

He smiled sardonically. "I suppose it is. I live in luxury."

"I'd expect nothing less for the spouses of the Emperor. He is the wealthiest being in the world, after all. Can't have his Harem living in squalor. Although, I suppose sharing him isn't the best of situations... Now, what am I going to be doing here, and where am I staying?"

He pointed to Kia. "Kia, please show Hannah where she'll be staying. It's probably best to wait for Anya to arrive back to see what you'll be doing."

Anya arrived ten minutes later with a haggard-looking healer, who barely stopped to bow before directing him to lie down on the sofa. He followed her directions easily, eager for the results.

"What seems to be amiss, Your Highness?" She asked briskly, swiping her silver hair out of her eyes with an aggravated huff. He got a look at her face then, noting that she was younger than he had expected, looking barely older than himself.

"I was hoping you could test to see if I am pregnant."

The healer seemed to freeze, looking him in the eyes for the first time. They were a strange mix of yellow and brown, startling against the pale pallor of her skin. "I see. And when did you copulate with His Majesty?"

"The thirtieth of September was the first time, and yesterday as well."

"And you waited this long to have a check-up?" She tutted disapprovingly. "I will have the answers in just a minute. Do I have Your Highness's permission to cast some spells?"

"Of course, as long as they don't have any adverse effects."

"Not to worry, Your Highness, His Majesty has all his Royal Healers under oath not to harm those in his Court."

She waved her wand gently over his abdomen area, chanting Latin under her breath for a minute straight. His worry grew as she frowned, casting it once more. A little while later, she straightened up, looking him in the eyes with a sympathetic expression.

"It is regretful that I must inform you that you have not conceived. My apologies, Concubine Slytherin-Potter-Black."

"Please, just Potter-Black." He responded distractedly, feeling like he'd just been dunked underwater, his head feeling stuffy. He was admittedly upset at the news, and it must have shown clearly on his face, because the Healer reached forward to cup one of his hands in her own, bowing her head to rest in on his knuckles.

"Your Highness, excuse me for saying this, but perhaps you conceived yesterday, and therefore, the pregnancy is too early to be detected. Please do not feel dejected. You are still young yet, and His Majesty appears to highly favour you. I am sure you will bear a child soon."

He shifted at her words, reaching down almost instinctively to brush over his stomach, hope filling him. "Thank you for your kind words, Healer."

Harry wouldn't be calling on any Healer again until he experienced a symptom of pregnancy. He felt too afraid of being told he hadn't conceived again to humour such a thing.

20th October 1998- Tuesday

A while after the other invites to meet with him had come, and just after they started tapering off a bit, another came, this time from Nobles Emma and Pippa, wanting to have lunch with him at his Palace.

Harry accepted happily, his feelings towards the two amiable enough, sending off Hannah to sort out the details. She had been designated the role as his primary maid for communications, something he hadn't realised he'd need until he'd become a Concubine and, suddenly, everyone and their friends wanted to contact him.

He quickly sent another maid, Lien, to go and invite Luna to his Palace as well, he and his friend having had little contact since his promotion.

He also sent Aoife to invite Penelope. Luna and Clearwater had been growing closer ever since the woman had been promoted to First-Class Attendant, and Harry was happy that his friend was branching out more. She'd never had many people around her, especially not those with pleasant intentions, so he was glad Luna had found someone else with the Court to rely on.

For something to do while he waited, he sought out Amari, and much to her pleasure, asked if she could place accessories that would match his pale green and grey robes in his hair. She tugged and pulled his head about as she twisted adornments into the messy strands, still as untameable as ever, but it looked neat and presentable when she presented a mirror to him with a flourish.

Finally, Aoife entered the room and announced that his guests had arrived.

"Please show them to the garden. I will be out in a minute."

"Yes, Master." The woman left with a shallow bow, closing the door on her way out.

"Is there anything wrong, your Highness?" Amari asked with a small frown. "I suppose I can add a little more into the back. Ooh, how about a chain that connects them together."

He smiled assuringly. "Nothing's wrong, I just need a few moments. It's best to let them settle at the table before I arrive."

"Fashionably late? Perfect! Then, can I add that chain?"

"Of course."

The chain brought the piece together perfectly, and Harry was afraid to even move, worried that he'd ruin the art piece adorning his hair. Amari had flushed hearing him call it that, fluttering her hands about. She'd then helped him down to the garden, where he could hear the others talking.

" *-bit underwhelming, isn't it?* " Pippa's voice was muffled by the trees, but he could hear the derision in her tone, and it made his footsteps falter in his approach. " *I would have expected something more from a Concubine's garden. Brother Felix's is much more put together.* "

" *Brother Harry has only recently moved in, Sister. Please don't be so critical.* " Emma tutted, and then Harry was through the treeline and into the clearing. The four of them were sat at the table he'd had set up, Pippa and Emma to one side, Luna and Penelope to the other, with the seat at the head of the table empty.

They had each dressed up for the occasion, Pippa and Emma's outfits bridging the line of too decorated and too plain respectively. Penelope had settled into her new role as a First-Class Attendant perfectly, it seemed, her accessories bolder but flattering. Luna, as usual, looked unconventional with her seemingly random accessories, intermingled with what looked to be bottle caps, but she still stuck to the neutral blue robes that her rank dictated.

He made his presence known by clearing his throat, and smiling apologetically when they turned to face him, startled. "My apologies for keeping you waiting, Sisters."

"Oh, not to worry at all! Thank you for arranging such a beautiful selection in the little time we forewarned you, Brother. My apologies for how suddenly we asked." Emma stood, bowing to him slightly. He nodded his head in response, smile warming.

"It was no trouble, my maids are well trained, and with the new editions, preparations are even easier."

Pippa piped up from where she was still sitting, despite both Luna and Penelope having stood in greeting as well. "Oh, well that's all well and great then, isn't it? See, Sister Emma, your worries were unfounded. Concubine Harry has proved himself an adequate host." She spoke flippantly, turning her body away from him in a clear breach of protocol. Harry tried not to let it grate him. He'd only been a Concubine for less than a month, most were still growing used to the new order.

(No one had dared to turn away from Cordelia even days after she'd been promoted.)

"Sister Pippa, it's good to see you." He blandly spoke, hinting at his dissatisfaction. She eyed him, he ignored her. "Sister Penelope, I hope you are well?"

The lady in question straightened at his attention. She wore the neutral blue tone of the First Class, which suited her far more than the dark blue she had previously been assigned. The colour brought out her brown eyes, and he was just now realising that they also contained a hint of yellow that had been downplayed before. "Oh, yes! I've been having a wonderful time now that I've moved into the First-Class Palace. It's been wonderful having so many of my Sisters around!"

"I'm glad you've been enjoying yourself. And how are you, Luna?" At last, Harry sought out the gaze of his friend, who met his gaze with a slow blink of white eyelashes.

"Perfectly well, Harry."

He grinned at her, taking his seat at the head of the table. He noted that some of the cakes and small sandwiches had already been taken, noting the crumbs on Pippa's and Penelope's plates. The latter had the humility to flush when she noticed Harry's gaze. "Shall we begin, then?"

"I can't believe His Majesty promoted you so promptly. He must like you very much!" Penelope gushed enthusiastically, and he smiled indulgently as she continued to pepper him with questions.

Harry had been expecting an interrogation of sorts, it had happened at all of the gatherings he'd attended since he's been promoted, all along the same line of ' *I can't believe you were promoted* ' and ' *How did you do it?* ', usually followed by a tittered comment on how they ' *should be expecting a promotion promptly, if that was all it took* '. Harry ignored these comments as best he could, simply smiling in return and wishing them luck. He thought that many would be sorely disappointed when they received no such thing at the beginning of November.

Pippa snorted derisively at his left, drawing him back to the present. "I wonder, how did you convince His Majesty to promote you? Was it that good?" Her tone was snide, and the words sent icy shivers down his spine.

"Pardon me?" He glanced at the woman, gaze not straying from her face as she stared haughtily back, eyes frosty. Harry frowned internally. When had the woman begun to dislike him?

"The sex, I mean. There's no other reason for him to have promoted you so promptly. Bet you begged for a promotion so sweetly, he couldn't resist." She casually reiterated, as if talking about the weather.

Harry gaped at her audacity. " *Excuse me?* " He sharply asked, eyes seeking out the others to see if they had also heard what the woman had said, or if he was imagining the words. By their equally slack-jawed expressions, he wasn't alone in his bewilderment.

She huffed. "You heard me." Emma sent her a cutting glance. "What, it's not as if it's untrue. The others have been saying it for weeks now, basically, everyone knows. You're young, you've got ambitions you wish to seek, and I'm sorry to have to burst your bubble like this Brother, but His Majesty does not genuinely like you. You're just a means to an end, like the rest of us, to repopulate his family name and ensure there are plenty of heirs to the throne. I've done my bit, delivered him a healthy and beautiful Princess, yet I am still a Noble? How am I a Noble with a child, yet you're a Concubine when you have only just deigned to do your duty?" By the end, it seemed she was more ranting than anything, hands clenching into the soft tablecloth.

" *Sister Pippa.* " Emma's voice was soft, barely a whisper in the wind, but it was cool and commanding enough to have Harry's legs give out beneath him, aborting his movement to

stand and curse the woman out of the garden in a moment of rash anger. "You are far out of line." She berated, looking down her nose at the other woman.

Pippa harrumphed, not taking the out for what it was. "I don't see how I'm out of line, I'm just simply stating the truth. Everyone knows it, it is clear to see, His Majesty is just using him-"

"Sister, be quiet-"

"No, I will not be quiet! I should have been promoted, why are you a Concubine instead of me?! Did you beg him, did you promise him you would bear him children galore? Well, I did too, and look what that's got me. Nothing! Nothing to show, except a few words of praise at a meeting where you stole the attention I deserved! He seems more interested in the brat than he does me, the woman who made her-"

" *Noble Macmillan!* " It was the first time Harry had heard the usually demure woman raise her voice, and its strength shocked him. "How *dare* you spout such spiteful nonsense, and against His Majesty and a Concubine at that! You could be accused of treason!" Emma was standing now, glaring heatedly down at her friend, lip curled up in disgust.

More than accused, it was treason to say such things. Harry watched on in shock as that seemed to burst her bubble, and she sank back fully into the chair. The woman looked thoroughly told off, but not ashamed if the haughty stare she was still sending him said anything. He glared back, crossing his arms over his chest. The anger that never seemed to leave him these days sat heavy in his chest, ready to explode at the slightest provocation. Emma sat down again, although her body was tense.

"People seem to keep on forgetting that there are ranks within the Harem for a reason. Noble Macmillan, I will be talking to His Majesty about the way you have treated me today-" Her expression morphed into one of shock. "Unless you apologise to me now." Harry hissed, hands feeling hot with unreleased magic. He curled them into fists, hiding them in his sleeves.

Her scowl deepened, lip curling. "I suppose I should. I apologise."

His eyes twitched. "Say it like you mean it."

Pippa scoffed, rolling her eyes. "What are you, a child? I said that I apologise, yet you're making me do it again? Unbelievable, I will be speaking to His Majesty about how you are unfit for the position of his Concubine, the immature little boy that you are!"

Harry stood, temper finally getting the better of him. Her eyes widened as the chair under her shattered into a million little pieces, falling onto the ground with a shriek. Penelope and Emma stood, alarmed, Luna simply pushing her chair out of range.

"Brother, please, I know she has wronged you, but-" Emma began.

"I won't harm her." His gaze landed on Pippa. "But know that you, Noble Macmillan, are no longer welcome in or near my Palace. *Get out*."

She sat on the ground, mouth gaping, her face an odd mixture of flushed at the cheeks but the rest sweaty and pale. "You can't- this is assault against a fellow-"

"*Get the fuck out while I'm still asking* . Do I look like I care? Who will His Majesty believe more? Me, his Concubine, or you?"

She got to her feet shakily, gripping the hems of her robes. She made a half-hearted grab for Emma's arm, but her grip was swiftly averted. Unbalanced, she scarpered, leaving behind a mess and a thoroughly irritated Concubine.

He licked his lips absentmindedly as he watched her leave, tasting the faint tang of blood. He had bitten through his lip.

Huh.

Clearing his throat, he sat back in his chair, flicking his wrist and cleaning up the mess of splintered wood with a simple vanishing charm. The other seats were righted in their correct positions, and the plates were neatly replaced. He sighed as he closed his eyes, feeling his irritation seep from him.

He had overreacted yet again.

He'd been doing that more often ever since he had joined the Harem, irritation easier to feel, emotions such as sympathy and empathy hard to come by in such a cutthroat space. He winced as he remembered his crude words, so unlike what was tolerated by the Court, and regretted that they'd find their way back to the people who would use them against him.

Harry also groaned at the remembrance that he'd used Thomas' name as a threat, wondering when he had begun relying on the man to fight his battles. He scowled at the thought, flexing his hand.

"You may stay if you'd like, although I have no qualms if you decide to leave."

Only Luna remained, her presence a steady hum of contentedness that lulled him into relaxation. Soon, he was asleep.

He'd make sure to inform Thomas another day.

26th October 1998- Monday

As if they had been waiting for the last moment, still within the month he'd been promoted, Harry was invited to tea by the three Second-Class Attendants, Merula, Cassius and Adrian, and also First-Class Attendant Zacharias.

He accepted the invitation without trouble, although a little hesitant. He'd already had a disagreement with Cassius and Adrian, back when they had insulted his blood and family,

with him shutting them down before they could continue. He and Merula, while yet to have many interactions with one another, didn't exactly view each other in a positive light, and Harry made sure to keep out of her way as best he could. He and Zacharias's strange aversion to each other went way back, with the man feeling a certain animosity towards Harry despite him having no recollection of what caused it.

So, he'd decided not to invite them into his private space and instead suggested that they take the tea in the Palace of Gathered Handsomeness, where the male Second-Class Attendant resided.

He arrived in the communal garden a little before the allotted time, surprised to see the four of them already present. At his back, Anya watched on cautiously as they rose, bowing. Harry sighed a little, thankful that they were going to keep the meeting respectful and cordial. He nodded his head in recognition of their deference, and they were quick to resume their previous discussion.

"We were talking about your fellow Concubines, Brother. They've been rather silent and inactive this past year, much less provocative than previous years."

"Yes, especially Sister Patricia! I am surprised you have not come to blows with our Sister yet, she can be rather volatile." Merula snickered a little, hiding her grin behind her sleeve. Harry's lip quirked a little, enough to satisfy, but not enough to be accused of enjoying gossiping about the woman when they surely reported this interaction to her at a later date.

"I'm surprised you would say as such. I've been welcomed wonderfully by the Harem; I can't imagine it being anything but this peaceful." Lies. It had been anything but an uneventful year, but Harry had also heard the stories of the previous years, especially the early days when there was no order and it was simply a race to bear the first child, and then the first son. Now, there was a bountiful number of children, and it was about attaching yourself to the Emperor himself, instead.

Merula giggled. "Oh Brother, I wish to see your face when you see first-hand the ruthlessness of your fellow Concubines. They are an interesting bunch, and I'm sure that you will-" He noticed that her attention had been drawn away from the conversation, suddenly, words trailing off. "Ah," Merula's spine straightened, and she stood whilst still staring behind him. Harry blinked, eyebrows furrowing as he made to turn, curious. "I'm glad you could join us, Sisters Dahlia and Daphne, Brother Theodore."

Harry froze, his breath catching in his throat.

Ah, this was a set-up.

"It's no trouble at all. I heard that Brother Harry had been invited," Harry turned his head at the sound of her voice, sweet and breathy as ever, and met Dahlia's cold, harsh eyes with a steadfast countenance. "I have yet to congratulate him for his promotion since he seems oh so busy recently. I thought to seize this opportunity whilst I could." She stared down at him for a few seconds, before turning back to speak to the gathered at large. "I hope you haven't been left waiting too long?"

"Of course not, please, have a seat." The concubines stood as the three rounded the table, bowing their heads and seating themselves after they had sat. Harry didn't move. "Isn't it so wonderful that our Sisters and Brother could join us today, Concubine Potter, ah, I mean, Concubine Slytherin-Potter-Black? My, that's a mouthful, you don't mind If we just call you Concubine Potter, do you?" Merula continued on, staring at him. They were all staring, their eyes roving between him and Dahlia, who his eyes hadn't moved from yet.

Harry stared at her, then at the rest of the group as they eyed him, eyes gleaming like a pack of wolves fixated on their last meal. Harry felt outnumbered, his only known ally being Anya at his back. He could pull rank on them all, but what would that do in a situation such as this? And most of all, he felt numb, his fingers tingling like they were frozen.

As the group continued to titter and stare, he felt the first stirrings of an icy irritation creeping up his spine, settling into a harsh lump in his throat. His eyes burned, fingers twitching at his sides.

"Concubine Potter, you are being rather rude by ignoring Sister Merula." Dahlia pouted then, batting her eyelashes at him when his gaze turned on her, still feeling as if his body wasn't his own. "You should apologise. That is, if you know how to. I'm not sure if you know how to apologise, you certainly didn't for harming Sister Pippa the other day."

He licked his lips, trying to bring feeling back into them. "And why would I do such a thing? What even is this, some sort of interrogation?" His lip twitched up into a defensive snarl, the

only thing keeping him even slightly grounded being Anya's reassuring hold on his shoulder. "What are you trying to gain?"

She frowned innocently, tilting her head so that she could stare right into his eyes without looking up. "What do you mean, Concubine Potter?"

"There it is again. My title is Concubine Slytherin-Potter-Black, and if that's too much of a mouthful, simply Brother will do, not just Potter. I have never been just 'Potter', never in the time that we've known each other. And where has the affectionate way you used to call me gone? Am I no longer your 'Brother Harry', Dahlia?"

She sniffed. "Please do not presume to call me by my given name when I haven't given you permission. We are fellow Concubines now, not school friends."

Harry stood, staring down at Dahlia with glowing eyes. " *Excuse me?* I have been your friend for years, and yet, for you to treat me as if I am beneath you? That our time together means nothing now that you've got another posse to hang off your every word like simpering lapdogs? When I am a Concubine to your position as an Attendant! For this, petty may it be, I expect you to carry out His Majesty's punishment before the month's end, or I will have no choice but to see it as a slight to mine, and His Majesty's, Imperial authority. I have had enough of everyone undermining my position. Good day, everyone." He snapped, turning on his heel to flee the situation as quickly as he could, despite the chatter that sparked as soon as he finished.

Harry could feel the beginnings of tears gathering in his eyes, frustration and hurt fuelling them. They began to slip down his face gently, soon transforming into sobs that shook his body. It was only when he was some ways away that Harry collapsed into a corner, hidden from sight, Anya hovering anxiously at his shoulder as he slid down the wall and into the dirt. He curled into his robes, their sparkles filling his teary vision until he felt dizzy at the sight, so he closed his eyes, leaning back into the wall.

"Master..."

He squinted open one eye and rasped in a hoarse voice, raw from shouting and crying. "I love her, Annie...but I don't think I can tolerate this much longer." He licked his lips, tasting the saltiness left behind by his tears. "I need to see the Emperor."

She looked down at him sympathetically. "His Majesty is busy preparing for the Samhain celebration, he is said to be too busy to-"

"That is days away! Please," His voice shook. "Tell him it's important."

Chapter End Notes

I don't know if I can hold in the plot points any longer, I'm getting the urge to skip ahead and write some of the future scenes now ^ ^ I'm already branching into writing about Harry's future children in Additions, but I'm going to try and keep the info about them neutral :)

How are you feeling about this chapter? Too much? This sort of thing has been building for a while, and it's just Harry's luck that it all decided to come out because Pippa and Dahlia decided they can't hold in their pettiness anymore.

Anyway, they'll be a good Tom and Harry scene in the next chapter, involving the results of the Twitter Poll, which was won by the option: Magical Creature. But now I'm kind of stuck as to which Magical Creature I should choose?

Thanks for reading! ^-^ I have some more exams coming up now, but it's all over after the 16th! Then, I have no commitments for a little while unless I get accepted into Uni :)

Twitter: xStrawberryJam_

Chapter 24: [Ego]

Chapter Notes

Everyone, you're probably going to LOVE this chapter :)))) It's 3.8k words ^-^

TW: Sickness

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

26th October 1998- Monday

Anya stepped into the Emeror's office, hands shaking by her sides as she nodded thankfully towards the Eunuch who held the door open. The man didn't glance in her direction, simply closing it behind her once she was in the room.

Ahead of her sat the Emperor. He looked as powerful as ever, all sharp edges and dangerous handsome looks, but there was a pinch to his eyes she hadn't seen before. As their eyes met, Anya ducked her head, lowering herself into a deep bow.

It was a few minutes before the man addressed her, shuffling paper indicating his preoccupation. "What is it? Is my Concubine well?" The Emperor asked, folding his hands together as he leaned forward.

Anya swallowed, feeling the words stick in her throat. The man's imposing presence filled the room, dark and heavy, and clearly not in the mood to tolerate interruptions. "My-My Master wishes to meet with you, Your Majesty. Would you be so gracious as to permit it?"

Ahead, she heard the man breathe out a huff, the sound of paper hitting the desk a telltale sign of his displeasure. "I suppose so, I am not too busy momentarily."

She bowed lower. "I thank His Majesty on behalf-"

"Leave. Bring me my Concubine, I have no time for pleasantries."

"Yes-Yes, your Majesty! I thank you-" His magic roared impatiently, and without finishing, Anya ducked out of the office and practically ran back to where Harry was waiting.

He appeared to have calmed down somewhat whilst she had been away, eyes dry, the only sign of his breakdown being the slight pink tinge to his eyes and their rosy puffiness. Fussing, she dabbed at them with a wetted handkerchief, her Master allowing her to do so.

"Did he agree?" Harry husked, looking down at her with those big, green eyes.

"He did, Master. However, I must warn you that he didn't seem in the best of moods today."

He shifted from foot to foot slightly, a telltale sign of his indecision. "Perhaps it wouldn't be so wise to go and see his after all? Ah, but It's already been arranged now..." Harry bit slightly at the skin on his thumbs, and with a tut, Anya pulled them away.

"I am sure His Majesty will do nothing to harm you, you are precious to him. Now, don't go ruining your hands, you need to look presentable for the Emperor."

"As presentable as I'm going to be five minutes after a good cry, but I suppose he's used to looking at worse." He chuckled, and she was glad to see his mood lightening.

"...What?"

The Emperor sighed, finally placing his quill down. "Harry, this is not the sort of incident you should come to me about. I have important duties to oversee, I am not in the right place to deal with the petty squabbles of my Harem." Harry looked up at him, eyebrows furrowed.

He...felt a bit embarrassed. He'd come to the Emperor, practically whining about the man's other concubines, and expected him to do something about it, forgetting that it was expected they resolve such things themselves.

Harry had just thought that, maybe, the Emperor was fond enough of him.

The Emperor's stare remained disapproving until his features shifted, leaning back into his chair with a slight smirk. "I may have something that will cheer you up and make the others jealous, perhaps. What better thing but to flaunt a gift given by me to those who have yet to receive such a thing?"

"Your Majesty?" He smiled at him, looking expectantly at the side door as it opened. It was the same Eunuch as before, with his mouth sewn shut grotesquely. Harry made to turn away from the sight, nose scrunching, but forced himself to remain in position.

The Eunuch entered holding a cage covered by a green cloth, and from inside, he could hear curious noises.

"What is it?"

Thomas waved his hand, and with a flourish, the Eunuch removed the covering.

Within the cage was a curled-up ball of fluff, white in colour. With a glance at the Emperor's face, filled with anticipation, Harry crept a bit closer to get a better look at it. As he further observed the mass, it began to unfurl, unveiling two pointed ears and an adorable tail. As he was leaning over the cage, breathing shallowly, those little ears wiggled, and a nose became visible, twitching as it scented the air. Harry held his breath as bright, yellow eyes opened, staring into their slitted depths.

"A cat!" He breathed excitedly, watching as the little thing stretched its legs, mouth opening wide in a yawn that revealed rows of razor-sharp teeth just barely beginning to peek through gums.

"A Wampus kitten." Thomas corrected, reaching forward to take the cage out of the Eunuch's arms and shooing him out of the room. "I had thought long for what to give you. My first instinct was a snake or an owl, however, when I was told that this little beauty had been discovered, an orphan without siblings to bond with, I knew that you'd love her."

"Her?"

"She is unnamed as of yet."

Harry stared down at the little kitten, although she was almost bigger than a fully grown housecat despite her youth, and felt his heart swell. He glanced at the Emperor, who was watching him eagerly, and looked back to the kitten.

"Sasha"

"Sasha?"

"It means defender, I remember it from when I was helping my Mother choose names for my sister. For I hope that she will grow up to protect us and any children we may have."

The Emperor smiled. "There is no better legged guard than a loyal Wampus."

"Legged?"

"None have ever successfully made it out alive when faced with my Nagini."

Harry smiled as his gaze softened at the mention of the snake. Harry had only met her once, and it had been an eventful meeting as the snake had thought he was trying to attack the Emperor when he had suddenly kissed the man. Thomas had sharply rebuked her, and sent

her off, but not before Harry caught a glimpse of her spotted coils. He hadn't seen her since, and he wondered if the Emperor trusted him enough to send away his most fearsome protector just for his ease of mind.

Thomas opened the door of the cage and fished out Sasha, who growled and spat at him, lips drawing back to reveal stubby fangs. Harry took her into his arms quickly as she began to lash out, cooing softly as she quietened for a second, snuffling at his robes. He waited with a bated breath for her to bite or scratch, leaning his head out of range. A long purr began to omit from her little frame after a few, tense moments, and Harry fell even more in love as he held her tighter to his chest.

"Thank you, Thomas."

31st October 1998- Saturday

A knock on the front door drew Harry out of the monotonous rhythm he had fallen into. He glanced up, startled, and dropped the sewing ring to the floor, standing to follow his maid.

It opened to reveal a maid dressed in medium blue, her eyes meeting his in a flash of grey before lowering to the ground. "Your Highness, I am here to inform you that Attendant Malfoy and Attendant Greengrass have begun kneeling, as you wished."

He blinked, confused for a moment, before he remembered what he had earlier demanded of the pair. "Thank you for informing me."

She waited there whilst he stared at her, growing visibly uncomfortable.

Harry felt uneasy at the idea of such a public punishment, but he knew he couldn't be lenient. This was the Emperor's punishment for them disparaging his authority as much as it was for Harry's benefit.

"I will not be excusing them until they have fulfilled the time they wasted whilst in the daily meetings. Which, you'll find, adds up to quite a bit longer than however long they have been kneeling." He leant on the doorframe. "Please remind my sisters that they brought this punishment upon themselves."

He walked sedately down the steps, a small entourage of maids following behind him, each eager to witness the two kneeling Attendants in front of his Palace. Harry himself was feeling conflicted, steps dragging slightly as he neared the gate. It was opened swiftly by the Knights guarding it, and Harry did his best to ignore their hulking forms, their black leather armour glinting in the mild sunlight. He could feel their sharp eyes following his every move, assessing him and the maids that followed.

Dahlia and Daphne were knelt on the stone floor by the gate, dressed in fine robes that had become rumpled and stained in the duration of their punishment. The pair looked ragged, shifting on their knees impatiently, heads bowed together as they whispered.

Hearing his footsteps, the pair glanced up with matching glares, eyes smouldering. Harry stopped in front of their kneeled forms, and he could hear as Daphne gritted her teeth, lowering her gaze to stare past him. Dahlia continued to sneer up at him, her usually perfectly golden curls flattened over her shoulders and forehead.

"Brother." She practically spat, and Harry squeezed his folded hands tightly behind his back. "How nice of you to finally come and see us."

"It has only been a couple of hours, Sister Dahlia. I could have left you for much longer and the Emperor wouldn't have rebuked me, I'm being lenient."

"Lenient? I can't feel my knees!" Daphne sneered to the side, blue eyes frosty.

He raised his eyebrow as he took in their stubborn expressions, internally sighing. They had learnt nothing, and all this punishment would serve to do is incite them to take things further.

"Then perhaps you shouldn't have disobeyed the Emperor's command."

Dahlia huffed. "This isn't about the Emperor, Harry-"

"Brother."

"Huh?"

"You are to call me Brother, or you are to refer to me by my title. I don't recall giving you permission to call me so casually, Sister Dahlia." He echoed the words that she had uttered so spitefully and watched as her shoulder sagged, gaze falling from his.

Her cheeks hollowed with her ire. "This isn't about the Emperor, *Brother*. This is about you and your ego. You never liked being ignored, and you're doing this to prove something."

"No, I did not, and I still don't." He agreed, shocking her into silence. "But now, I'm in a position where you can't ignore me unless you wish to face the consequences. You deliberately ignored His Majesty's orders to listen to me as the highest member of the Harem whilst he was on the trip, disregarding me further every meeting after that, and then you had the gall to further disrespect me and intrude upon my time when I had rejected your invite. That is why you are facing this punishment now, Sisters, not just because of my *ego*. I am not so shallow to do so." Harry stared down at them as they avoided his gaze, and tutted. "You may be dismissed. Please reflect on this, and try not to get into any more trouble. I am surprised you haven't been demoted yet with all you've done."

Dahlia faltered as she got to her feet, stumbling slightly, and Harry jerked forward to catch her. Her maid wrapped a firm grasp around her arm, glaring at him spitefully. Harry drew back at the venom in her gaze and watched as the pair were led out of the courtyard, limping slightly, being fussed over by the entourage of maids that had faithfully stood behind them for the duration of their punishment.

Harry felt cold as he watched them retreat, far from the satisfaction he'd thought he'd feel at seeing their egos bruised.

2nd November 1998- Monday

"Attendants Malfoy and Greengrass, I heard that you both finally fulfilled the punishment that was set. You waited for quite a while, I am unsure whether to take offence on His Majesty's and Brother Harry's behalf."

Harry smiled at Penny. "Don't fret, Sister. For me, I am glad that they fulfilled it in the timeframe I asked."

"But you shouldn't have to ask!" Bellatrix's fist hit her armrest. "They should have been eager to fulfil it the moment it was set!" She took a deep breath through her nose. "However, I do hope that the punishment, no matter how delayed, was enough for you to have learnt not to go against His Majesty or those who rank higher than you. Let this also be a warning to the rest of the Harem."

"Yes, Your Highness."

"I expect none of you to repeat this the next time we and His Majesty travel, although thankfully, Brother Harry will be joining us this time, as a Concubine."

"There is another trip, Sister? So soon?" Penny frowned from her side.

"His Majesty briefly informed me this morning. He hasn't yet notified me when it will be, but he mentioned it would be this year."

"December, perhaps? It would be rather short notice for it to be this month."

"No matter the notice, we must be ready for His Majesty," Bellatrix stated resolutely, turning then to Isla. "Sister Isla, you also forgot to inform me that you were spending the night with the Emperor. This is unusual for you, to spend the night with him outside of occasions, I mean."

The prim lady stared up at Bellatrix with dark eyes. "My apologies, Consort Bellatrix, I forgot. I did not spend the night with him on my birthday earlier in the month, so I decided to do so later on. He was otherwise preoccupied." She stated blandly, blinking sedately.

Bellatrix practically hissed, her hackles rising as they were so prone to do at any perceived slight. "Many of you seem to be forgetting these days, you as well, Noble Diggory."

The man shrank into himself. "I-I was planning to inform you, It was only a few days ago, on the night of my birthday..."

"A few days is still far too long!"

"Sister, have lenience. Sister Isla and Brother Cedric were serving His Majesty as we are expected to do. This should be something to congratulate them on. I do hope that I will hear you are with child soon, Brother, Sister." Penny smiled in that soft, reassuring way she was known for. Cedric thanked her with his own bright smile, whilst Consort Isla simply huffed, nodding at the other woman.

"I suppose congratulations are in order, if you have conceived. I am sure you will both report it swiftly if that is the case, yes? His Majesty being informed of any pregnancies is of utmost importance, there are precautions that must be dealt with, after all."

9th November 1998- Monday

After that night he had intruded on the Emperor's company, they had not spoken, sharing only a few glances as they passed each other in the Court, before Thomas was hurried away with

yet another appointment.

The Emperor sat opposite him, fixing the cuffs of his sleeves in a leisurely manner whilst Harry stared at him, shifting at the silence.

Thomas broke it with his smooth voice, drawing Harry in. "It's been a little while since we could talk like this. How have you been faring, My Concubine? Is your Palace acceptable? I forgot to ask the last time I saw you."

Harry smiled. 'Acceptable'? It was far more of an upgrade than he'd expected. "I have been well, Thomas, and the Palace is better than my wildest dreams. It's so pretty and the garden is massive!"

He smiled indulgently. "If you think such, then you have yet to properly see the gardens of the Consorts Palaces, or even more than that, the Noble Consorts and higher."

"I have been invited to spend time with Sisters Penny and Isla within their gardens a few times, although I admit that I haven't seen them in their entirety yet." Harry paused then, thinking about what he'd just said, or rather, not the contents, but how he had said it. Before he'd entered the Harem, he would have laughed at himself for speaking in such an 'extra' way, but now he spoke without thinking. Thomas noticed his pause.

"Is everything alright?"

"I'm fine. Just thinking."

The man raised his eyebrow, tilting his head. "Perhaps I can bring your focus to myself, hm? I have a trip planned for late December, to the Magical Ministry in Australia. The Minister is having some concerns currently, and I believe it's best for us to meet there."

Harry's lips pursed in surprise. "I heard from Consort Bellatrix that you were planning a trip somewhere, but she didn't mention it was to Australia!"

"I haven't told her yet. So, keep this a secret between us, just for a little while, yes?" The man winked, and Harry blushed.

"Of course, Thomas."

"Now, how is Sasha?"

Sasha was a little nightmare trapped in a fluffy body. She'd already broken a multitude of objects in his Palace, including vases and picture frames, and she'd recently begun digging great holes in the garden that served to trip up any unfortunate maid walking by. In short, she was a terror. But, she was a terror that liked to snuggle up with Harry at night time when he was feeling over-emotional and lonely, her purrs sending him off into a peaceful slumber. She was protective to boot, hissing at the slightest misstep of his maids, and curling protectively at his feet when he sat on the sofa.

For a species said to be 'untamable', she tolerated a lot from Harry, and seemed to hold no ill will towards him at all, showing this within her weirdly intelligent gaze.

"She's perfect." Harry simply said, not wanting to bore the man with the details. "I feel much safer with her around."

15th November 1998- Sunday

Tom swirled the wine in his goblet as he observed the rabble down below, the usually uptight lords and ladies tipsy with booze, giggling and weaving about the hall. His lip twitched as he watched Lucius Malfoy being swarmed by ladies, his Consort Rabastan Lestrangle gripping tightly onto his shoulder as he glared.

Today was his Concubine's, Patricia's, forty-third birthday, and it was alike every other she'd had before, although a little grander ever since she had become a Concubine a few years back.

The crowd at her celebrations were always more inebriated, possibly because the woman wouldn't allow the staff to serve 'sub-par' alcohol, and insisted it be as strong as petrol. Tom himself always made sure to switch his out with a fine wine from his personal selection, and made sure his other concubines were relatively sober in comparison.

He eyed as his newest Concubine, Harry, made his way over to a server for another glass, this being his fourth, and waved a Eunuch in the direction to dissuade him. Tom could see the many eyes following his Concubine, dressed in a fine green robe and Crown that made him shine against the crowds, and gritted his teeth at the way some observed his body with lust.

"My Emperor." A sultry voice came from his side, and, reluctantly, Tom peeled his eyes away from his Concubine to land on another. Patricia. He plastered a smirk on his face.

"Darling, how are you enjoying your celebrations? Is it up to your standards?"

"It always is, Your Majesty, although the crowd leave much to be desired, They are practically salivating over us!" She chuckled, bringing her goblet up to take a generous gulp. "I can see the way they're practically eye-fucking Sister Penny, look at the way Lord Hemming is staring at her!"

"Language, Patricia." He chided, tutting at the woman's smirk. "Why have you come to me for? Are you growing bored?"

The woman licked her lips, eyeing him, and Tom stared at her boredly. With one, clawed hand, she brushed his shoulder. "I was wondering, perhaps we could leave?" She raised an eyebrow. "I'm not getting any younger, and I do wish for a child at some point. It makes me feel old, watching as your children enter adulthood now."

He blinked at her, expression flat. With a sigh, he drained his goblet. "I suppose that's true. Elson, prepare a sedan for me and my Concubine."

29th November 1998- Sunday

Harry woke up in the morning feeling like his head was going to burst, his stomach protesting every movement he made as he called urgently for his maids to help him up.

As soon as he was upright, his stomach seemed to lurch violently, cramping so suddenly it was a miracle he made it to the bathroom in time to throw up what felt like everything he'd eaten in the past week.

He groaned as his throat burned and eyes watered, heaving heavily, ignoring the soothing motions Anya was making on his back. It felt like he couldn't breathe, every attempt simply leaving him in a heavy wheeze that caused his stomach to roil once more. It was a long while until Harry could peel himself away from the bowl, staring at his pale, shaking visage in the mirror.

Had he been poisoned?

Sasha, at his feet, as she had been from the moment he woke up, meowed in concern, the chirps softening something in his shoulders.

"What's wrong, Master? Shall I call for a Healer?" Anya asked concernedly.

All he could do was groan out a response weakly. "Please."

All he remembered next was a whirlwind of colours as his maids dashed about, settling him comfortably on the bed with a bowl to his right and a glass of water to his left, blankets covering every inch of the bed.

This was the scene that the Healer entered to, the same one that had assessed him over a month ago now. The disappointment he felt the last time he'd seen her flashed through him then, and Harry's stomach protested once more as he groaned.

"Oh dear, Your Highness!" The Healer rushed to him, settling him comfortably against his pillows once more as he was finished heaving. He stared up at her weakly, watching as she pulled her wand from her holster. "I won't be a minute, let's find what's the matter." With a few deft swishes of her wand, she cast a spell. Then another. Then another. "Oh."

"What, what is it?!" Anya panicked from his side, glaring as the woman smiled. "What's wrong with him?" Sasha hissed, mirroring his head maid's concern. This, more than anything, seemed to spur the Healer into action.

"Nothings the matter, actually, everything is more than well." She turned to him, smiling softly. "Congratulations, Concubine Slytherin-Potter-Black, you are with child. Allow me to be the first to wish you a healthy pregnancy and safe birth for you both."

Chapter End Notes

AHHHHHHHHHHHHH

Finally, I made it!

Who expected that? I actually changed the date so much, but I finally decided that this was the day he'd find out :)

Twitter: xStrawberryJam_

Chapter 25 - [Fondness]

Chapter Notes

3.5k words

This chapter took so long to write for some reason, but I added nearly 2k words last night, and I edited it all today :)

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

29th November 1998- Sunday.

Harry sat there, stunned into silence. He stared wide-eyed at the Healer, searching the woman's expression for any sign of deceit. She was watching him with a soft, open gaze, nodding seriously. It took him a few minutes to even begin to think.

"I'm...Pregnant?" Harry was hesitant to even speak the words out loud. He didn't feel grounded in that moment, almost a spectator to his own body's reactions. His heartbeat had sped up after stuttering briefly, and he could feel the way his hands had become clammy as they twisted together on his lap.

The Healer nodded again, bowing her head respectfully at his lapse in control, her hands seeming to make an aborted movement to reach out and hold his own. He grabbed one, noting the way his were shaking, and stared at her as she looked upon him, surprised. The grip tightened. "Yes, Your Highness. Only around six to seven weeks along, mind you, so there aren't any physical symptoms yet. If I'm estimating correctly, your due date should fall around mid-July time next year."

Harry swallowed. He'd have a baby before his next birthday. Young, younger even than his parents. That was... fine. Surprisingly. "How can you be sure that I am pregnant?"

"Would you like to see the results, your Highness?" The woman handed over the parchment readily, which Harry took with trembling hands. There, clearly etched upon it, read the words 'Pregnant- Approximately six to seven weeks'. Below it, the sheet seemed to go into specifics and a more in-depth overview of his condition, charts of colourful colours and strange symbols hurting his stinging eyes. The words blurred before his eyes, and Harry wiped at them with the sleeve of his robe.

He let out a sudden, strangled sound, sniffing, the paper scrunching within his fist.

"Your Highness, are you alright?" Harry's head snapped up, and he met eyes with the flustered healer.

She knew. She knew about the fragile life growing within him, of how this could affect everything for him, how this could affect the whole Harem and the Emperor too. Harry was not blind, he could see that he was clearly ascending quicker than anyone else and his predecessors, already a Concubine and showing no sign of losing the Emperor's interest as of yet. In fact, it only seemed to be growing, and obviously.

This life, this baby growing in his belly, would solidify his position, and secure him a place in the fight for the honoured position as the Emperor's primary spouse. And the Healer knew about that, someone he didn't trust in the slightest, who could run off to the nearest concubine once she left and blab about his condition, bringing upon him attention and a threat *he could not afford*.

"Do not, under any circumstances, inform anyone about this!" Harry hissed, hand retracting from where it had been grasping her own, instead settling on his stomach. He already felt overwhelmingly protective.

The Healer stepped back, looking shiftily around the room. "But, Your Highness, The Emperor must be informed of this-"

His eyes hardened. "Do you wish to be the one blamed when I mysteriously miscarry His Majesty's precious child? Do you think you could afford that scrutiny being placed upon you? Because if I lose this child, you will be the first I blame. Do not say a word to anyone." Harry spoke icily, stressing his words to emphasise his sincerity.

"Yes- Yes, Your Highness!" The Healer stuttered, no longer watching him warmly. Instead, her eyes were filled with fear and trepidation, reaching for her bag to begin packing her stuff. Good, it was better she feared Harry and the consequences he could bring rather than see him as an easy target to exploit.

"Anya," Harry turned to his maid, who had stood behind him loyally the entire time. She was watching the woman with cold eyes, but turned to him readily. "Complete a vow with her and make sure it has no loopholes. I need this child's existence to stay hidden for as long as possible."

"Yes, Master."

"It is only one, correct?" He faced the Healer once more, straightening to sit more comfortably on the sofa. She was still watching him warily, slowing down her rushed packing.

"I-I cannot be sure, Your Highness. To discover such, I'd need to cast a few more spells."

He waved the woman closer, and hesitantly, she swished her wand around, this time focusing on Harry's stomach area. "Well?"

"From what I can see, It is just the one, Your Highness. You are far along enough currently for that to likely remain unchanged."

Harry let out a breath he didn't even know he'd been holding. That was... a surprisingly welcome piece of information. He didn't know if he was ready for more than that, especially not for his first pregnancy, despite the acclaim that would bring him. It'd immediately place him above the large majority of the harem, even a single child would, in fact.

But now, he had a bigger problem to worry about. He was carrying the Emperor's child, and he knew with certainty that the others would do all they could to slow his rise. This put him, both of them, in grave danger.

1st December 1998- Tuesday

Harry sat on his seat with a heavy sigh, resting back into it as much as he could. He stemmed a movement to cradle his stomach as he did so, the motion having become a reassurance the past couple of days despite the lack of a physical bump. The action would be too obvious, despite his loose robes, to dare.

He was surrounded by people who wished him the worst, after all.

Looking around, Harry noted that Bellatrix was immersed in conversation with Isla and Penny, the three wearing matching, serious expressions, which was bizarre in itself. The number of times the three had been seen to be genial with each other could be counted on one hand by Harry. He watched as Bellatrix gestured wildly, looking put-off, hands flying down to grip the hand rests when Penny made a consoling gesture. She seemed to huff, looking back to Isla with a scowl, who looked equally vexed.

Most were engaged similarly in conversations. The meeting had begun a little while ago, with the Consort allowing time to talk beforehand rather than after, as was usual. However, Harry had sat in silence so far, due to the antagonistic personalities surrounding him. To his right sat Patricia, happily engaged in conversation with Alecko, which at least removed her attention from himself. To his left sat Pippa, who, while nowadays less outwardly hostile, still gave him an obvious cold shoulder, whether out of hatred or fear. Most likely, it was a combination of both.

Directly in front of him sat Cordelia, who was ignoring both Regulus to her left and Jasmine to her right, picking at her fingernails instead. Despite their more recent impartial conversations, Harry still felt no desire to interact with her outside of necessity.

As if reading her thoughts, the woman's icy eyes glanced upwards and clashed with his own. She held his gaze, her bland expression unchanged except for a single raised eyebrow. Cordelia blinked, tilting her head slightly, almost cat-like, before her attention slid off of him and turned to Patricia instead.

Harry, intrigued, glanced unobtrusively at the other, taking in her hostile expression as she stared at Cordelia, who refused to break eye contact. She looked almost... amused.

The almost palpable tension that was beginning to build around the pair, attracting the attention of those surrounding them, was broken with Bellatrix calling their attention. "His Majesty only had a singular decree for his Harem today, so, as it is prudent we interact with one another, I decided to leave this business for last." With a flourish, she unfurled the short scroll, taking in the words there with a raised eyebrow. "Attendant Lovegood." Bellatrix sounded, eyes fixed on the girl, who didn't even startle at the sudden address. Harry watched, awed and filled with trepidation, as his friend seemed to ignore the Consort outright. "Attendant Lovegood," She bit out again, voice filled with anger this time. Luna's head twitched, and he thought she was going to turn and apologise, but the girl simply swayed, lost in her own mind. "Attendant Lovegood, will you pay attention!" Bellatrix yelled for the third time, sounding irate.

Luna looked up, cloudy eyes fluttering like butterfly wings. She pursed her lips, looking confused. "Apologies, Consort Slytherin-Black, I was lost in my head."

Bellatrix breathed out deeply through her nose, seeming to recalibrate herself as she drew up, acting composed as if she hadn't just yelled at the other. "His Majesty has generously, on the grounds of you being pleasant, promoted you to the rank of Third First Class Attendant. I hope that you will treat this promotion with the respect it demands." She spoke the last bit with gritted teeth and a pointed stare, the animosity of which seemed to simply float over his friend's head.

Luna hummed, bowing her head. "I am thankful for his generosity." She said so blankly, before retreating back into the confines of her mind. The stares she received for her lacklustre reaction were hostile and mocking, making Harry think back to the whispers and sneers that had followed Luna throughout her Hogwarts years. He'd hoped, when he'd discovered she too had joined the Harem, that she would no longer have to face such childish torment, but his hopes had been too high.

However, Harry knew that she was strong of mind, and if she was ever truly in need, he was now in a stronger position to help her. And soon, perhaps an even more effective one.

5th December 1998- Saturday

After yet another mentally exhausting meeting, in which his progressing, hidden pregnancy was weighing heavily on his mind, Harry was desperately in need of a relaxing walk, away from the confines of his Palace.

Ever since moving into the Palace of Radiant Allure, despite its much larger size and greater opulence, Harry felt as if he had been placed into a smaller cage than before. Closer to the Emperor's residence, the security was tighter, as it was anyway with his new position as an official spouse. It also felt like the space was less Harry's, and more suited for his position rather than for *his* comfort. Even his maids felt like they had changed. They had all become more respectful, less likely to simply talk to him without excessive honorifics, even Anya, who was following three feet behind.

She had argued with him to bring an entourage instead, but the whole point of this excursion was to relax, so that would have defied his objective. She let it go quickly when he explained himself, although begrudgingly. Harry was nowadays clinging to those moments where she questioned him, too used to the servers of the Court obeying his every command.

He had been wandering the Court without aim for a couple of hours, his feet beginning to ache and mind finally clearing, when he stumbled across people he knew personally.

Rounding the corner, Harry blinked as he saw double. On one side, he saw Dahlia clinging to a more youthful version of himself, both looking bashfully up at the imposing Emperor, and on the other, he saw simply Thomas and Dahlia, standing a meter apart from each other. Frowning, Harry took another step forward, and the scenes merged. There, walking through the gardens he had been heading to, were Thomas and Dahlia, walking side-by-side as a veritable army of maids and Eunuchs trailed after them. Most bore the sigil of the Emperor's Household, although a few wore the medium dull blue reserved for First Class Attendants' maids.

Harry hesitated at the scene, stepping back a little, debating whether he should turn back the way he came. He had wanted to take a seat in this specific garden, it being one of the most beautiful, but he knew there were plenty of others to choose from. As if sensing Harry's indecision, Thomas' red eyes flashed to him then, piercing and harsh. Once they settled, a smirk grew on the man's face, and his eyes visibly softened.

'Harry', he seemed to mouth, and Thomas took a step forward. What Harry and the others heard, however, was: "My Concubine, have you come to join us on a walk?"

At the unexpected mention of his name, Dahlia, who had been preening under the Emperor's sole attention, snapped her head in his direction, and a frustrated frown grew on her face. She stared at him icily, teeth gritting. Tounge in cheek, she pouted up at the man, who was still looking toward Harry. "Your Majesty, I thought that we were having a walk. Alone."

Without taking his eyes off of Harry, Thomas responded. "We were never alone in the first place." The Emperor brushed her off, approaching Harry who had stayed rooted in his spot ever since he'd been spotted. "My Concubine, are you joining us?"

Harry hesitated. His feet hurt, he wasn't put together enough to try and impress the man, and he was too exhausted for the mental gymnastics such an interaction called for. He'd have to contend with Dahlia's snipes and jibes and fend off her insults, whilst also entertaining the Emperor and battling mentally with him in a different way. Less hostile, but still as tiring. He looked at Dahlia once more, who was mouthing something at him with a scowl, and twisted back to gaze at the Emperor instead. "I would be delighted, Your Majesty."

Thomas' resulting smile was as pleased as a cat who had got the cream, staring down at Harry as if he had exceeded his expectations. "Excellent." Curling his arm around Harry's, the Emperor began to drag him back to where Dahlia was standing, the girl visibly fuming as she glared at their interlocked arms. They began walking together, following the paved path that weaved throughout the hedges and flowerbeds, Dahlia rushing to keep up on the Emperor's other side after a few moments of seething. "It's been a while since I've been able to spend time with more than one of my concubines like this. Most are averse to each other, but I've heard that you and Miss Malfoy are childhood friends."

It wasn't a question, more a prying statement. Of course, the Emperor had obviously heard of their many spats, he'd personally seen Dahlia punished for one of them not even a couple of months ago. He was trying to dredge up that hostility for his own amusement. "Yes, we were close when we were younger." At his non-answer, Thomas tilted his head, a brief leer twitching at his lips.

"And not so much now?"

"No, we have both grown up. There is no need for such a thing within your Harem, Your Majesty." Dahlia butted in, tone cold and pompous. She really resembled Draco then, when he was in what Harry called his 'Pureblood fanatic mode', where he believed he was superior just because his family liked to marry back into itself.

The Emperor, hearing her words, simply hummed noncommittally, glancing down at her briefly. "I suppose it is not needed, but isn't existing lonely when there is no one to rely on?" The rawness of his words surprised Harry, although, he shouldn't be shocked. Who was the most powerful and feared man in the world supposed to rely on, if everyone wanted to use him for their own gain?

Even Harry wasn't conceited enough not to admit the reason he was attracted to the man was mainly due to his power, and the safety that had brought to his family. Strangely enough, Harry felt pity for him at that moment, his usually tightly controlled feelings surrounding the man loosening.

"It might well be, although I admit that I have a reliable friend in Attendant Luna," Harry admitted, locking eyes with an affected Dahlia, before glancing up at Thomas, taking in his inquisitive stare.

"I am glad for that. To be alone in the Harem, that is something I do not wish on any of you."

Dahlia cleared her throat. "Well, I have Auntie Bellatrix, and Attendant Daphne and Theodore. I am equally content."

The Emperor moulded his face into a faux innocent expression. "Really? I remember my Consort informing me she was quite upset with you at the moment?" Dahlia, off-guard at the unexpected comment from him, gaped. Harry was equally stunned. The usually impartial, content to watch from the sidelines Emperor, had just publically spoken out against one of his concubines. And in front of a crowd of Eunuchs, Maids, and his newest Concubine. Dahlia blustered, Thomas simply looking down at her with that expression still creasing his forehead. "Am I mistaken? My, It's best if I don't speak on such matters." But he already had. "Are you enthusiastic about the upcoming visit to Australia, My Concubine?" He deflected incredibly obviously.

Was this what fondness, the kind reserved for a lover, felt like?

Harry blinked up at the man, his lip twitching at the noticeable side-step. It was so unmistakable, it had to of been done so obviously on purpose, to really cement his words into the minds of the Eunuchs and Maids present. "I suppose so, although, is it not a diplomatic visit?" He answered, playing along.

The Emperor smirked. "It is, but that doesn't mean there won't be any time for fun." He heavily insinuated, and Harry felt his cheeks darken.

"Then, I will be looking forward to the trip more than I thought." He replied, and Thomas chuckled delightedly, his expression taking on a noticeably darker manner.

"If the Australian Ministry is partaking in the actions that I have heard rumours of, then I have doubts you'll enjoy it all *that* much, but I digress."

They continued the walk for another hour, and by the end, Harry's feet were numb, but he was wholly satisfied with how he'd spent his afternoon. Of course, his elevated mood only lasted until the Emperor was out of eyesight, and Dahlia rounded on him, only their respective maids present now. Notably, Dahlia was surrounded by four of hers, whilst only Anya stood loyally at his shoulder.

Harry was higher ranked than she, yet she went around with more maids than he did, only sparing two to continue running her apartments whilst she was out.

"I can't believe it, how dare you ruin this for me?! It took me a week of requesting to be able to meet with His Majesty alone like this, and you just had to be selfish!"

Harry's eyes rolled, and he huffed out a deriding breath. "Selfish? I suppose I am, if that's what looking out for myself is."

She fumed further, scoffing. "And crass enough to outwardly admit it. You are a disgrace, Harry Potter, I have no idea how I was able to tolerate you and your despicable personality for so long. You clearly used me to enter His Majesty's Harem, and now you are only using me further to endear yourself to him through deceit. You're even sabotaging my interactions with him, because you are jealous of me, and always have been. The only consolation I have is that you aren't pregnant yet, and I hope that you never are!"

His mood plummeted further. Harry's hand made a jerked movement to cradle his stomach, only containing the movement when he locked eyes with the girl in front of him. She'd exploit that, he knew. No past fondness would save the baby growing within him from her 'revenge'. If there was any past fondness, after all, with what she had just revealed. "We are Royal concubines, we aren't here to fight each other and wish infertility on others. Nor to baselessly accuse each other. Our main goal is to give His Majesty heirs, to revive the Slytherin line, not to hoard his attention-"

"But that's exactly what you're doing! Hoarding his attention-"

"I'm not hoarding anything, Malfoy!" Harry exploded, raising his voice. She stood firm, the pair of them practically in each others' faces. "His Majesty is giving me it freely, not that you'll ever see it that way! I have never used you, you just can't admit that I can attract his attention without you, and that you're failing to even catch his eye!"

She screeched, lunging for him suddenly, and Harry dodged, his instincts going haywire at the threat she was posing, both to himself and the fragile life he was carrying. Stumbling, she turned to face him, blue eyes wild with rage. "You are nothing without me, Potter!"

Glaring down at her with cold eyes, the last fondness he held for her evaporated at the pitiful sight before him. Dahlia's hair was in disarray, blonde locks sticking to her face, her robes creased and rumpled, her eyes bloodshot, and Harry could finally see Dahlia in all her imperfection. "I am everything without you."

The contrast between the early chapters and ch.14 to this one? This is what I've been building up to :)))

Dahlia started off as a character I wanted to keep sweet, a true friend to Harry and a powerful ally that would equally gain the Emperor's favour in the early years, before taking a backline in Tomarry's story. However, it ended up like this ^-^

This is actually one of those plot points I was talking about, and I'm so happy this chunk of Harry's story has come to an end. There is no going back from this, like there was the other times, Harry and Dahlia are no longer any sort of friends.

In the grand scheme of things, Dahlia isn't even that much of a main character, there will be more powerful enemies that Harry will face than she, but he needed to get over this hurdle and out of her shadow before he could advance with his full potential. In the early chapters, he felt very inferior to her, but now that he has something to protect. he couldn't care any less about keeping their relationship amicable and let her close enough to hurt him,

Here's to greater things for Harry in the future! Notably, even at chapter 25, I'm thinking this isn't even halfway through the story.... at least 70-75 chapters, I'm thinking :/ Maybe I can make them longer, and therefore less? I'm wondering if I'll get to 100k words with next chapter?

Also, I posted a side story chapter recently including some of Harry's future children :) And I've revealed a few things about the kids on Twitter

Chapter 26: [Australia- Part 1]

Chapter Notes

The first bits are a bit boring, the last bit was spur of the moment and a tad dramatic :)
Hoping to do a Tom POV next chapter to make up for the lack of Tom here ^-^

3.7k words

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

12th December 1998- Saturday

The morning of the twelfth dawned on Harry quicker than he'd of liked, the hubbub of noise it brought along deafening. The Court was filled with the flurrying of maids and Eunuchs, some hurriedly readying their masters and mistresses for departure and others preparing the Palace for the absence of the Emperor and his official spouses. Bags were packed, suitcases filled to the brim with robes for each day and evening, fine jewellery and trinkets that *obviously* had to come along with them.

Harry was sure that the last time hadn't been quite so hectic, but maybe that was because he had been out of the way as a Noble. There was a lot for the personnel to sort out, even though this process had been underway for a week now and planned long before that. There were always last-minute additions and problems for them to sort out; such as that little Delphina was now taking notice that her mother would be away from her, and she'd have to be stuck with her maids and nurses for the duration. That had led to a meltdown, Harry had heard, and the Consort was still steadfastly refusing to pack much of her belongings.

They would be in Australia for under two weeks, hopefully arriving back on the twenty-third, within the Royal Palace the Emperor had built there the year he'd taken over; 1964. It was aptly named 'The Scorched Palace', situated in the middle of nowhere, accessible to only those the Emperor permitted and only habitable due to magic, as it was situated in the middle of a large stretch of land most couldn't survive in due to the extreme heat.

The Palace was apparently a replica of the Court, except only with enough Palaces to house each Concubine and Consort, with additional buildings for the veritable army of personnel they would be bringing along. From the description he'd heard from Regulus, the buildings

were surrounded by a high wall, and the grounds were expansive enough that it would keep them entertained whilst the Emperor was involved in whatever politics apparently needed his personal, physical attention.

Harry stood back and watched as Anya commanded the other maids in his employ, queasily observing the proceedings. Out of all days to begin feeling the full effects of his pregnancy, it had to be on the day he would first meet the public and be under the intense scrutiny of all present. It would be the first time in over a year he had been out of the Court, although that was nothing on Cordelia, who was now facing her first breath of fresh air in sixteen years.

It still felt surreal to Harry, how quickly he'd ascended the ranks. However, he had to remember that he was yet the Emperor's favourite, and still had a while to go until he reached his new goal.

He had entered the Harem wanting a modicum of respect for his family, which meant he had needed the rank of Concubine.

Now, Harry was aiming for the position of Emperor Consort.

Exiting the floo, Harry felt his stomach lurch uncomfortably, hand coming up to cover his mouth as his throat burned and eyes watered uncomfortably. Now, at just over eight weeks pregnant, his sickness had come forth full throttle. It was as if the baby protested his decision to keep their existence secret with vehemence, making it as obvious as possible that there was something going on. And the sickness wasn't just a morning occurrence either, it seemed to follow him throughout the day, set off by the slightest disturbances.

Sasha had to remain behind, if only so that the worst of his sickness wasn't revealed- the smell of her setting it off horrendously. He had given the kitten her own room, decorated with the softest beds and blankets he could procure, plants to give the semi-feral animal places to hide, and freely accessible to her by a large flap he'd had installed on the door.

The other concubines were incensed at the Emperor's gift to him, although that ire had died down now as over a month had passed, and Sasha had yet to make more than a short

appearance outside of his Palace walls. It seemed they had all taken the position that she was simply a glorified pet, and not an extra guard as they had first assumed. Harry allowed them to continue thinking that as he trained her rigorously to patrol the perimeter of the gardens.

By his side, Anya fretted, covering Harry with her body as he leaned into her side, trying to hide the worst of his condition from the others. Luckily for him, the majority of them were enamoured with the sights of the Australian Ministry, or busy fluttering their eyelashes at the Emperor.

However, as he straightened up, the urge slowly fading away, Harry noticed the intense gaze Penny was sending his way, her eyebrows scrunched. She was beside the Emperor, standing tall and regal to his left. The Consort and the Emperor looked picturesque placed next to each other, bright blonde and icy blue contrasting perfectly with deep black and bloody red.

Harry smiled at her weakly, trying to alleviate her suspicion, and after a few moments of consideration, she appeared to let it go, pivoting to talk to the Emperor once more. He breathed out a slight sigh, shutting his eyes briefly as he felt his stomach roil in protest as he forced himself to walk closer to the others that were now gathering into a coordinated formation.

With Bellatrix and Penny standing inches behind the Emperor as his highest-ranked spouses, the rest of them fell in line. Isla and Felix, Alecko and Regulus, Patricia and Cordelia. Then, as the odd one out, Harry rounded out the formation walking between and slightly behind the last two. Surrounding them were the intimidating, masked forms of the Knights of Walpurgis, a sea of black cloaks and silver buckles between them and the ministry personnel and general public present, who had begun to gather at the sight of them.

Unlike the crowds that embraced celebrities and socialites, the gathered were silent, watching on with awe and trepidation as the Emperor and his Harem made their way through, cowed under the sharp gaze of the Knights.

At the centre of the room stood a woman with an elaborate hair-do, the style looking reminiscent to that of a unicorn that had thrown up onto a bird's nest. Harry stared unabashedly, even as she stepped out of the throng of suited politicians to bow to the Emperor. Behind her, the others followed suit, some fumbling awkwardly.

"I welcome His Imperial Majesty, The Emperor, to Australia." She remained bowing for a couple more moments, before lunging upright giddily, a sharp grin on her features. "I am Merilda Tullman, the Minister of Magic, Your Highness."

Harry cringed at the inaccurate address, seeing the shoulders of those in front of him bunch up similarly. His only view of the Emperor was the back of his head, so he couldn't ascertain whether it had gained a reaction from the man, but his voice didn't make it known. "I have yet to make your acquaintance, Mrs-"

"Ms." She interjected. At the Emperor's pause, she fluttered her red and pink eyelashes, a bold colour choice and an even bolder action. Harry felt the first stirrings of interest and amusement fill him, despite the crassness of the Minister. It had been so long since he had seen anything of the sort, those of the Court much too uptight for the liking of the only son and Godson of the Marauders. "I am unmarried."

"Ms Tullman." Thomas paused once again, and you could hear a pin drop with how silent the crowd was, awaiting his further response. "I must say, I am a little disappointed with the welcome I and my spouses have received," The Emperor said so lightly, but the temperature in the hall seemed to drop by several degrees.

The Minister blinked rapidly, having expected praise rather than a reprimand. "Pardon?"

"Your predecessor, Ms Garnet, welcomed us with much fanfare a few years back, as is to be expected from such an occasion. This pales in comparison. I must say, I am displeased." Thomas let her flutter for a little bit, tittering about how *'Oh, but there wasn't much advance given!'* And that she'd *'prioritised the people, not the festivities'*. He stopped that with a click of his tongue. "No matter, we shall simply head straight for the Palace instead, although I made sure my spouses were all dolled up for a grand welcoming ceremony. Such a shame. Let us hope the Palace has been set up to standards. Come." The Emperor commanded them, disregarding the Minister as she flapped about, following him back to the floo with pleads falling from her lips; *'But, Your Highness, we did plan a feast, if you would just follow me to the Hall'* and *'Won't you stay to greet the Lords of Australia that have come to greet you, Your Highness?'*. Thomas simply waved his hand flippantly, and although her mouth continued to move, no sound came out.

It was such a simple but powerful display of his mastery over magic. An almost minuscule percent of the population could cast without their wand, an even lower amount whilst silently.

The Emperor simply accomplished it with an off-hand twist of his wrist, barely paying further attention.

He walked between the concubines, who shifted out of his way in confusion as they had begun to sort themselves back into form. The Emperor came to a stop beside Harry, and without glancing in his direction, tucked his arm into his and began leading him to the floo, with the others squawking their dissatisfaction behind. Harry spluttered.

"Hush, I am simply in a hurry." Thomas flippantly spoke down to him as they reached the floo. "And I noticed that you struggled with the landing when you came through."

"The floo isn't my strongest form of transport, Your Majesty." Harry blustered truthfully, although to hide his predicament as well.

"Hm, at least my concubines get my title correct." The Emperor spoke loudly enough for the Minister to hear, who had stopped a few metres back, and without another second wasted, stepped into the larger-than-average fireplace. "The Scorched Palace!"

Harry promptly threw up mere inches from the Emperor's shoes once they landed, and cringed under the suspicion-filled stare sent his way.

13th December 1998- Sunday

Harry had forgotten how much he'd missed the warmth of the sun, growing used to the chill in the air as October came around, soon sweeping into November, and then into December. Now, however, in a different hemisphere, he got to experience the heat of Summer once again.

The previous day had left little time for relaxing. As soon as they had arrived within the confines of the 'Scorched Palace'- which was more of a Court- it had been too late to start much, and so, with his maids bustling about in the Palace he'd been assigned, Harry collapsed

onto the bed and fell fast asleep to the sounds of quiet muttering and scuffling feet. He had grown increasingly more exhausted as his pregnancy progressed, although it had yet to begin showing visibly. He hoped that the day it did would be a while off yet. Harry still wasn't ready to announce it. There was too much that could go wrong, even if the Emperor was informed. He trusted the other concubines as far as he could throw them, which wasn't much at all. They would surely use this against him, perhaps twisting the narrative to fit their own, or even try and get rid of his baby in the most extreme of cases.

Now, after sleeping off the worst of his exhaustion for an astonishing fifteen hours, Harry was out on the balcony of his Palace, soaking up the sun rays as he swung in the hanging chair he'd found there.

Below him, in the courtyard by his Palace, the unusual pair of Penny and Cordelia were walking arm-in-arm, heads close together as they chatted. Unusual since he knew that neither was close to the other, they'd never been ones to seek out each other's company, especially not alone. Harry observed as they paused, Penny reaching her hand out to brush against one of the plants, before being tugged along by Cordelia, who seemed rather irate. It was an odd ritual they repeated several more times, and Harry was growing increasingly suspicious of their actions.

They had surely spotted him by now, Harry not even trying to hide his inquisitive stare, yet they continued. Penny had even offered him a slight wave and smile, before being yanked again. Cordelia had yet to glance up.

"Master." The voice of Anya interrupted his musings, and, grudgingly, he removed his gaze from the pair below. The woman was standing behind him with her hands full of books. "You have received a present from his Majesty. Books, to occupy you whilst you are resting."

Harry's eyes lit up with interest. Penny and Cordelia forgotten, he picked up one of the books to read the title. 'The Conquest- Asia and The Emperor'. The others were similar titles, one for each of the continents, barring Antarctica, of course. Britain had its own text, which he already owned, but Harry was thankful for the thought. He smiled.

"Your Highness, I have brought you your tea."

Harry blinked as the soft words spoken to his side drew him out of his mind, and looked up to spot one of his maids- Aoife- standing there, a steaming cup of hot tea in her hands. She bowed his head when they locked eyes, and he took the moment to stretch, feeling his back crack satisfyingly.

"Ah, thank you, Aoife." Harry watched out of the corner of his eye as she placed the cup and saucer on the table by his parchment, before focusing once again on his work. He continued to scribble for several more minutes, before registering that he hadn't heard her leave. Aoife still stood in front of him, wringing her hands together. At his gaze, she smiled. It set off alarm bells in his mind.

"My apologies, Your Highness, I just wanted to see if you liked the tea. It's a new flavour, made from herbs native to Australia. Maia recommended it to me, and I enjoyed it so much that I thought you may like to try some."

Harry nodded, accepting her curiosity, and drew the cup closer to him. She often brought him new flavours of tea, so this wasn't as unusual as his mind was blaring at him. It was a green tea, darker than others he'd seen before. Hesitantly, he took a sip and hummed, enjoying the earthy taste, the smell equally enticing. In the back of his mind, he worried that Aoife could have tampered with it, due to how she was acting, but knew that she wouldn't be so bold as to do such a thing when there were so many witnesses. All four of his personal maids were present, and he knew they'd do all they could to inform someone if something happened. Therefore, whatever it was, if it was something, it couldn't be all too harmful, and certainly not fatal. Luckily, Harry was rather resistant to most potions and poisons, something his Mum and Severus had assured. He continued sipping, only a tiny mouthful at a time, to keep up appearances but also not ingest too much, just in case. Until his eye caught a hint of silver.

Harry frowned down at the liquid, swishing it this way and that, eyeing the strange swirls of silver that appeared with the light of the sun shining down on it, covering the surface with a strange sheen. He placed the cup down, feeling his body go cold.

He watched from the side of his eye as the maid retreated, walking strangely slow. At the clink of his cup meeting the saucer, her head turned, glancing nervously down at it, before

turning back once again. Harry swallowed thickly and waited for her to leave.

"Anya." He whispered, his throat feeling tight.

"Your Highness?"

"Call a healer. I suspect... if this isn't the first time, I suspect I may have been poisoned." He shushed her as she gasped, going pale as a ghost as she reached for the cup, which he kept out of reach. "Fetch the healer you have a vow with, and keep this situation quiet. If you must, tell whoever asks that I am feeling dizzy due to the heat."

Harry felt numb as the Healer's words sunk in.

Aoife- *that scheming bitch* - had been feeding him an anti-fertility potion, with the hopes that it would lower his chances of getting pregnant, or render him completely infertile if she got away with it for long enough.

It was only due to the fact that he was pregnant and that his magic was strong enough to burn off the worst of it, that it had yet to have any other effects besides making him feel queasier than usual. Harry had just been brushing it off as normal pregnancy sickness, but it had been the work of regular ingestion of the potion.

Aoife, who had been distant since the start, but certainly not suspicious, had been poisoning him for weeks, right under the nose of his maids and himself. He had suspected nothing from her, and it was only the strange and coincidental sense of alarm he had felt today that warned him of the possibility of poisons or potions. She had been feeding it to him through cakes and sweet treats, teas that she had been personally bringing to him, even spilling a bit of it on his pillowcase so he would breathe it in as he slept. It was only today that she had revealed her intentions, presumably eager to watch him ingest the largest dose yet, that would have surely left him struggling to conceive if he had swallowed the whole cup, if his magic hadn't been as strong, if he hadn't been pregnant already.

He felt sick to his stomach, and it had nothing to do with the potion.

With shaking, clammy hands, he grasped at the Healer's sleeve. "You cannot tell the Emperor that I am pregnant, your vow won't allow it." He stated. She looked nervous, looking at him as if he was going to keel over any moment. Harry felt like it, but he couldn't rest until he was assured the woman would do as he wished.

"Please, release me from the vow, Your Highness. The Emperor must know, he must be told that your maid was doing this, so that he can better protect your child." She pleaded with him, but he shook his head stubbornly, feeling his heart clench protectively at the mention of the baby.

The baby *that woman* would have deprived him of, that the potion would have seen never created.

"I can protect them myself!" He stated resolutely, although it was with a tinge of shame.

She stared down at him, eyes deceiving her feelings. "Yet this has happened." She cupped his hands in her, and he clenched them tight, setting his jaw stubbornly. "I will not tell the Emperor, I can't, not with the vow. But I must tell His Majesty of the potion, and he will grow suspicious why it hasn't had more of an effect. This has happened before, he knows it well."

"My magic is strong, you said it saved me." Harry injected, and she sighed, irate.

"Yes, but you would have been worse off if your baby hadn't absorbed some of the remnants."

His heart stopped, stuttered, then ricocheted into a frenzy, beating so fast he became dizzy. "They absorbed some?! Then how can you be sure there are no effects to my child!" Harry gripped her tighter, staring into her eyes with madness and ferocity he had not thought himself capable of, yet the thought of his child being hurt by this-

By his carelessness-

The Healer hushed him gently. "There will be none. The potion prevents pregnancy, it does not harm a current one. However, I cannot say for certainty that this may not affect your later pregnancies. You may experience sickness more heavily, or even struggle to retain the pregnancy in some cases." She explained, stroking the back of his hands with gentle circles of her thumbs as he gasped wetly. "I am sorry, Your Highness, but as little an effect as this had, it will still have some lasting repercussions, no matter how minuscule they hopefully will be. However, please know that your current pregnancy is healthy, and as far as I can tell, you and your baby will not suffer."

Harry nodded his head, taking in the information stonily. "Please go and inform the Emperor. Tell him that my magic burned most of it off, but that it has left me feeling sick; this should explain away my morning sickness for the time being. And... and tell him of the effects it may have. I feel honesty, as far as I may permit, is the best case in this scenario."

The Healer sighed, looking resigned. "Yes, Your Highness."

Aoife was dragged away by a swarm of Knights mere minutes after the Healer left, and according to Regulus, who had hurried to him soon after, thoroughly questioned, although in which way he wasn't informed. All he knew is that, due to a gap of memories in her mind, it was impossible to uncover the reasons why she had been feeding him the potion, or if someone had ordered her to do such a thing.

Thomas was, consequently, incredibly irked by the situation, and had stolen away the maid. It reminded Harry of Giana, and how he had never seen her after that incident. It sent shivers down his spine at the implications, but also filled him with a strange sense of *wanting*.

The Emperor was doing this for him. *For Harry*.

And here are the repercussions!

You know how in early chapters Harry was all 'test these roses, I'm suspicious'. He may have grown more suspicious of the other concubines, but he's grown too comfortable and complacent with his staff. This has been noticed and acted on. Honestly, the repercussions are much less than they could have been, and I'm actually being very lenient with the possible effects of this poisoning. However, I mean, if Harry had revealed his pregnancy, it would have been actual poison rather than an anti-fertility potion.

Forethought and all that. So Harry's done good ^-^

Tom is pissed. He is so pissed I'm unsure how to write it right now. I'll probably come back to that ending bit one day and add some more, but at the moment, just imagine blood, screaming and a few little crucios. Aoife is so dead. Which is a surprise, because I originally had it as Orla, but Harry would never drink teas made by Orla, so I turned her into Aoife. Aoife was also the one who handled Harry's suspicion of the roses at the beginning

Anyway, now I get to do a Tom POV, which is sorely needed because for all that this is a Tomarry fanfic, I've been enjoying the Harem aspect wayyy too much for someone that's going to get rid of it at the first chance I get to give Tom and excuse ^-^

Anyway, hope you enjoyed :)) Updates of the next chapter will be on my Twitter [Not calling it X]: xStrawberry_Jam

Chapter 27- [Australian Trip: 2]

Chapter Notes

At 3.1k, this chapter isn't as long as I suspected it would be with all it reveals

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

20th December 1998- Sunday

"Gold or Silver, Your Highness?"

Harry met the eyes of Amari through the mirror, barely visible behind the ornate hairpins she was holding up. He reached up to take the gold one in his hands, tracing his fingertips gently over the flowery details, especially on the snake motifs with emerald-encrusted eyes and twisting vines of pure gold. It was a gift from the Emperor, the other as well, for his promotion to the rank of Concubine. There had not yet been a reason for Harry to wear one, as ostentatious as they were, but the man had ordered that they dress well.

"The gold, it'll go well with my robes."

His hair was longer than when he had first arrived, just enough so that a hairpin could be weaved into it, with other pins and silken ribbons that blended in to strengthen that hold. It wasn't overly long, however, just enough to cover his ears and brush annoyingly at his neck. Perhaps, when he was older, he'd be more inclined to grow it out, as was the fashion in the Court. As of the moment, he was still too attached to keeping it short like his dads'.

Harry shrugged on his robes, wincing as the nail guards Anya had convinced him to wear scraped along the silk noisily. He was getting all dressed up for the ball the Australian Ministry had put together in the few days since their arrival, and felt incredibly anxious about every detail of his outfit. The accessories; bracelets, earrings, hairpins. The shoes, his hairstyle, the robes.

The robes he wore were incredibly intricate, lovingly crafted items. Anya, who had ordered for them to be created, had obviously used up quite a chunk of his stipend to have them made so finely, and with such soft materials. They were Concubine green with golden embroidery, pictures of deers and fauna twirling about the hems of the robes. The sleeves were equally as decorated, sweeping things that would cover his hands in an abundance of material, emphasising and exaggerating every sweep he made.

He smoothed down the robes, eyeing himself critically in the mirror. Whether a trick of the light, or perhaps wishful thinking, Harry thought he could perhaps see the beginnings of a bump growing. Or, perhaps that was just lunch, as he was only just over nine weeks along as of a few days ago. He sighed, tying the sash so it fell over his stomach, hiding whatever it could be.

"Master, we must be leaving. The floo connection to the Ministry will be closed soon, and His Majesty's other concubines have already left." Anya sounded worried, but they were still on time. He told her as such, but Amari was looking equally stressed, so he relented and peeled himself reluctantly away from the mirror and his self-deprecating stare.

"I'm ready, we can go."

Harry arrived in the almost-empty Ministry atrium, sighing as he clung a little tighter to his Head Maid, his stomach unsettled but not as bad as it had been. Anya checked him over thoroughly but inconspicuously, settling once there were no crinkles in his robes, and his hair was as tame as it could be.

"The ball is being held in the Hall. We are slightly behind, but not late just yet, Your Highness." Anya hurried him through the corridors, seeming to know where she was headed. After a few minutes of twists and turns, a pair of large, oaken doors came into view, and she released his arm. "This is the Hall, Your Highness. I will be waiting with the other maids to receive you once the ball is over."

He smiled at her gratefully, knowing full well he'd never have made it here, even with directions. "Thank you." Standing straighter, he stepped forward and closer to the doors. Guarding them were wizards dressed in black gear, wands in their hands but lowered to the

floor. They bowed as he stopped before them. Before he could introduce himself, they snapped to attention and pulled the doors open, light spilling out into the darkened hallway.

The hall was opulent, to say the least, with its stylised pillars and golden accents being the most prevalent feature. The hall was bright, the glass-domed ceiling letting in the last natural light of the day, aided by the many chandeliers that hung from it. It was clear to see that the Australian Ministry had gone all out to impress the Emperor, whether that was due to the embarrassment they faced a week ago, or whether this had been planned extravagantly from the start.

"His Highness, Concubine Slytherin-Potter-Black," Harry winced at the long name. "Sixth Royal Concubine of His Majesty, The Emperor." The herald to the side announced him, and Harry startled at the sudden shout. Squaring his shoulders, he headed for the dias as confidently as he could muster. He had to walk through the hall of staring politicians and Lords to reach it, shivering slightly under the intense stares sent his way. It made Harry fidget slightly and walk even faster.

He bowed as he reached the dias steps, making his way up them as Thomas smiled at him.

"A little late, I see, my Concubine." His voice was a teasing lilt, matched by the smirk on his lips. Harry sheepishly bowed his head again in apology.

"Apologies-"

"It is unacceptable." Bellatrix interrupted with a snap, sneering down at him from her spot to the right of the Emperor. "How dare you be late and keep the Emperor and the gathered Lords and Ladies waiting."

"It is quite rude of you, Brother Harry. We have been here for a little while now." Penny chimed in, her voice sweet and full of disappointment. It made him feel like a young boy again, being told off by the grownups arriving late to lessons or dawdling on the way down to dinner. "The servers have had to be delayed twice."

Under their disapproving gazes, Harry's shoulders slumped. "My apologies, Sisters, Your Majesty."

Bellatrix tutted again, fluffing herself up. "His Majesty has been waiting on you to begin the feast, you have made an embarrassment-"

The Emperor clicked his tongue, sending a narrow-eyed glance at the Consort. "Enough. He has been ill for several days, as you all know," His eyes narrowed further, red brightening with barely controlled anger, which Harry could hear in his voice. "It is a welcome surprise that he made it. Thank you for coming despite the trouble, my Concubine."

Harry gave him a weak smile, still reeling from the verbal lashing he'd just been subjected to by the Consorts. "You requested for me to come, Your Majesty, I wouldn't refuse such an invite."

Bellatrix scoffed. "It was not an invite, but yet you are late-"

"Bellatrix." Thomas grounded out, magic spiking in a violent way that silenced the hall. Those closest reeled back physically, Harry stepping back a little as the Emperor's magic became visible like heatwaves on the horizon. "I said enough."

"Yes, Your Majesty." The Consort bumbled uncharacteristically, the whites of her eyes glinting starkly. The Emperor continued to stare at her for several more moments before relenting and turning his gaze on Harry.

"Please take your seat, I will be commencing the feast momentarily."

Harry, still feeling jittery from the magical display, bowed his head again and shuffled quickly to his seat by Cordelia, at the end of the head table. The woman shifted as he sat next to her, leaning closer.

"You have caused a fuss." She hissed sharply into his ear, voice hushed. Harry cringed at her words, looking around the hall to see the eyes of many on him, some staring with little more than interest, some with icy coldness and disdain that made him gulp. "You should be more careful, especially in your condition." Harry went cold at the insinuation of her words and whipped his head to stare at her. Cordelia gave him a last sharp glance, before backing off.

He continued to glance worriedly at her, fretting his lip between his teeth. Did she know of his pregnancy, or was she referring to his recent poisoning? Harry didn't know the extent of the other concubines' knowledge of the situation, but the Emperor had said they understood he'd been 'ill'. Was that all Cordelia's words had been about? But the way she had looked at him-

The Emperor's chair scraped as he stood, drawing Harry's undivided attention towards the man. He hadn't been able to see his splendour in full when Thomas had been sat, but now, Harry could look upon the magnificent robes in full. They were predominantly black as usual but made of a fine material that gave off an iridescent glow with every shift. The robes, similarly to his own, were decorated with a golden thread, weaving a story of war and destruction across the hems and down the sleeves, surrounding the centre image of a snake winding in on itself. They were beautiful and eye-catching, and Harry heard the awed sighs of many as they too laid eyes on the Emperor's beauty.

"I thank you all for attending this evening, Lords and Ladies of the realm, Minister and members of the cabinet. It is quite a sight, despite the short notice." He smirked. "It has come to my attention that the Ministry has come into contact with something I have been searching for for decades now. I was most enthusiastic to learn of this and ask for the Minister's full cooperation in my endeavour. If not, well... It's best not to ruin the festivities with threats and such, as this is a joyous occasion. That is all, the ball may begin."

Hesitantly, still reeling from the Emperor's speech and previous show of magic, the Lords began eating, chatter stilted. The clinks of cutlery on china were the loudest noises, a slight murmur of conversation making its way up to the dias. He and the others also began eating in silence, watching the Emperor out of the corner of their eyes as the man hummed at the taste of the beef.

Also on the table were roasted duck and chicken, plates of lamb and pork, piles of perfectly golden roast potatoes and bowls filled with vegetables, and Yorkshire puddings stacked high on plates. The gravy smelt amazing, the wafting smell making his stomach growl with deep-seated hunger.

He piled his plate, avoiding the Yorkshire puddings and their slightly eggy scent, keeping the veg away from the meat and then pouring the gravy on top.

"What *are* you eating?" Came a perplexed voice from his left, and Harry paused his slathering of mint sauce on chicken and turned to face its owner.

Cordelia was watching him with a mixture of amazement and disgust, lip twitching slightly. Not wanting to let the forkful grow cold, Harry quickly ate it, humming in satisfaction, before clearing his throat.

"Chicken and mint sauce. It sounded nice."

"The mint sauce is for the lamb." She spoke as if Harry was an idiot, and it rankled him slightly.

He waved his hand dismissively. "Can't stand the taste of lamb, but I wanted some of the sauce."

Cordelia leaned a little closer to him, sighing. "Please try a be a little more conspicuous. Many at this table have been pregnant before, the signs aren't easy to hide, especially if you insist on eating such...combinations."

Harry nearly dropped his fork as fear and shock filled him at the clear pointedness of her words. Well, that answered that. And it also gave him a lot more to worry about. If Cordelia had noticed already, who else had? "Thank you for reminding me." He uttered quietly, face feeling numb.

She breathed out a sigh, nodding.

22nd December 1998- Tuesday

Piles of documents sat orderly on his desk, covering its surface. He'd been working non-stop since the end of the feast, the documents having seemingly doubled during his night of relaxation. 'There was no rest for the wicked', he thought to himself, lips twitching at the thought.

"Your Majesty," His Head Eunuch spoke, disturbing him suddenly from his writing. Humming, Thomas folded the parchment in his hands, taking his time to do so neatly, and put it away in the folder away from prying eyes. Then, he looked up to wave the Eunuch on, who had paused at seeing the state of his desk and self. He had ink stains on his hands and face, he was sure, but this Eunuch especially wouldn't breathe a word of such outside of this room. The man bowed at his attention. "I have collected what you asked."

Thomas' eyes lit up with glee. "Excellent!" He clapped his hands together, sweeping an area clean as he took the folder out of the man's hands. "You have it all?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. Photographs, documents, it was all there as you expected."

He stared at the folder with a dark sort of pleasure. "They were foolish not to destroy such things, but I am glad they did not."

"Is there anything else needed?"

Thomas waved his hand dismissively. "No, leave me be. I need to consolidate it all. The evidence needs to be clear, there can be no misunderstandings, otherwise, we'll lose the trail once more."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

He hummed as he leafed through the folder, pages upon pages of damning information that solidified his speculation filling it. Smirking, he picked up a photo containing the clear evidence he had sought.

Within the photo was the smiling facade of the buffoon Minister the Australian Lords had elected, dressed flamboyantly in pink and purple. And alongside her was the twinkling visage of his runaway enemy, in a garish gown of yellow.

After decades, Albus Dumbledore had finally come out of hiding.

23rd December 1998- Wednesday

"Are you certain of this?"

They had been back in England for less than an hour, and already, Thomas had been accosted by one of his concubines. Far from the usual, they were not here to seduce him, but rather to inform him of something he'd already begun to heavily suspect.

"Yes, Your Majesty, I believe it to be the truth. Far be it that I am the sort to tell on others when such joyous news as this is the sort to be told personally, but I have concerns. Brother Harry has been seen to be growing increasingly weaker as the weeks go by, he seems violently ill. I am worried, the poisoning must have affected him more than he let on."

Thomas swallowed harshly. It was his own belief that his concubines had a grace period of three months, or twelve weeks, to inform him, but it still stung that Harry, whom he'd been growing increasingly fond of, had left it so long.

By his estimation, the man could be as far along in his pregnancy as exactly twelve weeks or as little as nearly ten. He was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt and believe the lower estimate, but it was still cutting it close.

He had been suspicious, he was far from unobservant and dull, even a blind man could have guessed something was wrong, but he hadn't wanted to presume. Then came the harrowing news of his Concubines' poisoning, and it had given the sickness he'd witnessed an excuse. Thomas had witnessed many of his concubines fall to poison, by each other and by others residing in the Court. Bellatrix herself had been a victim to the very same anti-fertility potion, suffering miscarriage after miscarriage in her self-imposed quest to give them a child, despite his pleas after the fifth to cease her madness, that he was content with her help as his most senior concubine. Delphina had been her thirteenth pregnancy, and the only one to bring them a living child. It had cost her much to bring their daughter into the world, and for that, he'd always carry some fondness for the woman, despite her madness.

But Harry was most likely pregnant, and Thomas was conflicted.

The thought of the baby, which could be a child more powerful than he'd ever sired due to his and his Concubine's combined magical power, was heady. They would be the combination of the Slytherin and Potter lines, as well as the Gaunt, Black and possibly Peverell; that is, if that family magic was sensed within their child. They would have the possibility of inheriting so many family titles and magics, at least until more were born, leaving them as the most politically powerful of his children. Yet, he worried.

Most of his Concubines had given birth after the age of twenty, with the exception being Evangeline with his eldest daughter Evana, at nineteen. Harry was younger than this, with Thomas' estimations placing the due date incredibly near the man's birthday, perhaps after it if luck was with them.

This then led Thomas to think of the horrible scenario that there was a large chance this pregnancy wouldn't last. Many others hadn't, fifty-five pregnancies and only twenty-one had resulted in living children, nineteen of which still lived. He was ashamed to admit it, but he had done little to rectify this in the past. In more recent years, he'd been able to quell it by a large margin, but still, many persisted in poisoning their fellow concubines, and as shown by recent events, they would even poison those whom they thought were not yet carrying, to prevent them from ever doing so.

What would they do if they had known? How safe was Harry, and the possible child that the man was carrying?

Thomas clenched his fists, seething.

He could not tolerate this, he had never tolerated this, but some of his concubines took his decree not to harm them too far. They had been harming his children, born or not, for many years. They had killed off their own, even, when it suited their needs. They had even killed off each other, playing on his fondness for his children to punish others, benefitting from his protectiveness.

He would protect the baby his Concubine was perhaps carrying, and care for the others that were yet to come. If his concubines didn't step into line sooner than later, there would be no more.

The Slytherin crown would go to his most worthy grandchild, that had always been his plan.

Chapter End Notes

Ah look, there's the plot!

Considering I have nearly 70 chapters planned for this story, however, that plot probably won't be relevant for a while longer. Instead, you'll get family fluff and Harry becoming Tom's favourite to fill the void until it gets to that point ^-^

Also, I finally reached 100k words! :))

Thanks for reading!!

Twitter: xStrawberryJams_

[To cut a long story short: I got in to Uni, had a birthday, got the worst headache of my life so the chapter is a few days late :)))]

Chapter 28: [End of 1998]

Chapter Notes

A 3.8k chapter for you all this time :))

It's only a few chapters now until Baby Potter arrives!!! There's a little bit about them in Harry's most recent chapter in Additions :))

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

25th December 1998- Friday

The frosty morning air made Harry shiver under his many layers, clutching his robes closer to his body in an attempt to warm himself. With the deepening cold of the winter months now fully upon them, his winter robes had been pulled out from the back of his wardrobe, and today he found himself wrapped twofold, swathed in layers of fabric to hopefully keep out the worst of the chill. Heating charms had been applied aplenty, but Harry made sure his robes were impervious to magic, which unfortunately included his own for the time being.

Wound in Harry's hair was a plainer pin than the one he had worn to the ball, which he had unwrapped just this morning, a gift from his Mum and Dad. It was pure gold, embedded with tiny rubies that he hid before putting it on, not wanting *that* sort of ire directed towards him.

Red was for Imperial Noble Consorts. He would be crucified if he was spotted wearing the colour, even just a tiny amount.

As he was headed out of the door, Harry spotted the replacement for Aoife dusting shelves on the opposite side of the room. She was a tall woman with red hair and a brusque demeanour, named Attalie. She seemed nice enough, although kept her distance, always at the sidelines, never approaching or acknowledging him past a greeting and a bow.

It made sense. Her predecessor had been killed, after all, which he had only found out after prying. Thomas had seemed hesitant in informing him, but Harry had been adamant. He'd felt his heart stop when his suspicions had been confirmed by the man, shying away when he

reached out to hold his hands, but after being soothed by that dark, melodious voice, Harry had caved and let the Emperor's arms wrap around him.

It had been a close call, too close for comfort. With the amount she had been dosing him with near the end, and for however long she had been feeding him the anti-fertility potion for, Harry surely would have struggled, if not been unable to conceive. He had let his emotions out in the comforting embrace of Thomas' arms, feeling guilty at keeping the secret of their growing child from him, but being equally assured that it was the best course of action.

"Can you have the rooms heated before I get back? It's rather chilly, I don't want to get ill so close to the new year." Harry asked Attalie, arm wrapped around Anya's as she fussed with his hair unsuccessfully, hovering in the open doorway.

The woman glanced at him, barely turning, and bowed. "Yes, Your Highness."

With one last glance back, surveying the hustle and bustle of his maids as they packed away his presents and tidied up the living room, Harry patted his pocket anxiously and headed out into the chilly air.

Dreadedly, despite the festive occasion, the morning meeting was still held. Even more so, perhaps, so that the concubines could brag to one another about the gifts they had received from their families, or that they had gifted to their loved ones; royal children and Emperor included.

"Aurelia dearly loved her pony I gifted her," Penny informed them eagerly once the important business had been dealt with, a fond smile on her lips. "It is still young yet, but it is a fine beauty that will grow under her care. She's already smitten." The Consort looked beautiful and perfectly festive despite her sunny yellow robes, sat in her chair regally. On her lap was a tiny black kitten, a yellow bow wrapped around its neck. "Oh, and of course, my family sent along a gift for me as well. She was approved by the Emperor, so I've named her Soot."

Glancing down at the black mass of fur, Bellatrix's lip twitched. "A rather adorable kitten in comparison to the one Brother Harry received from His Majesty. But I suppose your family

can't quite afford such a rare and splendid animal as a Wampus Cat."

Harry blinked, startled at Sasha's mention. He didn't miss as Penny stiffened, grimacing at the insult dished out in his name. It was odd for Bellatrix to use him in such a positive light, especially since she and Penny seemed to get along for the most part.

"Of course not, Sister. A Wampus Cat's price is immeasurable, it is expected that my family couldn't afford such a Creature. I highly doubt even your family could have procured one. Such is the feat and generous gift that the Emperor has given to our youngest Concubine." She responded in kind, a genial smile on her face.

Bellatrix snarled wordlessly at the jab but backed off with a huff. "His Majesty is incredibly generous, yes. His gift to me was several bolts of rare fabric, so I too know of his benevolence." She couldn't help but add, and the two continued with their stand-off as Harry focused in on another conversation.

"It has been very hard for Serina, being away from me for so long, so I thought to get her a little pet for company, a puppy." Erin was saying, gesturing with her hands. "It seems that gifting pets is a trend, these days."

"What did you receive, Brother Harry?" Regulus asked from the opposite row, wearing a silver hairpin that sparkled with emeralds that he'd revealed he'd been gifted.

"My parents gifted me this hairpin and a few other accessories. My Uncles thought to get me a few spell books, so that I may further my education still."

Regulus, to Harry's surprise, laughed like his brother. Throwing his head back, his hair a cascade of silk, he let out a throaty bark-like laugh. "My brother, thinking to gift books? That husband of his is a good influence."

"A werewolf, a good influence?" Bellatrix sneered the word as if it was poison on her tongue. "Pah, what does a mutt know of goodness?"

Harry didn't even begin to retort before Regulus shot a dark glare at his cousin, his mirth dampened. "Do not insult my brother-in-law so, Cousin. I may just see that as an insult, and perhaps our Brother here may see it as such as well. Remus is a member of the House of Black now, we do not insult our own, as you well know."

The Consort bristled. "That mutt-"

"Is not a mutt. Remus is my Brother-in-law and your Lord. You would do well to remember that, Cousin." He icily intoned, arching a dark brow before turning back to Harry. "It is wonderful that he seems to be growing up. I'm happy for him."

Harry smiled gratefully. "You and me both, Uncle."

Harry trod up the steps to the Emperor's Palace carefully, hand gripped tightly in Anya's as she stabilised him on the slippery steps. One unfortunate fall and...well, Harry didn't want to even think about it. He clutched his robes closer to him, patting his pocket once more.

The Knights standing at the entrance were staring down at him as he made his way up, blank expressions on their faces. They were dressed in dark robes that enlarged their forms, two onyx guardians protecting the chambers of their Lord. As he reached the final step, the one on the right moved.

"Halt. What business do you have with the Emperor, Your Highness? His Majesty is busy." The man spoke in monotone, face hidden behind his signature ceramic mask.

Harry stopped a few steps from the top, freezing. "I simply wished to give him a gift. For Christmas." He clarified when the man continued to stand there.

"I cannot allow you entry, Your Highness." The Knight blandly responded.

"I can leave the gift with you to pass on to His Majesty-"

"Please leave, Your Highness." The other spoke. "You are disrupting the peace. His Majesty is busy, as we said."

Harry frowned. "I simply wish to leave this with you if I must-"

The doors behind the pair opened, and there stood the Head Eunuch, dressed in black robes with golden edges, the only Eunuch allowed to wear such fine garments. He had a displeased expression on his face as he stared down at the guards, a sneer twitching at his lips. "His Majesty will see you now, Your Highness. And he also sends his apologies if these...ruffians have disturbed you."

The knight on the left twitched, shifting antagonistically, but backed down at the sharp glare sent his way by the other man.

"Come along, Your Highness."

"Yes, of course." Harry hurried up the steps and slipped in, the doors banging shut behind him.

Harry entered the Emperor's office, bright-eyed and jittery as he cradled the box behind his back. It fit into the palm of his hand, only a small present, but one Harry had thought a lot about to make possible. He'd sent off his ideas to many craftsmen and found one that was able to create what he'd envisioned perfectly.

Two cufflinks with the crests of both of their Houses, entwined harmoniously, beautiful, intricate things that sparkled with the magical protections Harry had woven into every crevice. A symbol of their marriage, and their future child. Children, he hoped.

"My Concubine, It is good to see you." The Emperor welcomed him, standing from his seat behind the desk. Harry smiled, still feeling a little out of it from the hostility of the guards.

"It is good to see you as well, Your Majesty. Merry Christmas."

He smiled softly in return. "And you as well. Did you like my gift?"

The Emperor's present to him had been packed in a black box wrapped in a golden ribbon. It was pretty, and the robes that matched the colours were even prettier. Silky smooth and patterned with golden snakes, they reminded him starkly of the Emperor's usual style, and Harry had eagerly shrugged them on to test their fit. Perfect, tailored to his body shape, although he wouldn't be wearing them any time soon.

"I loved it, Thomas. I hope you like yours too." Harry shoved the box at him, enthusiastically watching as he unwrapped it carefully.

Thomas opened the box, his eyes glinting with eager anticipation. He smiled softly, pressing a gentle kiss to Harry's brow. "Thank you, my Concubine. It's the perfect gift."

Harry, having caught the brief flash of disappointment in the man's gaze, plastered a smile on his face. "I'm glad you like it, Your Majesty."

Thomas' red eyes snapped up to meet his own. He frowned. "It is not disappointing." Harry startled, spluttering slightly. "It is simply not what I thought it was going to be. Forgive me."

"No, no! That's fine, I didn't mean to imply anything! But, may I ask what you thought it was going to be?"

He sighed as his Concubine looked up at him with his doe-shaped eyes, the green sparkling and fresh amidst the dark tones of his office. "Something less tangible I suppose." His lip quirked up at the confused stare of the man, and he let his voice turn sultry. "Perhaps you can give me a kiss, that is partly what I had in mind."

Harry reddened beautifully, reaching up to mess with his hair- a nervous habit. "Um, I guess I can do that. Your Majesty." He quickly tagged on, stepping closer. Thomas rounded the desk, taking in the man in his full glory.

He was dressed in thick robes that hid his figure perfectly beneath them, and, taking that as a slight, he deftly untied the first one, delighting in the gasp that left Harry's lips. His hair was mussed, unruly as ever but oh-so endearing that it wasn't the annoyance he'd thought it'd be. His lips were slightly chapped but glistening, parted with desire. His eyes were filled with the same hunger that Thomas himself felt, clouded with want. And if he looked hard enough, Thomas could just see the beginning of a curve rounding his stomach now that a layer had been untied. His eyes roved the area, drinking in the sight, flitting quickly away as Harry wrapped his hands around his neck and leaned in, slotting their lips together in a passionate kiss that he sank into eagerly.

There was no doubt in his mind now. His Concubine was pregnant, and with under two weeks left of the grace period, he was growing concerned that, perhaps, Harry *wasn't* going to inform him until he couldn't hide it away any longer.

He'd have to force the man to confess, one way or another.

31st December 1998- Thursday

"My Primary Consort, as the head of my Royal Harem, I ask you to share this night with me. Do you accept?"

A repeat of last year's formality. A repeat of what must have been the same scenario for the last twenty-two years. Bellatrix had been Head of the Harem since its creation, her top spot secure for the majority of her reign, only usurped by Evangeline a minor few times.

Penny stood closely behind her, blue eyes watching the events sharply. Her gaze boring into the Emperor's own, begging him silently to change the ritual, to focus on the upcoming beauty that had risen from Second-Class Attendant to Consort in just ten years, half the time it had taken Bellatrix to rise from Noble.

The Emperor tapped his fingers on the arm of his chair, head tilted as Bellatrix eagerly accepted his invitation. He met Penny's eyes, red clashing with blue, before meeting cold brown.

"Bellatrix," His voice was silky smooth and filled with confidence as he broke through the scenario that had continued to loop for over two decades now, drawing the undivided attention of all. "Perhaps some company? We could use a pretty cupbearer."

The woman cackled, and Penny's smile dropped. "Yes, yes! That sounds wonderful! That Eunuch of yours never does stick around long enough to keep refilling our cups." She turned her head to speak directly to the woman behind her. "You wish to join us, Sister."

Penny met her gaze stiffly. "It would be an honour, Your Majesty, Sister."

With flourished movements, the Emperor stood, linking his arm with Bellatrix's, who preened under his attention. Then, he held out his other to Penny, who sidled up to him elegantly, cheeks flushed slightly and relief palpable.

Harry watched, heart prickling with jealousy, as they walked out of the hall, leaving them to wrap up the festivities.

1st January 1999- Friday

"Sister Penny, the Emperor compliments your trustworthiness in the face of a difficult and personal plight. He would like to extend his gratitude for your truthfulness." The woman glanced at the other, eyes glinting. "I would also like to personally thank you for your constant presence last night. You were a wonderful *cupbearer* ." She emphasised the last word, a cruel glint in her eyes.

"I thank His Majesty and yourself for your kind words." Penny accepted, smiling up at the other Consort, her calm demeanour a far cry from the startled, wide-eyed stare she had given her the night before.

Bellatrix shifted, lip curling. "And with the dawn of the new year, His Majesty also..." She paused, eyes closing. When she opened them next, she looked a mixture of resigned and furious, emotions which she attempted to keep under wraps as she plastered a half-hearted smile on her face. "Brother Harry, His Majesty promotes you to the rank of fourth Concubine." Her dark eyes bore into his own, features hard as stone. To his right, Patricia visibly seethed, her face turning red as her hands clenched. In front of him, Cordelia stared, tilting her head, not reacting as explosively as he would have thought. This made her the lowest-ranked Concubine, now. And it also pushed back Patricia to 5th, who-

"And what is His Majesty's reasoning for this?" Her voice was chilly, staring up at Bellatrix and the scroll she held with eyes that burned with fury. He chanced a glance at her, meeting her mad stare unflinchingly when she turned to him. Her lip curled, blue eyes blazing.

"His Majesty has not, which leads me to ask, do you know why the Emperor has promoted you, Brother?" Bellatrix questioned him, and Harry bit his lip, plastering a look of confusion on his face.

He swallowed the words that he wanted to blurt out. *I'm pregnant* . "I do not, Sister. I am in the dark as much as you."

Bellatrix scoffed, staring down at him. "Well, It can't be for nothing; His Majesty wouldn't do such a thing on a whim."

"He has previously, Sister." Isla, a usually silent spectator in meetings, spoke up. "Recently, Sister Malfoy was promoted simply because she was entertaining. His Majesty's favour with

Brother Harry is growing, and he is promoting him as he did with his other favoured previously. You remember how Sister Penny shot through the ranks, don't you?"

The other Consort tutted. "I suppose that's true. You should graciously thank the Emperor for your promotion then."

"His Majesty is most gracious." Harry agreed, curling his hands further into his sleeves, trying his hardest to still their trembling.

Harry sped back to his Palace, heavily breathing but not stopping for a moment, not even at the insistence of Anya, who was hissing into his ear that his carelessness could harm his baby. He ignored her, stuck in his own thoughts about his mistakes.

Who knew about them? Did the Emperor? Was that what the promotion was about?

But Consort Isla had mentioned how the Emperor sometimes promoted his concubines on a whim. Yet, could Harry really rely on such a coincidence? Could he allow himself to believe it?

That twelve-week deadline suddenly felt like a ton of bricks weighing heavily on his shoulders.

7th January 1999- Thursday

Harry worried his lip as he stared at the date on the calendar, underlined starkly with a red pen.

Today, he was twelve weeks into his pregnancy, and he could feel the significance of his choice weighing on him. He still hadn't informed the Emperor, and after today, that choice would have ramifications for him, depending on how long his silence lasted.

Harry still didn't feel ready to tell his husband, however. As the weeks went by, the stares from the other concubines had become harsher and more hostile. He'd brought dangerous attention to himself at the Australian Ball back in December, and a few still hadn't forgotten that. Worse, the ones who had stayed behind soon found out about that altercation and how the Emperor had responded to it, and they too had things to say. The first few daily meetings hadn't gone without a snide comment from one about his 'gall', and the topic still popped up now and then. It was as if they were intent on besmirching his reputation to his face whilst they still could.

His promotion to fourth Concubine had only further inflamed things.

Patricia had yet to stop glaring at him every time they crossed paths, sneering at him during the daily meeting, and snidely commenting on Harry's every action. Her watchful gaze was becoming dangerous, especially now that his belly was starting to grow.

He had first noticed it a few days ago, the tightness of his robes growing so uncomfortable that when he stripped them off, there was a faint line where the tie had pressed into his stomach. His previously flat stomach, that was now rounded slightly. Harry had cupped it gently, awed and amazed that he had missed the growth for so long, had been so wrapped up in worrying that he hadn't noticed the visible evidence that his baby was healthy and growing.

He would have to get some new robes as soon as possible and start making a gradual change to looser styles so as to not arouse suspicion. Harry was heading into dangerous territory. If anyone else found out, such as characters like Patricia or Pippa, would they tattle on him to the Emperor, who Harry assumed knew by now? Or would they do something more sinister?

There was a knock on his office door. "Come in."

Anya entered the room, peeking around the door. "Your Highness, the Healer is here."

Harry put down his pen, scrunching his eyebrows. "What for? I didn't call for her."

"To check up on you and your condition," Anya responded vaguely, although her eyes flickered down to his stomach. Harry pushed out from behind his desk eagerly.

"Already?"

"It is twelve weeks already, Your Highness. A scan is needed, to check up on..." She trailed off, but Harry was out of the door at the word 'scan', heading for his bedroom. Privacy was needed.

"Send her to my room. Don't let the other maids know of her true purpose."

The healer placed her wand gently onto his stomach, moving it back and forth. Harry watched, transfixed, as the blurry grey mass on the screen shifted, and he first laid eyes on his baby. They were a vaguely human-shaped blob, cocooned in darkness and shifting ever so slightly. Harry had never seen something so beautiful in his life.

He let out a choked gasp of awe, fingers reaching out to stroke the screen, other fist clenching so as not to disrupt the movements of the wand.

"As I suspected, there is only one. Baby looks healthy and is growing on schedule. You are twelve weeks along, correct?"

"I am." He responded shakily, eyes still fixed on the softly moving figure of his child.

"Perfect. From the looks of things, I would date your delivery date to be around the fifteenth of July, which would be thirty-nine weeks into your pregnancy. However, this date may change, and do not be alarmed if it passes by a few weeks."

Harry looked at the Healer, a sudden panicked thought coming to mind. "And what if I don't make it to then?"

She sighed. "Let's get you safely to twenty weeks first of all. Then, I will give you another scan so we can check up on the baby once more. If there are any problems between now and then, please call for me as soon as possible. And... pardon my rudeness, Your Highness, but it would be prudent of you to inform His Majesty of your pregnancy before the day ends. There will be consequences-"

Harry glared at her, his toxic green stare deadly. "The consequences of His Majesty are far lesser than losing this child due to poisoning. I thank you, but I do not need your advice."

She pursed her lips and bowed. "My apologies. I wish health upon you and the baby, then. And I hope that the Emperor will forgive you soon enough."

Harry snarled, hand protectively covering his stomach. "They are my baby too, I'm carrying them. Besides, I believe him to already know."

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

I'm starting Uni in a week, so I'm going to spend this last week of freedom writing as much of ch.29 as possible :))

Thoughts on the chapter? I kept adding more and more scenes, such as the kiss scene which didn't exist in my plan! More drama to come, especially from the key players ^-^

On to 1999!

Twitter: xStrawberryJam_

Fandom Wiki: https://intimacy.fandom.com/wiki/Intimacy_Wiki [This is coming along more now, and I've also noticed a couple of people have been helping me fill it out!

Thanks to them ^-^]

Chapter 29: [Two's Company]

Chapter Notes

A 3.8k chapter this time :) Ch.30 is already at 1.5k as well ^-^

Also, this book is nearly at 100k reads on this site??!

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

15th January 1999- Friday

"Father, watch this, watch this!"

Harry heard happy squeals of childish laughter as he entered the gardens, and stopped still, shocked at the sight before him: One of the Emperor's youngest daughters, Eleventh Princess Aloisa; who was Attendant Lukas' little girl, was trying to do a handstand as her father watched on. The Emperor was dressed finely in his signature black and gold robes, hair slicked back and one sleek, dark eyebrow raised.

"I'm watching," Thomas reassured the girl as she righted herself to check on him, returning to pressing her head against the floor whilst flailing her legs unsuccessfully as the man and an army of personnel watched on. Strangely enough, no other concubines were present despite the gaggle of Royal Children playing in the grass.

As he swept his eyes across the garden, he observed that it was all those under nine, but none of the youngest, namely the ones born whilst Harry had been in the Harem.

Their eyes locked then, green to red. Thomas' lip quirked.

"Would you like to sit with us, My Concubine?" The man called out, drawing the attention of all to where Harry was standing, clutching his hands over his middle.

Under all the eyes, Harry smiled uncertainly. "I wouldn't like to intrude-"

"Uncle Harry, come and play!" One of the girls cutely tilted her head as she stared up at him with big, blue eyes. Ninth Princess Aurelia, he could spot Penny's features mixed elegantly with the Emperor's anywhere. Harry blinked down at her, and she grinned toothily back.

"What do you want to play, Princess?" He asked as he began to lower himself to the ground, not wanting to be accused of 'looking down on a Royal Princess', even though there wasn't much choice but to do so.

The girl hummed, head spinning as she searched for something, her attention captured by a toddling, black-haired boy, who Harry recognised as the Princess' full-blooded brother, Fourth Prince Rastus. The boy was adorably small and reasonably steady on his feet now, a few shy months off of turning three. He was the youngest of the gathering.

Aurelia bounded up to her brother, startling him into stepping backwards and wobbling. Harry could see the way the maids crowding the young Prince gritted their teeth at that; and bristled at their annoyed glances, aimed unfairly at the girl. The disparity between the treatment of the Princes and Princess' in the Court, even by their parents, excluding the Emperor it seemed, was a sore thought for Harry.

If he had a little Princess, would she be sidetracked by the maids and Eunuchs, seen as lesser for no other reason than they assumed a Prince was more desirable to the Emperor? From the way Thomas interacted with his children, sons and daughters alike, he treated one no differently than the other.

Seeing the way the Emperor acted around his children made Harry imagine how he would interact with theirs. Would he gently hold the hand of their son as he jumped over sticks and stones? Would he hold their daughter close as she pointed out the shapes she could see in the clouds? Or would he smile over at them slyly as he watched them pinch another cookie out of the basket?

"What are you thinking about so intently, my Concubine?" The Emperor's question shook him out of his reverie, and Harry's thoughts sobered.

"The future, I hope."

Thomas sent him a smirk that sent butterflies soaring in his belly, and he turned away with a blush on his cheeks. Harry cleared his throat, trying to focus on the children clamouring for the attention of a 'new' adult whilst the Emperor watched on.

It was freeing to not be treated as an outsider by the Emperor's younger children, whom he was seeing more often now that he was an official spouse of the man, and legally a step-parent or 'Uncle' to them. The elder ones, those thirteen and older, were still standoffish around him, although he couldn't blame them. He and Evana, although not friends by any means, had come across each other in Hogwarts a few times. There had also been so many additions to the Court over the past few years that he could understand them not caring about the new faces, kept away from them and only seeing the lower Harem on celebrations.

There was a clear gap between the two sets of children. The younger were all eight or younger, the First Prince as the eldest, having been the first child born after the two-year abstinence of the Emperor after the death of the previous late eighth Princess, Jacinda. The girl had been born from a maid of the Emperor that he had grown fond of, or so rumour stated, as no one knew the true identity of this so-called lover. She had been born in January 1987, healthy and perfect, but was dead in the cradle within three days. To say the Emperor had been enraged was an understatement. He had refused visitations from all his concubines, placing the blame on them, although unknowing of the specific culprit. This lasted for over two years, until finally, in mid-1989, First Class Attendant Angelina conceived her son. This son however did not survive birth, and his mother lasted only a few days longer, overtaken with grief. The next, First Prince Alexis, wasn't born until late 1990.

A hard tap on Harry's hand drew him out of his musings, and he looked up to meet blood-red eyes. He startled momentarily, before chubby cheeks wiped away the Emperor's face and replaced it with one of a young boy. Second Prince Silas, at six, was the spitting image of His Majesty. His black hair was perfectly coiffed, features already showing their aristocratic angles, and most notable were his eyes, the defining feature of the Emperor that all the concubines wished their children to take. The Prince had been the first one to have such colouring, and since then, only two other children, Twelfth Princess Delphina and the latest addition, Fifteenth Princess Fiona, had followed.

"Hello, Your Highness," Harry acknowledged the boy, a bit perturbed when he continued to stare at him blankly. "How can I help you?"

The Prince stared up at him with a sharp glare, and Harry's eyebrows scrunched in confusion. "I don't need help," He spat out as ferociously as a six-year-old could, looking baleful. "Fix this for me. Now." A toy plane was thrust at his chest, and Harry picked it up with a quirked eyebrow. One of the wings was broken, and the magic on it seemed to be fading.

"Ask nicely, and I will, Your Highness." He responded instinctively. The maids behind the boy began to chatter in low, disapproving tones, and the Prince puffed up like an angry kitten.

"No! I'm a Prince, you should do as I say!" Without thinking, Harry handed the toy back to him, which the boy took, blinking at him in confusion. Silas glared further. "I said fix it!"

Harry was resolute. "Say please, and I will."

One of the maids cleared her throat, her nasally tone grating. "The Second Prince has requested for you to fix his toy, Concubine," Her voice was filled with derision. "You will fix it."

"He will not." The Emperor's smooth voice interrupted, and the gathered maids scattered with mumbled greetings, bowing lowly. The Prince visibly brightened, plane discarded on the grass.

"Father! Father, tell him to fix my plane!"

The Emperor looked unimpressed but patted the boy on the head when he clung to his robes. "Did you ask him nicely?"

"I don't need to, I'm a Prince." The boy replied, turning to glare at Harry, who was holding eye contact with Thomas.

The Emperor chuckled, although it was without humour. "And what a fine Prince you'll grow up to be with that attitude. You will ask my Concubine nicely to fix your plane, or it won't be fixed at all. He is not yours to order about, Son."

"But I'm a Prince!"

"Silas," Thomas' silky smooth tone held no room for arguing. "Ask nicely, although I wouldn't be surprised if your Uncle doesn't help even then. You have been impolite."

"-not my Uncle." The boy muttered petulantly, turning away from his father.

"What was that?"

Silas pouted. "He's not my Uncle! Mummy said he's just a concubine, not related to me."

The Emperor scoffed. "I will be having words with your Mother about this. But in the meantime, I am telling you to ask your Uncle nicely. Now."

Harry waved his hands placating, not wanting the argument between father and son to go on any longer. "It's alright, I'll fix it, It's not my place to educate the Prince-"

"Shut up, stop talking!" The Prince turned to him with blazing eyes, magic roiling. Harry's eyes widened as he felt it spark towards him, wand dropping into his hand quickly, ready to cast a shield. The Emperor's magic flared before anything happened, and with a blank expression, he picked up his son and apparated out of the garden.

The garden was silent for a few moments before the screams and wails began.

"Where's Papa?"

"Mumma!"

"Sonia, what's happening?"

Harry sat, staring at the spot the pair were in just moments before, as the shield around him disappeared. Strands of the Emperor's magic brushed against him as it began to dissipate, the last sparks still coiling around him protectively. That had been close. He cringed as he recalled what had led up to it. He should have just accepted and fixed the Prince's plane without saying anything, he didn't even know the boy, but it had been drilled into him from a young age to be polite that it was instinctual to correct.

Harry had to remember that none of these children were his. But, he'd be damned if he let his own grow up using their status like that.

24th January 1999- Sunday

Regulus sauntered slowly down the smooth path towards the Pavilion of Raining Flowers, arms folded across his chest within his sleeves. His maids, the personal ones he'd brought into the Harem, trailed behind him, keeping a respectful distance.

He breathed out a soft sigh as, when he came closer to the shelter, he noticed a head of curly black hair bobbing about where the seating was.

"Bella," He muttered, exasperated, trudging up the steps with more reluctance than before. "Cousin" He called out to announce his presence. His cousin was well known to cast a spell and perhaps ask questions later. "What are you doing here?"

She turned to him, a deranged but perfectly happy smile on her features. "Reggie! Me and Delphie are having a snack, aren't we sweetie?" Bella cooed down at her one-year-old daughter, who was happily munching away at tiny bits of fruit in her mother's lap. The little girl tilted her head back, mush smeared around her lips, some in her hair as well he noted, and smiled.

"Mam!"

"Yes, Delphie's having a nice time with Mummy, isn't she?" She cooed, pressing an exaggerated kiss on her chubby cheek. The girl giggled happily, turning back to her fruits. "What are you here for, Cousin?"

He smiled down at his niece when she looked up again with big, red eyes at her mother's tone and tickled her chin, eliciting more giggles. When her attention was diverted once again, his expression changed.

"I was looking for some space to think, but I suppose it would be better to speak with you. It concerns...His Majesty and me." He coolly bit out, hiding his hesitance in the presence of so many maids.

Bellatrix's expression hardened, but her voice was still sickly sweet as she spoke to her daughter. "Delphie, sweet, go with your nanny to look at the pretty flowers. Mummy needs to speak to Uncle Reggie."

One of Bellatrix's maids swiftly took away the little princess, who whined momentarily but went rather calmly, and Regulus took a seat next to his Cousin. He waved away his maids, and Bella did the same.

"What is it?" She asked him sharply once Delphina was out of earshot, and Regulus internally sighed as he prepared himself.

"I'm thinking of trying for another baby." He admitted to her truthfully, watching her face out of the corner of his eyes.

Unlike his expectations, Bella simply froze, before her shoulders relaxed. "Truly?" She asked him softly, and when he nodded in confirmation, she breathed out a fond sigh. "That's wonderful, Reg. I know you always wanted more than one."

He trapped his lip between his teeth, releasing it quickly with an internal admonishment. "Carina's birth was traumatizing for me. I never want to experience such a thing again, but... technology has improved since then, and so have the capabilities of the healers. Magical innovation has advanced since the legalisation of Dark Magic. I've always wanted another, and now is perhaps my only chance to have that."

"I'm happy for you, have you told Carina?"

"I don't think she'd appreciate me discussing anything of the sort with her." Regulus smiled wryly. "Any mention of anything to do with intimacy and she's out of the room like the house is on fire. But I should, she should know before it happens. There'd be more than a fourteen-year age gap, and that's if it's soon. But... do you think His Majesty will accept me? After I've spurned him all these years."

She was silent for a few, tense moments. "I will not lie to you, Cousin. You do not hold his favour, which seems to be focused towards Penny and our family's heir," She spat out, wrinkling her nose as if smelling something rancid, and Regulus winced. "You are also quickly approaching your forties, and have been taking contraception for fourteen years. It... I hope that it all works out for you." She ended with, and Regulus weakly smiled.

"I hope so as well."

31st January 1999- Sunday

"I'm pregnant."

Thomas spun at the soft admittance from the woman beside him, red eyes narrowing. He moulded his face suitably into a surprised expression when she looked up at him with wide eyes.

"Truly?" He asked.

Jasmine smiled, although it was strained. "Yes, Your Majesty. The healer believes I am-" She stopped, glancing up at him nervously. "Twelve weeks and a couple of days along. Isn't it wonderful, Your Majesty? I'm so happy to be carrying a son of yours once again."

He stopped walking at her words. "Child. A child of mine. We do not know if it is a son or a daughter. But I am pleased." Thomas admitted truthfully. If in the back of his mind, he was quietly sighing at the drama that would unfold soon enough, he couldn't be blamed.

"It is a son." Jasmine insisted, smiling again now, looking up at him expectantly.

His expression hardened, and he breathed in deeply to keep his temper in check. "You found out the gender?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. I was so excited!" She giggled on happily. "I will be giving you another son, another potential heir- Your Majesty?" The woman stopped as she spotted his eyes, which had darkened with anger. "Are you not pleased?"

Thomas had closed his eyes as she spoke those incriminating words. "How long have you been a member of my Harem, Jasmine?" He questioned her smoothly, barely opening his eyes to stare down at her blankly.

She went white, fidgeting. "I-I was just so excited, Your-"

"How long have you been here?"

"Sixteen years, Your Majesty." Was her whispered response.

Thomas bared his teeth in anger, looking away from her still. "Then you more than know why I don't allow my concubines to find out the gender of their baby."

Jasmine scoffed and Thomas felt something snap inside him. "I wasn't going to get rid of it, no matter the gender! Prince or Princess, they'll still be royalty, your child!"

He span, eyes glowing. "I have lost so many children, Jasmine, despite those same words! So many little girls! Some I don't even know about, but I know there were more! All because you all want your own little prince, your own shot at being Empress, or Empress Dowager." Thomas hissed, seething, taking one last look at her flat stomach. He met her eyes, the hazel orbs shiny with tears. He sneered. "I am thrilled to have another child, but I am not that you went against my will, Noble Lafington. Good day, and I wish you a healthy pregnancy."

"Your Majesty!"

1st February 1999- Monday

"Brother Harry, his Majesty admits he is disappointed in your recent behaviour, although he has not deigned to specify." Bellatrix smiled at him cruelly, eagerly scanning the scroll. Her smile disappeared. Harry's head, which had dropped, lifted at the annoyance that rolled off her. "But-" She hisses. "Retains the belief that you will rectify this soon."

The Emperor most certainly knew, there was no doubting that now. That was as much of a reprimand as he was going to get before it really started to have consequences. It was surprising even that there were none yet, honestly.

"He also wishes to extend his apologies for the behaviour of the Second Prince, and asks for you to accept the written apology from the boy, and also from the Third Consort, his mother." Harry's eyes widened in surprise. The Prince was being made to apologise? To him? Instinctively, his eyes searched the room. Consort Isla's cheeks were darkened slightly, and she met his gaze with embarrassment. "Ah yes, I heard about this. His Majesty was forced to remove the Prince after he grew too upset at the situation. You shouldn't have riled him up so much, Brother. He is only six, you should have just accepted his demands."

"I simply wished for him to ask me more nicely, a sentiment which the Emperor fully agreed with. But I do agree that I shouldn't have."

Bellatrix harrumphed. "You shouldn't have. Do not deign to treat any of the royal children as if you know them, not when you don't even have your own child. Speaking of children...His Majesty also proudly congratulates Noble Lafington on her pregnancy. He promotes her to the rank of Sixth Concubine. Sister Jasmine," Bellatrix turned her ire full-heartedly on the proud-looking Noble, who was preening happily in her chair. Harry stared at her, at her flat belly- carrying the probably younger sibling to his own- with shock. "I had no idea."

"My apologies, Sister, I found out a bit later than I expected to." The Noble smiled wanly, stroking her stomach with reverence. "I hadn't expected it, but I feel blessed."

Bellatrix cleared her throat, shuffling gleefully in her seat in the way she did when she was about to ruin someone's mood. "However, due to Noble Lafington's delay in informing the Emperor, she is to be confined to her Palace for a week, as the rules pertain. As she only went over the specified time by two days, her stipend shall be halved only for the week she is confined."

Jasmine inclined her head, not seeming troubled by the punishment. "Of course, His Majesty made clear to me that there would be consequences. I feel ashamed that I kept such joyous news from him, but the Emperor has informed me that he is simply thrilled to have another baby on the way, despite this."

Harry numbly reached subtly for his own bump that was steadily growing now, hidden under his loose robes. And another, that none knew about. Jasmine was pregnant as well, and by the sounds of it, weeks behind him.

He bit his lip, and tilted his head back, feeling resigned.

2nd February 1999- Tuesday

"Why are you here today, My Concubine?" The Emperor placed his pen down as Harry stepped hesitantly through the doors, watching as the Head Eunuch closed them tightly

behind him. He breathed out shakily. "You look pale. Please, take a seat."

Harry walked closer, placing his hands on the back of the chair. He gripped its backrest, but didn't make a move to sit on it.

"Are you well?" Thomas asked, shuffling his papers and setting them to the side.

He drew in a deep breath, clenching his fists. "I'm pregnant." Harry let out, voice stiff as he forced the words from his throat. He slammed his eyes shut, not wanting to see the disappointment on the Emperor's face. The man definitely knew, and he must also know how far over the grace period Harry had gone.

The sigh the Emperor let out was deafening. Tears filled Harry's eyes as the consequences of his choice crashed down on him. Arms wrapped around him, pulling him close as he felt the first of them trail hotly down his cheeks. "Shush, my Concubine, whatever is the matter?"

"I'm sorry," He whispered, sniffing wetly. "I should have told you sooner, I should have, I know I should have! But I was so scared, so many have been lost, even I've witnessed a few, and they despise me, Thomas! What else was I to do?" Harry let out quickly, staring into his husband's eyes.

He was shushed once more. "It's alright, you've told me now, that's all that matters." The Emperor tried to push him into the chair, but Harry stood firmly, still staring at his face, anticipating.

"No, it's not fine! I deceived you, I kept the knowledge of our baby from you! I'm over fifteen weeks now!"

The Emperor sighed again. "Harry."

The sound of his name coming out of the Emperor's mouth shocked him into silence. "Thomas?"

The Emperor's voice was firm, but not harsh. "I get to decide what is 'fine' and what is not for myself. And I understand your reasonings. However, you do know that this cannot be resolved without consequences."

"I know. I'm sorry." Harry inhaled shakily, melting further into the man's hold.

"I know you are. Now, you are nearly sixteen weeks along now, correct?"

"Fifteen weeks and five days. I conceived on our wedding night."

The Emperor chuckled softly. "Is that so? Then," His voice hardened. "Your weekly stipend is to be halved for a month, and you are to be confined within your Palace walls until the first of March, where you will be safe until you are nearly twenty weeks along." Harry looked up sharply, met with the Emperor's knowing stare. "Rarely do people hide their pregnancy from their spouse without a reason. I understand your worries, Harry. Thank you for keeping our child safe in the only way you knew how to. I will endeavour to do the same from here on out."

Chapter End Notes

I would like to say: I am very supportive of Harry keeping his pregnancy a secret for so long, and it was the correct decision to announce it to the Emperor on the 2nd of Feb. Here, the Emperor won't announce it until the start of the next month, meaning Harry will be basically 20 weeks along, nearly in the range of viability. The punishment also wasn't that severe, more of a boon for him than anything, and Thomas knows that: He's not here to punish his concubines for keeping it a secret if it's for their safety. Tom would be more annoyed, however, if they found out what they were having, as he explains in the chapter. I know I said there were something like 50+ total pregnancies, but there have been many more than that :/ And some are for the reason he alluded to.

That being said, Baby Potter has now reached 16 weeks and will be 19w by the end of the next chapter ^_^ They'll be here, hopefully, in ch.33 :))

Twitter: xStrawberryJam_

Also, the Wiki Fandom page is coming along well now :) Thanks to the person/people that are helping me with it ^-^

Thanks for reading!

RANKING: February

-Harry Potter-Black - Remains 4th Concubine

-Jasmine Lafington - Promoted from Primary Noble to 6th Concubine

-Cordelia Rosenberg- Demoted to 7th Concubine due to Jasmine's promotion.

All Noble's ^ due to Jasmine's promotion to Concubine:

-Pippa Macmillan - 1st Noble

-Emma Vanity - 2nd Noble

-Cedric Diggory - 3rd Noble

-Erin Witt - 4th Noble

Chapter 30: [Three's a Crowd]

Chapter Notes

Ch.31 is at 2.1k atm, which I'd usually consider over halfway done, but this is an important chapter: It sets the downfall of the older leaders of the harem and heralds in the new, and also shows Harry's changing attitude towards the hierarchy of the Harem

I'm also not too confident in writing confrontation but it's needed, as next chapter is the reveal of Harry's pregnancy :/

This chapter made it to 4k in the end :))

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

2nd February 1999- Tuesday

Thomas stroked Harry's hair as he continued to lean against him, propping his head atop the other man's. It was silky despite its inherent untamableness, and his Concubine seemed to relax further by the second, practically melting trustingly in his hold.

Over Harry's head, unbeknownst to the man, he stared at the corner of the room, right by the door, where one of his most senior Knights stood, hidden under multiple charms and an invisibility cloak. With his eyes, he conveyed a message. The Knight's aura vanished as he fled to do his bidding, and Thomas smirked.

Harry pulled away from his chest, and he softened his gaze and expression in time for the man's teary one to meet his, the green orbs even more vibrant against his flushed face. Thomas stroked his cheek gently with a thumb, which drew a self-conscious smile from the Concubine.

"Merlin, I'm a mess." He sniffed. "Sorry." Harry apologised again, and he tutted disapprovingly.

"Stop apologising, I have already said that I believe your reasonings to be just. You are receiving a punishment, although it will be more of a boon to you than anything."

If something was to truly be a punishment, it needed to be void of benefits after all. Confinement would ensure his husband's, and child's, safety, and the lowered stipend would mean nothing truly. Thomas wouldn't allow anyone who was his to go without luxury, the man would be cared for and lavished within his Palace, safe and content.

"I know, It's just... I've already seen them on a scan. They're so beautiful, Thomas. So perfect and small."

He took note of the lack of gendered language, unless...

"Just the one?"

"Just the one." Harry smiled at him, looking giddy. "Although I've already got a slight bump. It's not big, I've been able to hide it easily up until now, but," He grabbed his hand, and Thomas allowed for it to be placed upon the man's stomach. "It's there."

He was right. It was small, smaller at this stage than Thomas was used to, but there was definitely a bump there. He spread his hand against it, wishing he could feel some sort of movement from their baby. It was too soon, of course, but he could hope.

"Perfect," He couldn't help but mutter, and the way the man's eyes softened told him it was the right thing to say.

"They are. Our baby."

The Emperor looked as handsome as always, sat on his smaller throne in his office. He wore a touch of colour today in contrast to his usual black outfits, the details of his robes a deep green. Patricia thought he looked perfect like this, and eagerly awaited running her hands through his hair as he kissed her breathless once she revealed the news she rushed here to divulge.

When she uttered the words, the Emperor's fingers had laced together in front of his face, hiding any expression that would have disclosed what he was feeling at that moment. Patricia shifted where she sat, but continued to eagerly await his reaction.

"You are sure?" He questioned, staring into her blue eyes.

"Yes, Your Majesty. I am pregnant. Isn't it wonderful? Me and Sister Jasmine, due so close to one another," She smiled at him, her giddy anticipation for praise palpable.

He sat back, staring at her with conflicted emotions. Patricia was the most concerning of his concubines, whom Thomas felt he could trust the least when it came to his children. Their daughters, especially.

Their first daughter, Daniella, had been his second child and the Second Princess for the two months she was alive. She had been born with his dark locks and baby blue eyes, although he hadn't got to see if they'd have changed as she grew older. Because then, she was gone, and all Patricia's pregnancies since had suspiciously ended soon after her first scan. All babies of which were identified as female post-mortem. And that was only the pregnancies he knew of, that had lasted even that far along.

It was suspicious that the woman was even informing him. The last time they had slept together was on her birthday, which was just shy of twelve weeks ago. Patricia would have had her first scan by now, and most likely, against his wishes, found out the gender if possible.

Thomas decided to be truthful first of all. "I'm overjoyed at the news," But would this pregnancy be like all the others? Would there be a baby for him to hold at the end? Or would

Patricia yet again tell him that the baby, always a little girl, hadn't made it. That, next time, they would 'have their little boy'.

"So am I, Your Majesty." Patricia's magic began to fizz in excitement, and Thomas squinted. He threw up an invisible shield with a thought for precaution. "Especially since this will be our long-awaited first son together." She added on brightly, leaning forward. "I'm glad we're finally getting one."

Patricia bit her lip to contain the grin that wanted to practically split her face. The Emperor's expression was still blank, but she could tell that he was restraining himself purposefully. Their little Prince, finally.

She had been overjoyed when she had first found out just that morning, bending over to weep with gratitude. Patricia would soon have another babe in her arms, after so many years of failures. A Prince this time, a son that she could keep.

Thomas had to stop his magic from crushing the desk in front of him. It still rattled ominously, but the worst of the damage was some cracks that were fixed absentmindedly. He turned away from her, breathing in deeply.

Patricia continued to boast, uncaring that he had yet to respond. "Well, the Healer believes him to be a boy, but I know he will be. He's been long awaited, our own little Prince. I've already sent off orders to the department to start making his clothes, and to begin preparing a nursery in my Palace. Oh, but then there's also-" She finally took stock of his darkened expression. "Your Majesty? Aren't you pleased?" Patricia's voice was filled with confusion and exaggerated hurt. "I thought you would be happy. This will be your fifth son."

Thomas' lip twitched up into a snarl. His hands clenched at his sides. "Sixth." He bit out and turned towards her. "Sixth son. Jasmine is carrying a healthy boy as well." Thomas felt his eyes burn with anger, but he was filled also with vindictive glee as Patricia's bewilderment became genuine. "And it will stay that way, won't it, darling?" His voice was a hiss as he met her gaze, sneering at the way she bared her teeth back at him. Patricia's confusion had turned into anger, and he smirked.

She stood, a flurry of red-haired fury. "It will. And so will our son." Was all she responded with, before she fled his office, magic singeing the doorway as she went.

Thomas sat back, blowing out a heavy breath.

Three.

That was the third current pregnancy, all so close together. Harry was just over sixteen weeks along, Jasmine was at thirteen weeks, and Patricia was just under twelve.

He could almost feel the headache he would inevitably gain after the announcement of this at the beginning of the month, but snickered nonetheless.

Three children, each either the first or only living connection from his House to theirs.

The Lafington's were a former Pureblooded, turned Halfblood House from Ireland. Sure, the family wasn't that powerful nowadays, but Jasmine's ancestors had been known to carry the gene for a second, smaller magical core, located near their heart. Jasmine herself didn't have one, but her great-grandfather had, and that's what mattered to him. Their child had the possibility of attaining such a boon, which would forever become associated with the Slytherin name and hopefully pass down to future generations.

The Rakepick's had no special talents such as that, but Patricia herself was exceptional. She had been top of her class at Hogwarts and became a Professional Curse-Breaker soon after graduation. When she had breezed through the Selection and smirked up at him, Thomas had chosen her as the third member of his Harem. Their daughter, Daniella, had been that link to the powerful witch, but with her death, he felt as if he had lost control. The deaths of their subsequent daughters had sealed that. However, now, with this 'Prince' she had so desperately waited for, that link had been reforged. Thomas would protect this child from their mother, no matter what they were.

And it was Harry's pregnancy that he was most thrilled to receive confirmation of. Their child would be another link to the illustrious Black family, this time through the blood-adopted Heir who would become Lord Black eventually, and pass on his titles to his children. That wasn't to say that Harry didn't share a true blood link to the Black Family- in his two times Great Grandmother was one- and this meant that there was also the chance the many talents of the House would be passed down.

This wasn't the connection Thomas was most pleased about, however.

His Concubine was foremost the Heir to the House of Potter, a staunchly Light family that hadn't budged in their allegiance in centuries. While it wasn't a spectacularly powerful House, as it once was during the Middle Ages, it was a connection he couldn't have dreamed about before the man landed unexpectedly in his Harem.

That, and the fact that he didn't seem inclined to despise Thomas, had been the biggest surprise. The Heir to a man and woman who he suspected had dealings with Albus Dumbledore, not indoctrinated to hate everything Dark? It was a blessing he wouldn't let go of.

And with this child, they would be linked through blood, a tie stronger than that of marriage. A union that would result in the connection of the two remaining Peverell bloodlines, and hopefully allow a strong enough claim to bring back the Ancient House from extinction.

10th February 1999- Wednesday

Harry stared down at the giggling photo of his sister, who sat in a wooden highchair at the end of their dining room table, bashing her hands happily down onto a birthday cake. She was one year old as of yesterday, and Harry mourned the loss of time, for the moments he hadn't been present for.

He had only met her once in her life, in the whole year she had been here. Harry had missed out on so much already. First breath, first smile, first laughs, first words, first steps. And now, he was pregnant with what would be Florence's niece or nephew, who would be less than two years younger than herself.

Her hair had grown out into wild, bright curls, he noted. That auburn-almost-red colour that his Mum was known for, so different to Weasley-ginger. It looked almost magical, curling over the tips of her little ears, practically obscuring her warm, brown eyes.

They were opposites in their colouring, taking a feature from each of their parents. Florence, their Mum's hair, their Dad's eyes- and nose, Harry noted. He took it all from their Dad, apart from the eyes and nose.

Harry felt grateful that his parents would have another child to fill the space he had left, he'd been worried that they'd feel lonely by themselves in that giant Manor. His Mum's unexpected but welcome pregnancy had been a deciding factor in his determination to join the Harem. She would entertain their parents, keeping them content and happy, whilst Harry went away to salvage the reputation of their House and ensure she had the best childhood possible.

That was all firmly in reach now.

Harry had succeeded in becoming a Concubine, well ahead of his previous expectations. He still had a part of the Emperor's favour, despite the recent happenings, he was even on a first-name basis with the man. And most importantly, he was pregnant.

He placed a hand on his swollen stomach, tracing gently over it.

This child would be a physical connection of their Houses, one no one could refute or break. And more than that, they would be a connection between him and Thomas. Their child, their shared blood.

Harry felt a flutter inside his stomach then. He frowned, sitting up straighter, focusing all his attention on it. There. Another flutter, as gentle as the first, but distinct in a way that couldn't be mistaken.

He placed both of his hands on his stomach eagerly, but the sensation didn't seem to register outwardly. But he could feel the movement of his baby, and it brought tears of relief to his eyes.

15th February 1999- Monday

An unexpected knock on his door startled Harry, causing him to tear the parchment he was writing on. Instead of growing annoyed, he rushed for the door. It had been days since the last visitor of any sort, and he was starting to go stir-crazy.

Confinement was a blessing for the baby, but Harry hadn't realised how used to constant interaction he had become. The assigned maids weren't much help in that, as most of them treated him strictly as an employer, not a friend- although that's not to say they weren't cordial towards him. Anya was his best form of socialisation, although she seemed more likely to lecture than chat with him recently. Kia liked to chat, but they had run out of interesting conversations days ago. And with Tabitha, the woman couldn't spend too long standing around so they could sign to each other, so he was stuck overhearing others' conversations instead.

Outside the doors stood an Eunuch, dressed in the Emperor's colours, flanked by two Knights with their faces covered. Harry blinked as the Eunuch bowed before pulling out a scroll of parchment from Merlin knows where.

"Concubine Slytherin-Potter-Black," The man's voice carried, and his maids began to congregate behind him. "His Majesty announces that you are permitted to attend the ascension ceremony and wedding of Her Highness, the Sixth Concubine. You are to interact with the other participants as scarcely as possible and are to make your way back to your Palace once the event is over so that you may resume your confinement. The Emperor allows this so you may welcome His Majesty's newest Spouse alongside Your Royal Highnesses."

"Today?" Was all he could utter.

"At 5'o'clock, Your Highness."

It was already 3:45 p.m.

"I am grateful for His Majesty's benevolence." Harry managed to keep his composure until the man and the Knights were nearing the gate, before slamming the door shut.

"Anya! I need robes!"

To hide his pregnancy until it was announced on the first of March, Harry wore the loosest robes he had in his wardrobe. Luckily, it was still cold enough to wear such thick layers, but he still looked a little awkward so overly dressed.

However, as long as there was no concrete evidence that he was pregnant, the other concubines could speculate all they wanted. A boon of his isolation meant an influx of guards, and the Emperor had even assigned one to test his food before he ate or drank as a precaution against another poisoning.

It was a wonder, with precautions such as these, how so many previous concubines had been poisoned whilst pregnant. Or, perhaps, there was something going on that Harry didn't know about.

He wore sparse jewellery, although allowed the hairpin he had been gifted for Christmas. He looked rather plain for a wedding, but Harry was sure there would be other things to focus on other than his clothes.

Jasmine looked beautiful in her green robes, smiling happily as she made her way up to the dias. In her hair, gems of green were woven throughout her curls, dangling onto her forehead. The tiara she wore was similar to the one he had been gifted for his promotion, although Jasmine's had more swirls and twists, the peaks topped with small diamonds. It suited her perfectly, and she wore it confidently.

She was grinning as she spoke the final, ceremonial words, practically bouncing in place. His Majesty looked composed as usual, although spared her a few, amused glances. Finally, they sealed their vows with a kiss, and the crowd dispersed to mingle.

Harry made to escape as soon as he could, adhering to the Emperor's decree. Unfortunately, without his notice, Regulus had snuck up behind him, stopping him short.

The man wore a frown on his face, looking confused and concerned, emotions that shouldn't be worn on such an occasion. "Why has the Emperor confined you?"

"I'm sorry, Uncle. I can't say. Please, I need to go." Harry tried to evade him, but the man sidestepped into his path. He sighed, flicking black waves over his shoulder.

"Nephew, please, what is it? Is it a punishment? What did you do to warrant such a thing?"

"It is a punishment as much as it is for safety. Now, please, I really need to get back." Harry felt jittery, exposed, cautious under the gaze of so many. These people weren't his friends, they would cause him harm if they could. Already, it was incredibly suspicious that he had been placed in confinement with no official announcement. Harry was sure many of them had correctly guessed why already, this was a procedure they had witnessed before, although most told the Emperor of their pregnancy at the end of the month, rather than right at the beginning.

He was attracting attention the longer he stayed out in the open. Already, he could see several concubines- Erin, Jasmine, Lukas- inching closer, listening in and waiting for the moment to corner and question him. Harry's heart beat a little faster at the cold glare he was receiving from Patricia, and Dahlia's sneer didn't help him feel any safer.

Regulus stared at him, his expression serious. His eyes, perfect copies of Sirius', searched his face, and then surveyed the milling throng around them. "Alright," He nodded. "I'll make up some excuse in the meantime. The rumour mill has been thriving, you know? There is all sorts of gossip going around, debating why you were confined so unexpectedly. I'll take one of those, say you didn't dismiss it as a reason but didn't agree either."

Harry smiled gratefully, the selfless act that could get his Uncle into conflict with the others noted. "Thank you." He conveyed simply, before turning and hurrying away, absorbed back into the ranks of Eunuchs and Knights, a maid gripping tightly onto his arm.

23rd February 1999- Tuesday

Harry stared out the window, watching the last of the ice melt away, running in rivulets down the window. The pale winter sun was glowing weakly, barely warming him, but it had been growing stronger recently.

Orla was dusting the bookshelf to his side, chattering away as she did so. Harry didn't mind, because she was revealing information he couldn't access for himself whilst in confinement. Harry never thought he'd see the day when he missed the daily meetings, but at least they were a good source of gossip.

"Concubine Lafington's pregnancy still seems to be progressing without trouble, Your Highness."

"That's good, I'm glad for her," Harry muttered sincerely, tracing a droplet with his fingertip as it ran down the window. In his lap, a book about Defensive Magic laid open, discarded when the words had begun to swim together.

"Although, there does seem to be a bit of strain between her and Noble Witt recently."

Finally, Harry pulled himself away from the glass, frowning at her words. Erin and Jasmine, fighting? They were most likely the closest pair in the Harem, even he and Luna didn't meet up daily or spend more time in each other's Apartments than they did their own. "And why is that?"

"Apparently, Noble Witt was seen shouting at her after her promotion. Her maids have been saying she's been more irritated as of late, probably since they have been close ever since they joined in the same year. Now, Concubine Lafington is a rank higher than she is, and pregnant at that. Perhaps she's displeased since she has given his Majesty a daughter already, yet it is her pregnant friend who has been promoted."

Harry kept his lips sealed, not voicing his opinions. Orla may be a good source of gossip, especially now in his confinement, but she was also a leak for his own goings. One wrong word and the entire Court would know his thoughts. It was hard even now trying to hide his ever-swelling belly from her prying gaze. He only wore closer-fitting robes within his rooms and in sight of his personal maids. Whenever he ventured out into the other parts of his palace, Harry made sure his belly was hidden under swathes of fabric. It was lucky it was still cold out, although with spring quickly creeping up on them, he would have to shed his layers soon.

Perhaps it was a blessing his hardest-kept secret would be out by the start of March. An announcement of a baby to herald in spring. Fitting.

"And there's more!" She giddily spoke under his full attention, cleaning forgotten about. Harry hummed, staring at the duster she was waving about, spreading dust. "I've heard that Concubine Black has been spending more time around His Majesty these days. Others are whispering that he has decided he wishes to have another baby, although it is a matter of speculation whether or not the Emperor will accept him after all this time. He has been refusing His Majesties advancements for much too long for that, I think."

Harry frowned. "Keep your opinions to yourself, you are talking about a spouse of the Emperor and my Uncle."

She flushed, turning back to dust vigorously. "Ah! Yes, my apologies, Your Highness. I forgot myself."

He hummed, turning back to stare out at the garden. Soon enough, the silence grew too loud once more, and Harry sighed. Orla had moved on to wiping down the tables now. "Is there anything else?"

The woman startled, before grinning sharkishly, quickly dampened by his unimpressed stare. "There is also speculation that Concubine Rakepick may be pregnant." Harry straightened up, eyes widening. Orla paid attention to his increased engagement and smiled slyly. "She has been flaunting her stomach recently, although has made no motion to confirm or deny anyone's suspicions. The maids of her palace told me she's been stocking up on baby clothes. Boys ones. A room in her Palace has also been set aside to be redecorated."

Harry stood from his seat, beginning to pace. His hand twitched closer to his stomach, the movement hidden by his sleeve. Patricia, pregnant? That was unexpected, as well as unwelcome news if it was the truth. The woman had a sinister reputation regarding her own pregnancies and children, something Harry shivered to think about.

"What else can you tell me? How far along do they say she is?"

Orla seemed to be enjoying his visible unease, still smiling widely as she pretended to focus once more on her task, but she was watching him out of the corner of her eye. "Oh, I'm not sure, the gossip varies. Some say she's only a few weeks along, some say ten, others report her to be already within the second trimester. Although," Here, Orla smirked, stopping dramatically. Harry frowned at the pause, waving her on. "Pat- Her Highness has previously been known to fake a pregnancy. For attention." She tacked on.

"Who would do such a thing? Surely it's obvious there's no baby, and she would have to know she'd be punished for doing something like that."

"People do strange things for attention," Orla shrugged. "As I said, it's happened before, and it's clear she's preparing for a little Prince. Who knows whether it's real or fantasy?"

Chapter End Notes

Tom has hidden Knights all over his Palace to do his evil doings for him? Who would have thunk it? No, but seriously, most of this story is written from Harry's Pov, so Tom seems so soft compared to Canon but, like.... He's the overlord of the literal entire world??? And kills all who disobey him, apart from his harem. Harry's view of his is very rose-tinted, because that's the view Tom wants him to have. Tom wants him to like him, not a hateful husband who will stab him in the back.

I think I've mentioned this a few times, but I really really need people to understand that the Tom we see in this story is not Tom. He's the version of Tom Harry is allowed to see. He'll see more as they grow closer and older, but as of now and for a while yet, this is the version of Tom we all get. Even his POV's don't reveal it fully, but that's a fault on my part- I'm not good at that sort of stuff

Maybe I'll explore more of Tom later on, maybe that'll be saved for part 2 (if it ever comes out), but, yeah

Harry and his rose-tinted glasses, eh?

Link to the Court's layout:

[https://twitter.com/xStrawberryJam_/status/1713668327149560187?
t=C8UIH8ohRPVqFX1rwLt7mw&s=19](https://twitter.com/xStrawberryJam_/status/1713668327149560187?t=C8UIH8ohRPVqFX1rwLt7mw&s=19)

It's also on the wiki: [Harem Palaces](#) | [Intimacy Wiki](#) | [Fandom](#)

Chapter 31: [Shifting Power]

Chapter Notes

Happy Halloween! A 4k chapter for you all :))

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

1st March 1999- Monday

Harry's hands shook beneath his sleeves as he trudged unwillingly, arm looped with Anya's, towards the meeting hall. It wasn't entirely fear that he felt, that was on behalf of the reaction the news of his baby could incite, but a large chunk of his mind was filled with a sick form of excitement.

He felt himself... *looking forward* to watching their reactions, the shock it would surely provoke. Harry hadn't spent the night with the Emperor since his baby had been conceived, and since contact with the Emperor had been unpermitted during his isolation, pregnancy would surely be the last thing on any of their minds. How could someone, who was subjected to weekly health checks, hide a pregnancy for that long, after all? Harry was glad he'd sworn his Healer to secrecy when he did.

Anya, taking the slight tremors shaking his body to be outright fear, rubbed comfortingly at his shoulder. "It will be alright, Master."

"How can you promise that?" He hushed back at her, biting his lip. "I've already been poisoned to *stop* a pregnancy, they're going to use any excuse after this. I'm going to be berated over announcing it so late, I know I am."

"They can do nothing about it, Your Highness. His Majesty has already dolled out your punishment, any further action would only incite his ire."

"I hope you're right."

The pair came to a stop outside of the meeting hall, Harry sucking in deep breaths in a futile attempt to calm his anxiety. A few others were heading in around him, and Erin gave him a confused look as he hesitantly headed up the steps.

"Are you alright, Brother?"

The smile he attempted to plaster on his face must have come out wonky because she looked even more concerned than before. "I am, thank you for asking, Sister."

Entering the hall felt as nervewracking, possibly more so, as the first time he had. It felt as if all eyes were on him, and it didn't help that apart from a few, the majority of the seats were already filled. Harry headed for his chair in between Alecko and Jasmine, shifting under the stares.

"Are you feeling well, Brother?" Jasmine whispered to him as he sat, and he nodded, not trusting himself to open his mouth. Her eyebrows scrunched. "Are you sure? Do you need to visit a Healer?"

"Oh, stop mothering him, Lafington." Carrow spat from his other side. "He's a grown man, I'm sure he can deal with a little sickness himself."

"I was only voicing my concerns, Sister." Jasmine harrumphed, letting go of the subject to cross her arms and brood. Alecko scoffed but remained silent as they waited for Bellatrix, as usual, to arrive.

She came swishing into the hall, Regulus to her right, Felix to her left, an uncharacteristic smile on her face. "I thank you all for waiting, His Majesty was in a rather good mood this morning and wished to chat for a little longer." As she sat, she surveyed the room. "He was rather tight-lipped as to why, however."

"Good morning, Sister," Penny said, her voice containing a slight amount of chiding. She was a stickler for the rules, Harry had discovered over the past year and a half. Bellatrix always

arriving late must grate on her nerves.

"Yes, yes." She waved her off absentmindedly.

"His Majesty seemed rather eager to hand over his decree to Bella today," Regulus spoke up. "I, for one, am intrigued."

Bellatrix smirked, still in her good mood. "Then, let's not keep you waiting, Cousin." She cleared her throat, unrolling the decree flamboyantly. "Sister Patricia, His Majesty congratulates you on your pregnancy, one which he is pleased to announce is progressing well. He promotes you to the rank of Third Concubine, which demotes both Brother Harry to the Fifth rank and Brother Regulus to the Fourth" She was smirking nastily. "At least you informed him on time. There seems to be a lack of that recently."

Patricia huffed, sitting back. "Of course, I wished to share the exciting news with His Majesty as soon as possible. Sister Jasmine, I am looking forward to our children growing up together, seeing as how they'll be born so close to one another."

Jasmine gave her a shy but genuine smile in return. "I'm sure they'll get along well, Sister."

Bellatrix snorted, shuffling the parchment so she could see the next part. The woman read it to herself, froze, and then scrunched the paper in her hands. Bellatrix's glare would have left him as nothing but dust if it could, her brown orbs blazing with fury. Her magic spiked, and everyone shifted, the hall falling silent. All their eyes were fixated on the Consort and on him, who faced her wrath with as stoic of an expression as he could muster. "Concubine Potter," She hissed, voice like venom. Harry wouldn't have tried correcting her address if she had even left him time. "What is this? You dare to wait so long to inform us?!" The last bit was screamed, the screech piercing his ears. "How dare you? How dare you! Head back to your palace at once!"

"You cannot confine me, Consort Slytherin-Black. His Majesty has already given me the appropriate punishment." His hands shook as he spoke, but he kept his voice firm.

Bellatrix threw the scroll to the side. "I do not care, how dare you?"

"What is it, Sister?" Penny was standing, walking to where the parchment had been disregarded. She read it as well, eyes widening and paling. "You're... pregnant? Already so far along, oh Harry," Her voice was soft, but Harry noted a condescending lilt hidden behind the dismay she projected. "How could you? His Majesty must have been so disappointed. I am surprised that he kept you as the Fourth Concubine, although Brother Regulus suffered due to this and was demoted to Fifth."

Harry stood from his chair, ignoring her words, and began marching out of the hall. He couldn't help but have the last say. "I believe His Majesty would be delighted to know that you don't care for his decrees, Consort, or acknowledge that he has already reprimanded and dealt with my situation."

"Potter, stop at once! I am ordering you to stop!"

His heart beating wildly, Harry didn't slow in his advance, even speeding up as much as he dared. Pushing the doors to the Hall open, he rushed out into the garden, hearing a hoard of footsteps chasing after him.

The Court was alive with activity, and the personnel present had the pleasure to watch as he stormed through them, parting and being pushed back by the rest of the Harem.

A hand gripped his upper arm viciously, and Harry hissed as he was yanked backwards. He met Bellatrix's wild stare head-on, glaring up at her. "Get off of me."

She raised a hand, and Harry stood firm in the face of her violence. Her hand collided sharply with the side of his face, and Harry's head was knocked backwards with the viciousness of it. The sharp sound echoed in the garden, as did the gasps of the other concubines and their maids, who had followed them like vultures drawn to prey.

Harry blinked, the sting having made his eyes water, but he righted himself. Glaring at the Consort, he sneered. "And what did you think that was going to accomplish?"

"You think you're all that, the favoured whore that you are! But that's it! I'm his most senior wife, I'm head of his Harem, and if I ever let an upstart like you treat me like this, you best believe I'm out of my mind!"

The Emperor's voice cut through the air like a whip. It was filled with anger, heavy and without its usual silkiness. Harry looked behind him to see the man in all his furious glory. His brows were furrowed, his face contorted in anger, and his eyes were glowing with rage. He reached them in quick strides, the crowd parting like a sea in the face of his wrath.

"What is the meaning of this?"

The Emperor stood before them, by Harry's side, eyes fixated on the blooming bruise on his face. He could taste blood in his mouth, and with a swipe of his tongue, confirmed that the strike had caused him to bite the inside of it. Thomas' eyes darkened when he dabbed at his lip, which had also split from the hit.

Stepping forward, he raised his hand. He slapped her, her head whipping to the side with the force of it. Harry's eyes widened, staring at the furious figure of the Emperor as he towered over the Consort, visibly seething. His eyes were brightly glowing a bloody red, snarling down at the now cowering woman.

Bellatrix seemed equally stunned, eyes wide as she slowly looked up at the Emperor. Her voice came out a pitch higher than was comfortable. "Your-Your Majesty! Why would you hit me like that? I was-"

"Bellatrix, I have half a mind to Crucio you right here for daring to slap my Concubine, my pregnant spouse." His hiss was terrifying, and it sent a shiver down Harry's spine. Thomas looked mutinous, the violence towards one of his concubines unexpected.

"I'm your spouse, your primary-"

He scoffed, ignoring her, "Harry has already served his punishment, he was confined for a month under my orders. Or do you disregard my authority? Felix served much the same punishment for the same discretion. I won't tolerate injustice like this in my Harem."

The hovering crowd was silent. It was like a scene from a drama, so overly dramatic Harry could barely believe it was happening to him. Who chased someone down to berate and slap them? Over something which had passed and been forgiven by the slighted?

Thomas turned to him, one hand reaching up to brush a finger against his swelling cheek. "Are you well, My Concubine?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. She didn't hit me too hard."

Thomas nodded sharply, backing off a little to begin barking orders at the crowd gathered. "Get back to work, the lot of you! My concubines are not your spectacle!"

Her cheek red, matching his own, Bellatrix stepped closer to him with the Emperor out of the way. "You are a *brat* ! A filthy, fucking blood traitor!" She hissed at him, face almost touching Harry's. Her voice was low enough that it couldn't be overheard by those around them, full of uncontained hatred.

Harry, his cheek hurting, lips tingling, and hands shaking, snarled back at her, getting up in her face as she did to him. "Do you want to repeat that to His Majesty, Sister? Tell him that the man he took as his spouse is a 'filthy blood traitor'? His 'favoured whore'?"

"Silence." The man hissed, and Harry stepped back at the look in his eyes. He gulped, lowering his head to break eye contact. Already, there was sweat beading on the back of his neck.

Thomas had never looked at him like that before.

"Stop with your petty squabbles." Bellatrix made a noise of affront, and Harry opened his mouth to respond. "I said silence! What has warranted such a reaction, Bellatrix? No, I'm not finished. There have been many pregnancies in my Harem, what has made you react in such a violent way? Calling Harry a whore? Slapping him? Chasing him down in a way that so publicly disgraces you both?" He clicked his tongue.

Her voice was petulant as she raced to excuse herself. "It was that smirk on his face, he was so smug-"

"You're all smug! So what? Give me a reason Bella, not to confine you as you wished to do to him?"

"Why-" She stuttered. "Why am I getting confined!? He should be confined, he did wrong!"

"Harry has already served his confinement. Now is a time to celebrate yet another pregnancy, not physically harm the one carrying my next child!"

She gritted her teeth, meeting his furious gaze with her own half-mad one. "Fine, side with that brat and not the woman who you love, who has stayed faithfully by your side for over twenty years!"

"Love? I have twenty-four concubines, if I loved any one of you, the rest would be gone the next day. Do not overinflate your purpose here, Consort. I have never loved another in my life. The one who I care for will be the future Empress or Emperor Consort, and that, I suspect, is still a long way off. Perhaps none of you will be alive by that time, perhaps it will never be filled. Head back to your Palaces, the lot of you, I want you all out of my sight and not causing further drama this morning. I am sickened by what has occurred." He proclaimed this with a straight face, speaking to all of them, not just Bellatrix.

"Remain in your Palaces until I say."

9th March 1999- Tuesday

The explosive aura surrounding the Court still hadn't settled by the time the morning meetings started up again, on the order of the Emperor.

During the week they had to reflect on the events of that morning, Harry's confusion over how it had all gone so wrong only grew. Patricia's pregnancy had been welcomed by Bellatrix as if it was nothing of consequence, however, his own had received such an explosive, violent reaction from the Consort. In fact, they had all seemed put-oof by the announcement. He knew he was new to the Harem, but such a reaction was surely unwarranted. There had been others who had conceived so early on as well. The only explanation he could think of was that, perhaps, they knew something he didn't. Something along the lines of a possible promotion for the birth of his child, or further favour.

Whatever it was, it left the Court, and therefore the meetings, fraught with tension so thick you could cut it with a knife.

Bellatrix, she refused to even look at him or acknowledge him further than an opening glare at the beginning. She seemed similarly frosty with Patricia now, although seemed to more readily voice this.

"And where is your bump? I started to show much before this; are we sure there is even a baby in there?"

Patricia, with a deadpan snark, simply looked the woman up and down. "Are you sure that wasn't just your... extra weight. You are getting on now, Sister, it's simply a fact of ageing."

"We are only a few years apart in age! Make some sense, Sister-"

"Then perhaps it is my superior breeding-"

Bellatrix stood, shaking in rage. "Your dirty blood has nothing, nothing! On the pedigree of the House of Black! Its superiority even shows in our family's half-blood heir over there, sullied as it may be with his mother's muddy blood."

The wood under Harry's fingers creaked, and he sneered at the woman. She glared back, turning her attention to Jasmine.

"It seems as though no one here knows how to respect their betters." Bellatrix sniffed imperiously. "One, hiding their pregnancy far beyond His Majesty's wishes, and then weakly cowering in isolation whilst further failing to communicate with us," Her lips pursed. "Another, 'forgetting', conveniently, to inform us, and the last, on time at least, but for how long with this baby stick around, I wonder?"

Patricia stood similarly, hair rustling with the force of her magic. "My son," She took visible pleasure in the reactions that drew from them. "Is staying. And he will be a glorious Prince."

"My son, as well," Jasmine piped up, looking smug.

All eyes drew to him. Harry protectively placed a hand over the visible swell of his stomach, glaring back at them.

"I have kept to his Majesty's wishes. My child's title will be known at birth, as he decreed."

"That's the only thing you seem to have done correctly recently, Brother." Bellatrix spat, sneering.

Harry's eyes rolled without his volition. "Perhaps save the righteous spouting for when you aren't under His Majesty's ire, Sister. I seem to remember him slapping you, I recall it vividly. How much you must have annoyed him to warrant that, I wonder. But, I suppose I am his 'favoured whore', aren't I?"

Bellatrix's dark, half-mad gaze grew colder, and she gritted her teeth as she collapsed back into her chair. "You won't be able to hide behind His Majesty and speak to me like that much longer, *Concubine*."

"No, by then, I won't have to 'hide behind' anyone at all. Your time, Auntie Darling," She bristled visibly at the taunting title. "Is almost up."

With that, he stood and trekked out of the hall, eyes watching as he left. Harry heard rustling behind him as others gathered their things and exited as well, the Consort doing nothing to keep them there to continue the failure of the meeting.

They didn't meet for a whole week after that, and it was clear to all that the dynamic of the Harem had shifted.

20th March 1999- Saturday

"You have news for me?"

"Yes, Your Majesty." The man behind him intoned, and Thomas waved his concubine out of his office.

The woman looked startled, spluttering indignantly. "But, Your Majesty, I was telling you about Rastus and Cecelia's week!"

"Important matters, Penny. You may come back in an hour."

She looked dumbfounded, hovering in the doorway as if expecting him to wave her back in and say it had been a mistake to send her away. Penny seemed to realise that this was not the case, and with a huff she spun around, her golden ringlets flying up in a golden cloud. "One hour."

Thomas watched as his office doors slammed shut behind her, and steepled his fingers. "Report."

"The Potters seem to have minimal contact with Dumbledore and the Order. He approached them, but they refused his advances, expressing worries for their young daughter and close

connections to you through their son. Dumbledore attempted to capitalise on this, but they denied any further involvement."

Thomas let out a deep sigh. "Good. Keep an eye on them, however. That old coot has never taken no for an answer. The Potters are a golden opportunity for him, especially since Harry is now pregnant with my child."

"Yes, Your Majesty. The others are also focusing on their respective tasks, Hughes will have his report on the Rosenberg family soon."

"Very well." His Knight disappeared as soon as their conversation was at a close, and he leaned back in his chair. A smirk played on his lips.

Dumbledore was growing ever bolder, especially approaching one of his favoured concubine's family's so brazenly. It was obvious he was preparing something, and Thomas needed to respond in kind.

1st April 1999- Thursday

When Harry entered the meeting hall that morning, he could feel that something was off immediately. It only took seeing Penny sat on the dais, in the chair usually occupied by Bellatrix, to confirm his suspicions.

He took his seat, taking in the confused faces of the others who were slowly trickling in as they too noticed. Bellatrix was absent as of yet, the meeting was still a little while off from beginning.

When Bellatrix, Aleto, Felix and Regulus were still a no-show for the start, Penny cleared her throat. Her voice was clear and confident, and Harry had to say that she suited the role of a leader perfectly.

"It seems that our Sisters and Brothers are taking liberties again. This may have stood whilst Bellatrix was the head of this Harem, but I will be reporting to His Majesty if you arrive late. It is a matter of pride to be on time as much as anything else. Clearly, they don't believe so."

The doors opened with a flare of magic, and as usual, Bellatrix and her group sauntered in as if nothing was amiss. That was, until they spotted Penny in prime position, staring down at them unamusedly.

Bellatrix's reaction was priceless, as was her dumbfounded expression. "What do you think you're doing, Consort Haywood? How dare you sit in my seat!"

"My seat, Sister. His Majesty informed me of the change this morning. You have drawn his ire, although he didn't elaborate further. However, it isn't too hard to guess why. I suppose we will find out his reasoning why once I read his decree. Please, have a seat."

Bellatrix stomped up the aisle, a dark sneer contorting her features. "Get. Out. Of. My. Seat."

Penny stared down at her, unimpressed, a blonde eyebrow raising as if to say 'Are you serious?'

"As I just said, His Majesty-"

"This must be a mistake! There is no reason for this!"

"Quite the contrary, I have a scroll here that states quite the opposite. Consort Slytherin-Black, His Majesty announces that you are to be demoted-"

"No!"

"To the rank of Secondary Consort. The Emperor-"

"I do not accept this!"

"The Emperor accentuates that this is due to your treatment of Brother Harry. Your verbal and physical violence towards him, especially considering he is carrying the Emperor's child, is unacceptable. Therefore, His Majesty states he can no longer trust-"

"Shut up!"

"-You not to abuse your power. You have proven to be volatile and unfit for the position of head of His Harem. He asks for you to reflect on this matter-"

Bellatrix stood and stormed out of the Hall in seething fury, her magic whipping about, breaking glasses and vases. The concubines yelped as porcelain exploded and the marble floor cracked under her rage, the doors flying off of their hinges.

Penny sighed and carried on as if the Consort hadn't just destroyed their surroundings. "His Majesty also announces that, due to a discussion His Majesty has recently had with Brother Regulus, he is promoted graciously to the rank of Fourth Consort."

Regulus was glaring up at her, his expression not wavering despite the news. In fact, his dark sneer only seemed to grow deeper, eyes a deep grey. He didn't say a word. The Consort raised her eyebrow.

"Are you not going to thank His Majesty for this, Brother?"

He spun on his heels and followed the path of destruction his Cousin had left. "I will *thank* His Majesty personally, I think."

8th April 1999- Thursday

There seemed to be an odd tension surrounding Regulus and the Emperor at the man's promotion ceremony.

It had been a lavish affair, although his Uncle had seemed to be less than enthused in some moments. It had gone without a hitch, despite the main character looking less than enthused, and the following banquet had begun much the same.

The Emperor raised his glass in the air, and the hall fell silent. The man remained sitting, looking imposing in his gilded throne, dressed more elegantly for the occasion. "I would like to begin by saying that this promotion has been a long time coming. Consort Regulus has long been a member of my harem, for nearly twenty years now. In that time, he has given me a daughter, the third Princess, who wrote to express her gratitude for her Father's promotion. We have had our... disagreements, but that is in the past now. I am delighted that the long empty upper Palaces are finally being filled."

Polite applause followed his unexpected speech, and Regulus looked mollified. He clapped along from his seat next to the Emperor, a reassuring hand clasped in his Cousin's, who was sat next to him. Penny was bright-eyed and enthusiastically smiling up at Thomas, saying something to him that Harry couldn't quite hear.

The Emperor frowned, then his brow relaxed and he smirked nastily. Whatever he whispered to his new Primary Consort caused her to pale dramatically and shrink back into her chair.

Chapter End Notes

Baby Potter will be here in ch.33, which, woah! That's so close now! I've already written the scene [kind of], although the rest of the chapter is still blank

Ch.32 is at 2.6k atm though, although I suspect that one will go well over 4k since that's only one scene fully written :/

Thanks for reading!

Twitter: xStrawberryJam_

6/11/23- Slight edit as I forgot to clarify the rankings for 1st March- Patricia was promoted to 3rd Concubine, which made Harry drop to Fifth and Regulus to Fourth, but Harry regained part of the Emperor's favour, so he stayed as Fourth and Regulus instead dropped to Fifth.

Chapter 32: [The Last Stretch]

Chapter Notes

Incredibly long, incredibly drama heavy ^-^ Word Count: 7.6k

This chapter is so long because I had a lot to put in before baby Potter is born, who arrives *checks notes*... next chapter!

Ch.33 is at 1.2k currently, and since this chapter was so long, I might give myself an extra little time to work on that one, just to make sure its as best as it can be :))

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

13th April 1999- Tuesday

The man was lounging in his chair, looking as if he didn't have a care in the world, as he listened halfheartedly during the morning meeting. A book was hanging limply in his hands, and he was drumming his fingers repetitively on the armrest. From her new position off of the dias, Bellatrix could see and hear this better, now that she was on the same level as the rest of the harem.

Her attention having been lost long ago, she stared at the way Potter cradled his stomach, practically flaunting it to the jealous stares sent his way. Bellatrix frowned at the disrespect he was showing, the way the man was brandishing his bump, robes no longer loose and overflowing as he had worn before. Potter was mocking them, she knew it, the brat was so proud of himself for carrying the Emperor's child; as if many of them hadn't done the same thing before.

Ever since the announcement of his pregnancy the month before, it all seemed to be going wrong for Bella. The most personally irritating was that Patricia was also pregnant, that bitch who taunted her throughout the years about her many losses. Bellatrix had mourned with her when the previous Second Princess Daniella had passed as a baby, but the one she had thought of as a friend soon turned on her, mocking her as she lost one pregnancy after another. It had filled Bellatrix with sick glee when she had first shown off little Delphina to the woman, when her baby had passed milestone after milestone, steadily approaching her second birthday now. However, if the woman was to be believed, she was carrying a son, a baby who would surely overshadow Bellatrix's little Princess. That Jasmine had confirmed

carrying a son, and that Potter was steadily nearing his due date made her fume and fear further.

The second, and most daunting development, was that she no longer held the highest position in the harem, all because she had been rightfully incensed to learn the Potter brat was hiding his pregnancy. Didn't he realise how such a thing could damage the reputation of the Emperor? If his concubines suddenly started popping out children left and right with no forewarning, who was to say what sort of rumours would spread? Bastardy. That was what they would whisper. A child, not the Emperor's, as there was no notice of the Emperor acknowledging his concubine's pregnancy. It had happened before, and Bellatrix would not allow it to happen again. She had used her position to implement guidance that would allow them to avert such misunderstandings, and the man had come close to causing one.

Penny- that wretch who stole her rightful position- was droning on about some sort of legislation the Emperor had passed recently. By now, Bellatrix would have dismissed the meeting, as there wasn't anything of importance to announce. However, her usurper seemed to wish to fill the entirety of the hour, wasting their time.

She could be with the Emperor- although he wasn't accepting her invitations these days- or with her daughter. She could be hosting tea with her allies, those who stood against Penny's ascension and the recent injustices she'd recently been dealt. Bellatrix wanted to be anywhere but here, subjected to mocking and pitying stares.

"What is your opinion on the matter, Sister?" Bellatrix continued to be immersed in her thoughts before a sharp clearing of a throat gained her attention. "Sister Bellatrix," Penny, her soft features contorted, was glaring down at her. The woman dressed more vibrantly as of late, yellow robes seeming to have brightened, headpieces more embellished, citrine jewellery much more prominent than previously. "Please pay attention."

"What?" She bluntly stated, frowning as she was ripped rudely from her thoughts.

With a put-out sigh- as if Bella was the problem here!- Penny repeated herself. "What is your opinion?"

"On what?"

Penny placed a hand on her brow, rubbing there with a light groan. "Sister, we have been discussing His Majesty's newest legislation for a while now, have you not been listening?"

Bellatrix snorted. "We discussed this same legislation yesterday. I thought that was the end of it, is there anything else that needs to be said?"

She fussed, making excuses as to why they should 'analyse his Majesty's legislation in depth as it may affect them at some point', and how this legislation, in particular, was 'one of the most important he'd created in a while.'

"This only affects the muggles, Sister." Patricia cut in, sneering. "Why do I need to know of legislation that affects them?"

Penny huffed. "Because, Sisters, some of us have Muggle relatives. It is not only you in the Emperor's Harem. Sister Cordelia's family is Muggle, as is Sister Erin's and a large part of mine."

She sneered. "And we are witches and wizards. So what if anything affects those Muggles? If I was related to them, which I am gladly not, I would have cut off that embarrassing connection as soon as I could. It is an honour to be a part of his Majesty's harem, we don't need the stain of Muggle relatives tainting such a prestigious creation."

Cordelia scoffed, glaring at her. "Not all of us are descended from the common rabble."

"Yes, yes, we all know you're from a royal family, but that doesn't erase the fact that they're muggles. All muggles are the same. Beings that are inherently-"

"Enough!" Penny raised her voice then, and Bella sneered to herself. "We are getting nowhere, and I doubt we'll be able to have a genial conversation after this, so this meeting is dismissed."

Bellatrix stood mere moments after she finished, hurrying out of the hall, her thoughts swirling deeper into a spiral now that she was free to think.

The third thing that had gone wrong for Bella was that the Emperor no longer held her in high regard. She had no excuse to barge into his office on grounds of discussing 'official matters', now that she was only the Secondary Consort. She could no longer spend an hour every morning chattering to him, pretending to care about his new legislation, because that was a privilege reserved for the Primary Consort and those she wished to invite along. Bellatrix could no longer simply approach him and expect him to indulge her whims, because she had lost much of the favour she had built up with him over the years.

When had she started to lose it all? When had her downfall started?

Bellatrix could not pinpoint the moment, but she felt worn down and rather old all of a sudden, tilting her head back to stare up at the blue sky, the sun warming her pale skin.

Was it when Potter had joined the harem? No, she had felt her grasp on the harem slipping for a while now, power inching out of her hands slowly, millimetre by millimetre. His ascension had only exaggerated the speed. Was it when she had lost power to Evangeline, only gaining it back when the woman had died? No, that wasn't it, the Emperor had hated that bitch by the end. Then was it as far back as when Penny had joined, a Second-Class Attendant that had climbed the ranks at alarming speed, now her superior?

Or was it Bellatrix herself? Was it the distance she had created between herself and the Emperor when she had lost one pregnancy after the other, growing more and more desperate, lashing out at the man when he tried to provide comfort? Was it when she had, finally, given birth to their daughter, but hidden her away from him? Was it her ambition to see her daughter on the throne that drove him away?

Was it that she couldn't provide the man with a son, as Evangeline had, as Isla had, as Felix had, as Penny had? As perhaps Jasmine and Patricia would if they were to be believed. As possibly the current focus of her ire, Harry, would.

But, after recent events, would the Emperor accept her into his bed again?

She was older now, forty-eight at the end of the year. Penny was only twenty-seven, and Potter turning nineteen. Could she even compete with them, conceiving yet another child?

...Could she stand yet another loss?

21st April 1999- Wednesday

Anya placed the tray down carefully on the table, wincing when the china clattered together slightly. She glanced up, relieved that Harry was still sleeping.

He was now just shy of twenty-seven weeks into his pregnancy, and it was beginning to take a physical toll on him. Harry was tired constantly but had difficulty getting to sleep nonetheless. It was a miracle he was resting now.

She hushed one of the palace-assigned maids, June, as she came stumbling into the room, chuckling to herself. The woman's face sobered, and she glared at Anya, sticking her nose up in the air as she began to dust. Anya shook her head, amazed at the attitudes she had to deal with.

Some of the maids working in Harry's palace weren't the sort she wanted around His Highness, especially not whilst he was pregnant. The touchiness and need for some of them to be around him had increased ever since the news of his pregnancy had come to light, and it was grating on every one of Anya's nerves. There had been outrage from a portion of His Highness' maids when the news broke, wondering why they hadn't been informed beforehand. Luckily, that hadn't gotten back to Harry, but Anya was now increasingly wary about them.

Orla and June, especially, were the ones she was keeping a close eye on. They were loyal to only themselves, and Orla especially didn't seem to hold Harry in high regard.

June was trusted enough to leave her alone with Harry, she was apparently his source of gossip or something like that, but when Orla was around, Anya always made sure either herself, Kia, Tabitha or Hannah were present. She had suspicions that Orla had another master in the harem, one who she was reporting to regularly.

Anya had caught her sneaking out during the night before and only stopped her those few times during Harry's first year in the harem. Now, however, she simply observed, noting which direction she went in. She had Kia follow her a few times, but she never got far as the woman was incredibly suspicious of her surroundings, acting as if she knew she had a tail. She would head off in a different direction, leading Kia elsewhere, and always circled back to Harry's Palace.

Harry shuffled in his sleep, and Anya held her breath, hoping that he wouldn't wake. But, to her dismay, his eyes began to flutter open, and he made a questioning noise.

"Did you have a nice rest, Your Highness?" Anya asked him softly once he was sat up and cognizant, and he hummed positively.

"I feel better than I have in days." He confirmed, voice still slurred a little.

"I made you a tea, although it's got a warming charm on it. I was hoping you'd sleep for a little while longer, just until Lady Luna arrived."

"Ah," Harry perked up, losing any remaining drowsiness as his face lit up. She sighed, any hope of his rest continuing dampened. "I forgot. What time is it?"

"Twenty to one, Your Highness. You still have until then."

He hummed. "Make sure you have her favourite tea ready, she doesn't like to drink much else."

"Yes, Your Highness."

She made a tea for him, pushing it closer so Harry didn't have to reach as far. Still, he struggled a little bending over to grab it, and Anya fretted as he grunted.

She hoped the experience of being pregnant would open Harry's eyes about its struggle, and put him off on having the amount he wished. However, the flash of anger he had gotten in his eyes when she had passingly mentioned such a topic a few days back made Anya second-guess that.

All she could hope was that he'd wait a while after his child was born, and allow them to help with raising the little Highness as much as possible.

1st May 1999- Saturday

The weather was terrible as they entered the month of May. The Court was littered with puddles, mud had been tracked everywhere, and the pond in his garden had overflowed. It was through the torrential downpour that Harry had to struggle to attend the morning meeting.

He was sodden by the time he arrived, the spell he had cast rendered useless due to the wind. A quick drying spell and he was warm again, but Harry still felt slightly sticky. It was a relief to relax back into his chair and soak up the warm air of the hall, which the other concubines seemed to be doing as well.

One of the changes Harry had noticed since Penny had taken over as head of the harem was that she was less likely to cancel a daily meeting. Bellatrix, at the first hint of rain or snow falling, had used to cancel the meetings and ask them to remain in their Palaces. Penny did no such thing, so Harry and the rest were expected to attend despite the heavy rain.

Another change was that she refused to dismiss them early unless there was a disruption, the time spent hanging around in the hall, barely listening, eating into their day.

"Brother, His Majesty commends you on being so reliable as of late, and as reward for this, he graciously promotes you to the rank of Secondary Concubine." Penny gave him a smile, but it didn't quite reach her eyes. "I must say, I'm pleased that there is no remaining bad blood between you and His Majesty, despite recent events."

Harry grinned, as fake as the one she was still wearing. "Why would there be, Sister? Me and His Majesty meet regularly, there has been plenty of time for us to gain each other's trust again. I'd say we're even closer than before. It's a wonderful thing."

"Quite," The Consort bit out, sourness tainting the word despite her smile. "And on more important matters, the Emperor wishes for us to send our congratulations to Her Highness, the First Princess Evana, as it is her nineteenth birthday today-."

Harry snorted to himself. He had become disillusioned with Penny as of late. She seemed to have grown less fond of him as he climbed further up the ranks and closer to her position. The dour way she had announced his promotion to Secondary Concubine and election to quickly change the subject spoke volumes.

It was saddening that he was steadfastly losing allies in the harem with his promotions, not gaining them, but he should have expected there to be feelings of animosity and jealousy growing at some point. Dahlia's and his friendship and its dissolution the clearest case.

Luna and Reguus were now the only two he would consider his allies, although whether he could truly trust his Uncle was to be debated. The man was, clearly, devoted to Bellatrix to a fault, and Harry didn't want to find out who the man would choose if it came down to that.

The answer was, depressingly, obvious.

6th May 1999- Thursday

"Thank you for humouring me today, My Concubine." The Emperor greeted him as Harry entered the dining room, sweeping in with Anya keeping him steady.

Harry gave the man a grin. "I am honoured that you would invite me for lunch, Your Majesty. I wouldn't deny a chance to spend time with you."

"Still, you are growing ever closer to your due date now. It must be tiring to make your way over here. You seemed unsteady on your feet." The man noted, and Harry winced slightly as he sat, his baby shifting to press right on his ribs.

"I make my way to the daily meetings every day, besides, I'm glad for the exercise. Anya was simply helping me as my ankles have become rather sore the past few days."

"Due to your pregnancy?"

"Yes, my Healer said it's quite a common ailment."

The Emperor hummed, clicking his fingers a couple of times. A few moments later, the doors swung open, and maids began unloading plates of food onto the table. "I was thinking," He began, and Harry gave him his full attention. "I hope that our child gets your eyes, although I pray they get my hair." He grimaces. "The Potter hair is not something I've ever imagined a child of mine having."

Harry laughed. Having lived with his hair all his life, he was used to the daily struggle, although it wasn't as bad as many exaggerated. Anya, or whoever was doing his hair for the day, always complained, but it was their fault for not listening to his advice. His grandad has invented a hair Potion specifically to help manage Potter hair, after all. "Well, they'll have a high chance of being born with black hair, as we both have it."

"We do, but that does not discard the genes of the other grandparents. Your mother has red hair, as does your sister, if I recall."

Harry smiled fondly. "Yes, Florence seems to have taken most of her colouring from our Mum. Red is recessive, however."

"My grandmother, from my paternal side, also had red hair, although more orange I suppose." The Emperor admitted. He got a faraway look in his eyes, as if lost in a memory. "No, I don't remember it being quite as bright as Lady Potters."

"Was your Grandmother a nice woman, Your Majesty?"

He snorted, a nasty grin pulling at his lips. "She was an old hag. She wanted nothing to do with me, and neither did I, truly. She died long ago now, good riddance." He said this in a humourous tone that suggested a joke, but it was one only the man himself understood. Harry offered a slight smile, which only seemed to amuse Thomas more. "Please, have some food, my Concubine. I made sure they served us a treacle tart."

15th May 1999- Saturday

Dahlia watched Harry as he walked sedately up the steps to the Pavillion. He had yet to notice the presence of her, Daphne and Theo as of yet, otherwise Dahlia was sure he would have turned away.

As if hearing her thoughts, he lifted his head then, and she met his startled, green eyes as uninterestedly as possible. Harry seemed to hesitate for a moment but continued up the steps with that characteristic bullheadedness of his.

Dahlia scoffed at his impudence, breaking eye contact to look at Daphne. She, too, had noticed the man and seemed equally annoyed with his dismissiveness towards them. He'd always been so full of himself, ignoring her when she didn't have anything to offer him. Now that he was a Concubine and in His Majesty's good books, even pregnant with his child, it seemed he wasn't going to bother with her any more, despite using her to get into the Emperor's harem in the first place.

She expected him to barge his way into their gathering, perhaps using his station to do this. However, he simply continued past them, much to her surprise, seating himself on a bench on the other side of the Pavillion.

He hadn't even acknowledged them past a quick nod on his way past, leaving them watching as he settled with a book, ignoring their stares.

Daphne scoffed audibly, turning to her with raised eyebrows. "How rude!"

Theo rolled his eyes. "Don't start something, he's a Concubine. And pregnant."

"And that excuses his behaviour?" Daphne continued, sneering. Dahlia always thought such a thing made her look ugly, the expression odd on such a pretty face. She never said this, however.

"Ignore his, Daph. If he's not going to greet us properly, we won't acknowledge him."

"He doesn't need to acknowledge us. Our rank dictates that we're supposed to greet him." Theo muttered, sipping his tea with a roll of his eyes.

"If you're going to keep on Theodore, go and greet him like a good little Attendant." Daphne snapped, and Theo's sneer suited him much more.

"I think I'll pass. I don't want you both to appear more disrespectful to authority than you already do."

Dahlia humphed and settled back into her chair. "Let's forget this. Come on Daph, you were telling me about Sister Penny's paintings?"

Theo hung back once they had finished up with their tea, the afternoon growing late. Dahlia had to get back in time for a proper lunch, as her cook never waited for her. She was disrespectful, but all attempts to get her removed had been denied by the Emperor.

She tutted, beckoning him closer, yet he remained. "Theo?"

"I have something to discuss with our brother. I'll meet you back at the Pavillion of Stars later." He waved her off, and Dahlia hesitated, but Theo didn't seem willing to budge.

Sighing, she linked arms with Daphne instead, who was silent by her side. "Alright then, suit yourself."

He approached the man, who seemed engrossed in the thick book in his hands, a thing which would have disturbed Theo two years ago but now seemed typical for him.

"Brother Harry." He softly spoke, making sure to announce his presence before he got too close. Potter glared at him, bright green eyes flashing with a steely light. Theo barely suppressed his flinch, staring down at the man with what he hoped was as open of an expression as his upbringing could allow. Potter didn't relax in the slightest, but his regal recline let Theo know exactly how much of a threat he was seen as. Good, he wasn't here to be antagonistic.

"Attendant." Was his bland reply, and Theo swallowed back his instinctive bristling dryly.

"May I talk with you?"

"Are we not doing so already?"

He ignored his snark with grace. "Somewhere a little less public would be better."

"What could you have to say to me," He snapped his book shut. "That requires privacy?"

"Something that I believe may interest you."

Potter scoffed. "I am not one who enjoys much gossip, Attendant."

"But I'm sure that this would be most interesting for you, Your Highness."

Potter raised one of his dark eyebrows, green eyes rolling back in annoyance. "Fine. Follow me, I'm sure my gardens will be more suited towards the privacy you seem to want so much."

He followed the man back to his Palace, stopping himself from gaping at the finery. It was massive compared to the rooms Theo held, and he felt envy grip his heart. If only he could have this.

Once they were settled, Potter raised an eyebrow. "And?"

Theo cleared his throat, leaning forward. Unmeaningly, his eyes landed on the swell of the man's stomach, which was large enough now that it was unmistakable. He looked away, flustered. "I overheard something."

"Hm?"

"About Dahlia. She's planning on poisoning you, sometime soon."

Harry frowned, feeling his magic spark under his skin. "Excuse me?" He spat, not ever trying to rein in the waves of power that forced their way out. In front of him, Theo leaned back.

With a shaking voice, the man continued. "Well, I mean, that's what I've heard! There's all sorts of rumours going around!"

Harry sneered. "So it's a rumour? Has she said anything about it?"

Was Dahlia an idiot? Informing someone of your plans was the easiest way to get found out. She had left a trail, if it was true, one that would easily be sniffed out by the Emperor when the time came to invoke retribution. That was, of course, if Harry didn't avoid her plan in the first place.

"No, but-"

"Then keep your mouth shut." He hissed, eyeing as the man's lip twitched slightly. "The maids around here like to spout all sorts of nonsense. You don't want to ruin your relationship with her, do you? I will keep my guard up, but I will not allow myself to go mad with paranoia. As you plan for me to, Nott."

The man in front of him smirked openly now, snickering a little, amusement sparkling in his eyes. "You've changed, Potter."

"And you haven't in the slightest." Harry stood, book snapping shut, signifying the end of their conversation. He wasn't in the mood for any more interaction with the man. Theodore had always creeped him out a little at Hogwarts, and the eyes he could feel on his back as he carefully descended the steps sent shivers down his spine.

He'd acknowledge the threat the man had warned him about, but he couldn't afford to hide himself away now.

Now that he was truly a major player in the Harem, the Secondary Concubine, it wouldn't do to look weak to the vultures circling ever closer.

27th May 1999- Thursday

Spring was in full bloom, the flowers bright, the leaves green, air warmed by the strong sun. It seemed to fill Harry with energy, and absentmindedly, he swung their joined hands about, humming happily. Thomas did nothing to stop this, watching him with amusement and blossoming fondness.

He wanted to keep Harry close to his side these days after he had begun hearing rumours of possible future poisonings against the man. However, each of the rumours said something different. One was that his previous childhood friend, Attendant Malfoy, was going to invite him to her garden for tea and poison him. Another pointed to Bellatrix, who would do so through the use of a maid. Yet another pointed fingers in Patricia's direction, citing that she was mad with jealousy after her most recent fall in rank. There were even some rather outlandish rumours concerning Luna; that she was just cosying up to the man, just to stab him in the back later on.

He had rummaged through the minds of these maids and Eunuchs, having no such qualms about ruining their minds with his harsh Legilimancy, only finding them to have no clear root, or for the lead to stop suddenly.

Whatever it was, whether they were rumours or not, Thomas was taking the situation seriously. He had already begun feeding Harry antidotes that would remain latent in his system until needed, administered through his Healer disguised as vitamins.

Harry was startled as he slipped on a step suddenly, grabbing at the handrail tightly to stop his fall. Thomas felt his heart lurch, magic surging forward to protectively cradle his concubine and lead them both to steady ground. He could feel the man's heart thudding in his chest, as well as a kick to his side courtesy of their child.

"Thanks," The man sighed, breath catching in his throat. "Your Majesty." He tacked on hurriedly, and Thomas brushed a piece of his hair out of his face.

"It is no problem, my Concubine."

"That was idiotic, Brother." A snide voice came from behind them, and Harry jerked. He had already sensed the man's approach and sighed in exasperation, turning.

Felix was making his way down the steps, having followed them at a short distance for a little while now. He was dressed finely for such an ordinary day, and Thomas wanted to sneer at the blatant posturing. In comparison, he made Harry seem like a simple lordling. Exactly the man's intention.

"Excuse me?" Harry frowned, tilting his head as the other man stepped closer. Felix didn't stop until he was right in front of them, giving Thomas his full intention, ignoring Harry entirely.

"He should be more careful with your child, Your Majesty. It was irresponsible for him to not be holding onto the handrail in the first place. Another mistake like that, if no one was there to catch him, and your child would be dead."

Harry shrank at his harsh words, and Thomas gritted his teeth slightly. His concubines seemed unable to keep the peace within the harem as of late, it seemed. Felix following him whilst he was with another, however, wasn't something new. The man didn't usually outwardly show his jealousy, but when Thomas was with other male concubines, his temper always seemed to flare.

"And what of the time you fell in the lake whilst pregnant, Felix?" He asked in response, surprising the other man. Felix, confused, didn't respond. "Nothing to say?"

"I don't believe my 'swim' has any relevance in this matter, Your Majesty." The man responded rather snippily, and Thomas grinned.

"Oh, but it has everything to do with it. Please keep your opinions to yourself, especially when they are hypocritical. Harry, come along, you're shivering. Let us take tea in my front sitting room."

Felix made a noise of discontent, but made no more comments, neither did he attempt to stop them. If he had, Thomas would have seen to it that the man realised his mistaken presumptuousness.

8th June 1999- Tuesday

Patricia approached him, a wide smile revealing her pearly white teeth. He wasn't sure if that was her version of an amiable smile, but to Harry, it looked more like a shark bearing its teeth before trapped prey.

"Brother Harry~" The woman practically purred, and he shivered at her tone. This behaviour of hers, towards him especially, in the past weeks was unusual. She had seemed to suddenly get over her ire, instead, ignoring him whilst she fawned over Jasmine. Now, she had set her sights on him yet again, just in a less antagonistic way. "Are you free this afternoon?" She questioned, still smiling.

Harry hesitantly responded. "I am. Why?"

"Well," She drew out. "I was thinking, would you join me for tea? Just the two of us, at the Pavillion. Ah, although I can't really promise it will be just us, can I? In such a public space, we're bound to bump into others."

He scrunched his nose, distrusting. "I suppose I can. What time?"

"One o'clock. It will be tea and cakes, so have a light lunch so you have room." Patricia laughed, before strutting away, leaving Harry blindsided. He huffed, exasperated, and dreaded the next few hours.

"As I was saying, I am quite looking forward to watching our children grow up together, Brother." Patricia folded her hands on the table, staring at him intently. "My son and your and Jasmine's children. There have never been so many children born so close together, it's thrilling!"

"They'll be in the same year at Hogwarts, presumably." Harry smiled awkwardly, still feeling uncomfortable around the woman. She didn't like him in the slightest, so Harry was acting cautious, barely touching the tea or food in front of him. He'd taken a tiny sip to start, but now, every time he picked up his cup, he pretended to take a drink of it, vanishing it wandlessly bit by bit.

"Oh yes! I can't wait, I've already begun-" The woman was cut off by a throaty cough that startled him, reaching and gulping down some tea. She spluttered into the cup as another cough shook her, and Harry placed his own cup down.

"Are you alright, Sister?"

"Yes, I'm-" She coughed again, dabbing delicately at the corner of her mouth. Harry frowned.

"Are you sure?"

She waved her hand flippantly. "Yes, yes, I'm healthy as can be. I only had a health check the other day, so it should be nothing to worry about. Perhaps it's the cakes." Patricia took another long, purposeful drag of tea, and Harry squinted at the red shine on the corner of her lip.

"Sister, I think-"

The Concubine slammed her cup down. "As I said, my health check reported that I'm in perfect health-" She was cut off this time by a fit of coughing, severe enough to shake the table. The maid by her side fluttered close, holding her mistress's shoulders and asking after her in concern. When Patricia finally lifted her head again, there was blood covering her lips, a pool of it resting in her handkerchief. They both stared down at it in shock.

"Sister-"

She gasped loudly, meeting his wide eyes with her own, a spark of hatred igniting within them. "You've- You've poisoned me!?" The woman suddenly yelled, devolving into another round of coughing that had her hunching over. Harry's blood ran cold at her loud accusation.

"I-I can assure you I haven't-"

"Assure me? Look, look! Look at my handkerchief, blood! See? My Healer said I was perfectly healthy as of a few days ago, and now I'm coughing blood!? Oh, call a healer, a healer!" The woman flopped back into her maid's arms, another rushing off with speed. "My baby, it's about my baby I know it! He's jealous that I'm carrying a son, the spiteful man! Get the Emperor!"

"Sister-"

"Don't call me Sister with that foul mouth of yours! I didn't think you had it in you, but just look at this! Where's the healer? Oh, my baby, I'm going to lose my baby!" She wailed some more, devolving into gasping wheezes that made Harry's heart lurch. He simply sat there, frozen in place, as he watched her maid tend to her the best she could.

The maid kept looking at him, eyes wide, dabbing gently at her mistress' lips as blood continued to spittle out as she hacked. She seemed to be anxiously waiting for something, but as he remained sitting there, rigid, she grew increasingly worried.

A horde of footsteps could be heard, and Harry shakily turned his head. There was the maid that had rushed off, and behind her, the Emperor, followed by a group of Eunuchs and

Knights, along with a few concubines. An especially harried-looking healer was being bodily dragged along, a large case in her hands.

"What is the meaning of this?" The Emperor's voice bellowed throughout the Pavillion. He looked mutinous as he surveyed the area, eyes lingering on the blood, the spilt tea, and Harry's pale white face. His attention focused on Patricia, who, at the sound of his voice, had straightened from her slouch to call his name. "Healer, treat her immediately, I want to know what's going on."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Your Majesty! Arrest him, he's poisoned me, that wretch is trying to kill our son!" Patricia yelled, sounding breathless and she wheezed and spluttered.

Thomas strode closer, looming over their sitting forms. Harry could barely focus on him, eyes fixed on the blood still dripping from the Concubine's mouth, the way she threw her head back and thrashed as the Healer approached, screaming and shouting at him to 'save her son!', for the Emperor to 'punish him immediately'. It was like he was watching a drama play out before his eyes, but instead, it was his reality.

"-cubine. Harry!"

The Emperor's sharp voice brought him out of his reverie, and he looked up jerkily. The man was staring down at him, eyes blazing. Harry shook, bringing a hand up to cover his mouth in dawning horror.

"I-I-I didn't-" His voice shook like it never had before. "I-I didn't-" A heavy hand landed on Harry's shoulder, jostling him slightly. The Emperor drew closer, face still blank, eyes searching.

"I'm going to need you to calm down, Harry."

Patricia's voice cut into their bubble. "Calm down, calm down! He's poisoned me! I'm the one who needs you-"

"Silence!" He roared, face twisting. "Healer, what's your verdict?"

With a grave expression, the Healer turned to the Emperor. "She has indeed been poisoned, Your Majesty. It is a concoction supposed to attack the recipient's organs, resulting in coughing up blood, and can, in severe cases, cause miscarriage. But I can confirm that the worst of it has passed, it is fast acting, but Her Highness' magic was strong enough to fight it off."

"Hah, see!" The Concubine crowed, sitting straighter now that the danger had seemingly passed. Her breath was still wheezy, but she was no longer coughing blood like she had been minutes before. "That little bastard poisoned me! I knew it, he was jealous all along, and see what's happened now. I wonder, has it been him behind Sister Jasmine and Erin's-"

"Enough." The Emperor's tone was steely, but Patricia boldly ignored him, speaking to the growing crowd that was forming.

"It's so obviously clear, Your Majesty. He needs to be locked away, far from-"

"You're smirking, Patricia."

"-What?"

"I believe we need to get you both settled within your own Palaces. I will be conducting an investigation into this." His voice brooked no argument, nodding to a pair of Knights who were closest to him. They moved, shuffling back the crowd, demanding for them to return to their duties.

"Your Majesty, how could you think there's anything behind this? And what do you mean by 'you're smirking'? Are you blaming me, do you think I'd purposefully poison myself?-"

"I wouldn't put much past you, Patricia. Now remain silent, my Knights will escort you back to your Palace. And when I come to talk with you later, you will tell me the truth of this matter, and I will decide on the punishments. If I find you have willingly placed my children in danger- either of you-" He shot a look at Harry, who still felt numb as he watched the proceedings dully, "Then there will be severe consequences. Severe. Now get out of my sight."

"Thomas, how can you treat me so coldly? I've just been poisoned, are you truly going to side with that man? Thomas!"

He ignored her, grabbing Harry by his arm and hauling him to his feet. Perhaps the gesture was supposed to be one of support, but Harry stumbled as he was righted too quickly, hunching over with a groan. He gagged, feeling bile rise in his throat as blood thundered in his ears.

"Steady, steady." The man held him tightly by his arms, guiding him forward.

"I-I-" Harry stuttered as they began walking, stumbling, away from the table. "I didn't-"

"Shush, my Concubine, the truth will be revealed."

"She's framing me." He shakily whispered, shoulders bunched up to his ears. Harry's throat was dry, and it felt like there was a rock lodged within it. He couldn't get his voice out, no matter how much he wanted to clearly defend himself. The situation was dire, yet he couldn't even finish a sentence. "Why would- I wouldn't-" Harry fell silent as the Emperor continued to guide him, eyesight hazy.

"We will speak more back at your Palace."

He waved all the maids away, ordering for one of them to fetch him a drink- not tea. Thomas settled Harry on the sofa, observing the way the man continued to shiver as if he had been doused with icy water.

The maid- Anya, he recalled. Harry always sent her to him to arrange their meetings. She was his Head maid. Loyal.- handed him the cup of juice she had prepared for her master. Astute. He wanted nobody approaching his husband except him whilst he was in such a vulnerable state. Thomas waved her away as well, and she hesitantly obliged, but he could feel her aura hovering right outside of the doors.

He approached Harry slowly, settling next to him and taking one smaller, shaky hand within his own. In the man's shock, their skin colours almost matched, and Thomas circled his palm with his thumb in an attempt to soothe.

He was conflicted about how to do so. His expertise in the area of 'comforting' was minimal. It was much easier with his children, whom he could simply bribe with gifts to get them to calm down. He could do no such thing in a situation such as this. Thomas snarled wordlessly at the reminder.

Patricia was a downright nasty woman when she wanted to be. She had to be, to have remained in his Harem for so long. She had been part of the first generation, back when the only reason he began taking spouses was to create a stable bloodline so that the Slytherin name would never again die out. It was a ruthless time, before Thomas implemented many of the rules that existed today. Many died, and he couldn't find it in himself to care when they did. They had been a means to an end, even his so-called 'favoured'. That had fortunately changed as he settled, thinking more before acting, taking better care of what was his. But the scars of his previous attitude still clearly showed with how the early members of his Harem interacted with the others.

Patricia targeted others using herself and the children she bore, never leaving physical evidence on others to draw the blame back to herself. Once, he had been blinded by her, excusing her actions as a natural process to eliminate the weak from his Harem. Now, his spouses were *his*. They weren't hers to scheme about.

No, he didn't believe for one minute, unless his husband was the world's greatest liar, that this poisoning had anything to do with the man. It had Patricia's dirty fingerprints all over it. The smirk she had hidden behind the bloodied handkerchief, her immediate finger pointing as if

the culprit had already been chosen in her mind, the way she had screamed and yelled about a poison, despite being immune to many and one of the wariest women he knew. Patricia would never drink tea prepared by others. That teapot was her own, a stupid miscalculation on her part.

He had gifted similar to all of his upper Harem members, but he always made sure they had dissimilarities for cases such as this one.

However, the fact that she had done such a thing whilst carrying the son she had desperately wished for was something that didn't fit in with that scenario. And Patricia was truly a smart woman, would she target his heavily pregnant husband whilst pregnant with a son herself, putting that child in danger of truly being affected by the poison?

He was just glad he'd had the foresight to dose his husband with a variety of antidotes beforehand.

By his side, Harry let out a heavy, shuddering breath. The man was still shaking, although he no longer looked so shellshocked, that haunted look in his eyes one Thomas never wanted to see again.

"I feel sick." He looked it as well. In contrast to his usually healthy pallor, his skin was pale and clammy, the hand in his own slick with sweat.

"I will have your Healer called for. For my peace of mind, and yours, you need to be checked over. Such stress is not good for your body, especially whilst pregnant."

The man hummed, leaning closer to him. Thomas had his Healer sent for, and they sat in silence for a few minutes, before Harry's small voice broke it.

"You truly believe me? I didn't do it, I wouldn't. I don't have much ill will against her, not enough to do something as heinous as this." Unlike his previous, stricken pleading, his voice sounded sullen now, disbelieving.

"The truth will come out. But I do believe you." His head shot up, eyes filling with hope. "That poison is not one that can be prepared so hastily. I heard that Patricia only invited you for tea this morning."

"She did. She was all smiles, it was unusual. Now..."

He pressed a kiss to the top of the man's head, shocking himself with the care he was exhibiting, but he hid that from his Concubine as he looked up at him in awe.

A knock on the door broke the moment. "Enter." He called, tensing slightly.

A woman entered and bowed lowly, and Thomas beckoned her forward as he noticed the emblem on her robes denoting her as Harry's healer.

"Check him over, a full inspection."

"Yes, Your Majesty." The woman acquiesced, kneeling to hover her hands and wand over his concubine, focusing especially on his stomach area.

"Is anything the matter?" He spoke after a short while, having watched the proceedings like a hawk.

The Healer drew back, still bowing her head. "His Highness' blood pressure is a bit high for my liking, and the baby seems restless."

"The baby's hurt?" Harry shot up, grabbing at her hands.

"Oh no, Your Highness! The baby is well, it is more you I am worried about currently. We need to get your blood pressure down, otherwise, I'm afraid I will have to start worrying about your child."

"What do you recommend?"

"For now, His Highness needs to relax. You need rest and lots of it. I have half a mind to put you on bed rest. Something such as this could send you into labour early."

"Then It shall be done," Thomas spoke with finality. Harry didn't even refuse, his hands clutched over his now heavily swollen belly. He was nearly thirty-four weeks along now, only weeks off of his due date, if that. Their baby could come later on today if the Healer's warnings rang true.

Patricia had been exceedingly rash and idiotic with targeting Harry whilst he was so far along. If he did begin labouring early, Thomas didn't know what he would do in retaliation.

The woman was carrying his child, a son if she was to be believed. He couldn't harm her in any way, his conscience wouldn't allow anything of the sort. That didn't exclude her from punishment, however. Depending on how forthcoming she would be concerning this matter when he questioned her later- he foresaw a battle of wills he wasn't in the mood for- it could go either way.

However, currently, Thomas was needed by his husband's side to watch over him and assure himself that the man was safe.

Chapter End Notes

I have so many plans that are finally starting to be written now!! I mean, we're nearly halfway through now, there's still so much more I have to write!

I'm going to be posting an alternate version of Harry's talk with Theo in Additions, the original version, as It was all Theo's POV at first. I added it in yesterday because it literally stopped where he reveals to Harry that Dahlia will supposedly poison him, and I thought that was a little mean ^ _ ^

Anyway, I have plenty of drama ideas, but does anyone have a POV they want to see? I've done Tom, Bella, Dahlia, Penny, Reg, and Patricia a bit. Theo, Jasmine, Anya and

some others as well

Thanks for reading!

Twitter: xStrawberryJam_

[Just as a last off, I will be posting a poll on my Twitter for guesses as to what the baby will be :)]

Also: Changes in rankings for this chapter- [Just affecting Concubines]

1st May

Felix- 1st Concubine [Same]

Harry- 2nd [Up from 4th]

Alecto- 3rd [Down from 2nd]

Patricia- 4th [Down from 3rd]

Jasmine- 5th [Same]

Cordelia- 6th [Same]

1st June

No movement

Chapter 33: [Rue]

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 5.0k

:))))

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

20th June 1999- Sunday

The confinement period was a blessing for Harry, in the end. For the first few days, he had been left alone to settle, simply satisfied with the knowledge that the Emperor didn't believe that he was behind the poisoning, and was currently searching for the culprit.

After that period of suspension, the Emperor had visited his Palace with a cold expression, personally informing him that Patricia was still pleading innocent, and he was inclined to believe her. Shocked, he had refused to listen at first, believing the man was going to turn on him then and have him arrested on the spot.

It had taken a while for Thomas to calm him down enough that he would hear him out, and many declarations that he still believed in Harry's innocence.

He explained to Harry that there was evidence to support her innocence and that she wouldn't have placed her long-awaited son in any harm. The poison had been a strong one, and an attack on the both of them. Harry had been lucky he was cautious, Patricia had been fortunate that her magic was strong enough to fight off the worst of it.

The woman was still adamant that he was the culprit, but now it seemed less likely to Harry that she was behind it and framing him, and more like someone had attempted to harm both of the babies, placing the blame on whichever one of them pulled through the best.

It angered him, as well as terrified him. Someone obviously had ill intentions towards his child, both of their children, and unfortunately, Harry couldn't begin to pinpoint who. All members of the harem would gain in some part from both him and Patricia losing their children, or having their reputations mangled from the blame. That only made searching for the true culprit harder.

Harry didn't believe that this poisoning was the one Nott had been warning him about, however. Dahlia wasn't as ruthless as she wished to believe, she wouldn't have targeted him through Patricia, and she seemed to idolise the woman. It did concern Harry that she may attempt to do something in this time of turmoil, however.

Therefore, Harry took the confinement as a blessing, and was dreading entering the fray once again, especially since his competitors would have had that time to slander him, to use those days to change the narrative to fit their needs. Not that it mattered, truly. The Emperor had announced neither he nor Patricia were the culprits, but rather the victims of an outside attack.

He was eager, however, to watch the others and attempt to deduce who was behind the poisoning, as there was no doubt in his mind that the culprit was one of them. Things were beginning to heat up now that Harry was steadily approaching his second full year in the Harem, as if the rest of the concubines had finally decided to treat them as the competitors they were, instead of newcomers with no attachment to the man they all coveted.

This episode demonstrated what many were capable of, despite the false sense of security they had been collectively lulled into over the past few years of fewer attacks. It would have the hackles of many up for months to come.

1st July 1999- Thursday

Confinement ended on the first of the month, although Harry hadn't felt the time at all. The Emperor continued to visit him every few days, and they would talk about the future. Their future with their baby was Harry's favoured conversation topic.

As his due date slowly crept up on him, only a few weeks if his baby stuck to schedule, his mind was filled with the thoughts of them being parents. Thomas had plenty of experience, and this would be his twenty-second child, but this would be *their* , hopefully, first.

Harry was already considering names, but none were definite, as he needed to know what Thomas was going to name them. But one thing was definite, whether they were a boy or a girl, they were going to have a middle name that reflected Harry's mother.

Harry had his dad's name as his, and while he wasn't going to be so on the nose and name his child 'Lily' or something along those lines, he was looking towards the more botanical names.

There was also the matter of preparing for the arrival of his child. The nursery's decoration had been underway for weeks now, as had the creation of their wardrobe. Most of it was neutral colours, pastels and blacks, but a few items were more decorated. They weren't going to be an ordinary child, after all. They were going to be A Prince or Princess, and no matter what, the heir to the Potter estate. His second would be entitled to the Black Family fortune, but Harry had already begun planning the split of assets to make sure none of his possible further children felt left out of any inheritance.

They would be Royals, no matter what, so it wasn't as if they would be deprived of much anyway. They would always be entitled to the best society had to offer, with their pick of suitors, and access to the wealth attached to the Slytherin name.

He nodded in thanks as the Knights on either side of the Meeting Hall doors opened them, entering with Anya guiding him gently. He winced, feeling his ankles chaff on his shoes, but luckily his robes covered them. Harry surveyed the Hall, noting how it was mostly filled.

Jasmine and Patricia were looking much rounder than before, at nearly thirty-four weeks and thirty-two weeks respectively. Jasmine was visibly preening as those surrounding her showered her with compliments, staring down at her heavily swollen stomach jealously. She was patting it, chucking as she spoke to her child sweetly, eyes full of love.

Patricia's, on the other hand, were full of distrust. She was cradling her growing bump protectively, glaring at those who looked at it for too long. Harry grimaced as she turned her stare to him, the Harem finally noticing his arrival.

He was a little later than usual, his ankles sore, gait smaller and slower due to his state. He was now thirty-seven weeks along, after all.

There was a dramatic gasp.

"Oh, Brother Harry! You're back with us!" It was Cedric, who stood to hold his hands, guiding him towards his seat in between Regulus and Patricia. "You're practically glowing!"

By his other side, Anya was barely containing her frown as Cedric practically dragged him along, but Harry chuckled good-naturedly. It was only fair to let the man have a little spotlight whilst he could, seeing as how he'd been so useful to Harry in the beginning.

"Hopefully only for a little while longer. I'm eagerly waiting to meet my child when they finally decide to make their appearance."

"It shouldn't be too long off now," Regulus spoke as he sat. "You're thirty-seven weeks now, correct?"

Harry nodded. "I'm hoping they'll arrive within a week or so." Wryly, he smiled. "They're quite big, my healer is surprised I'm still up and about."

His Uncle hummed. "They'll be putting you on bedrest soon, then. It happened with Felix when he was thirty-eight weeks with Prince Elias and measuring larger than normal."

"Are you saying you believe his baby will also be a boy?" Patricia mocked, cutting in. She was scowling, eyeing Harry with distrust, and she flipped her hair over her shoulder when their eyes met, turning to Regulus instead.

Regulus scoffed, rolling his eyes. "A baby's size doesn't indicate gender. I was merely pointing out a similar situation, so that Harry won't be concerned when it happens."

"Well," She continued. "I was thinking, all three of us can't possibly be carrying boys, that's just absurd! His Majesty only has four boys, it's highly unlikely we'll make that seven within a month. Therefore," She turned to Harry, smiling nastily. "I think you'll have a girl!"

Harry barely refrained from sighing. "Wonderful," He blandly responded. "I've always wanted a daughter first. Maybe mine and His Majesty's second will be a son, as we'll surely have another, the Emperor is already so enamoured with our first, and they haven't even arrived yet."

Her smile dropped, and it was her turn to roll her eyes. She snorted. "Well, try not to be too upset when that doesn't happen. If you can't give the Emperor a son, he's less likely to have another child with you."

"His Majesty told you that, did he? Funny, he was telling me just a few days ago that he has names in mind for our future children already."

Huffing, Patricia refused to respond, and Harry shared a glance with Regulus.

Once the remaining concubines arrived, Penny began the Meeting swiftly.

She unrolled the parchment in her hands, plastering a saccharine smile on her lips. Grinning, Penny began to speak in that bubbly tone of hers. "His Majesty hails the endurance of his Harem for yet another year and asks for us to reflect on the occurrences we have faced over the past year. He comments that there have been trials to face over the months, but that as a Harem we continue to move forward, and eagerly await the new additions arriving soon, the three Royal children due imminently."

There were polite claps and murmurs of thanks and congratulations.

Penny's smile turned biting. "There are a few members of our gathering who His Majesty believes have reached the time for promotion. However, he declares that due to their

behaviour, he only wishes to promote one of those. Sister Lovegood." She chuckled, looking towards Luna. "Congratulations are in order, Sister,"

Luna, a dreamy expression on her face, smiled. She looked unsurprised, but she always did have a strange way of knowing upcoming events.

"His Majesty graciously promotes you to the rank of Fifth Noble."

The choked breaths of Dahlia and Daphne were clearly heard. They were the current Primary and Secondary First-Class Attendants respectively, after all. Usually, it would be the highest member of each class to be promoted, not the third. It meant they were two of those who were skipped over for their desired promotion.

"I thank His Majesty, he's very kind." Luna turned to him then, blinking. "This means we'll have more space in my new garden, Harry. Little Rue can come to play in it when they're older."

Someone snickered, and Harry heard various sounds of scorn and dissatisfaction. His smile faltered, words of congratulations dying in his throat.

" *Rue* ? That isn't a name appropriate for His Majesty's child." Pippa scoffed, laughing lightly along with the others. It was mocking, and they were all staring at him as if he'd done something humorous.

Harry huffed. "That's not-" He began to explain but was cut off by Patricia's noise of derision.

"What makes you think you can name His Majesty's child? It is His Majesty's decision-"

" *I know!* " Harry raised his voice, glaring at the concubines whose titters slowly tapered off. "I haven't *named* my child. You're right, His Majesty will do that. However, as you might have forgotten since you're getting on in your years now," Patricia spluttered, and he heard giggles further down. "I will have the right to give my child a *middle* name."

"Rue is not a proper-

"Rue is not the full name!" He barely refrained from throwing his hands up in the air, frustrated. "It is a shortened version of it. Either Ruellan or Ruellia, that's what I've decided on. Why that pertains to you, I have no idea, as His Majesty has always staunchly defended a concubine's right to name *their* child." He huffed, leaning backwards. "Congratulations, Sister. I'm sure Rue and I will be frequent visitors of your new Palace."

Nodding happily, having ignored the others entirely, Luna smiled, and it washed away a good portion of the ire Harry was feeling.

14th July 1999- Wednesday

At nearly thirty-nine weeks along in his pregnancy, the constant surveillance Harry was under was beginning to grate on his nerves. It had been days since he'd last had a moment alone, the team of Healers he'd been assigned for his last few weeks seemingly believing that Harry would enter labour at any given moment. He had been excused from attending the daily meetings earlier in the week, which he had eagerly taken, but was now sorely regretting that. Harry had unknowingly subjected himself to constant prodding and little of anything else.

The heat didn't help, July having reached scorching temperatures that left him gasping for air due to the humidity. The only reprieve from this was either to sit in front of a fan, or find shade elsewhere in the Court.

"Your Highness, please, you must remain within your Palace walls. The baby could come at any moment!"

"I'm not feeling any closer to birth than I was an hour ago, I can assure you that this baby will stay put at least long enough for me to go for a walk!"

"But, Your Highness, there is a risk that your labour may progress quickly! The Royal child must not be born in the garden!"

Harry exited the gates, Healers and a horde of maids hot on his heels. He was determined to enjoy the fresh air of the Court whilst he could, and to do so, he needed to get out of the four walls of his Palace before he went stir-crazy.

Behind him, it sounded as if a stampede was following him, most of Harry's household having decided to follow him, along with the Healers.

"Your Highness, I must implore you to return! You should be resting whilst carrying the Royal child!"

"Then I should have been resting the whole of these long, nine months!" He shot back, continuing on his way.

"Please, Your Highness, you must return!"

"Harry," The Emperor's voice surprised him, and he spun to face the man. "I came to visit you, yet I find you running from your Palace as if it is on fire." Thomas was dressed far more casually than Harry had ever seen, robe open to reveal the black button-up shirt and trousers he wore underneath rather than tied intricately at the waist. He stared at the Emperor's figure, barely managing to tear his eyes away.

Harry chuckled awkwardly. "I needed to get out, Your Majesty."

Thomas surveyed the crowd behind him blandly. "Thank you all for your care, but I will be overseeing my Concubine for the time being."

The head Healer looked as if she might argue, but thought better of it. "Of course, Your Majesty."

Wrapping an arm around his waist, which made Harry's face burn brightly, Thomas steered him away from the Palaces. He realised where they were going after a few minutes of walking.

"I've only been to the Pavillion of Stars once."

"Did you not like it?"

"Oh no, it's very pretty! It's just, it's the most busy of the Pavillions."

"My Knights are turning away any who wish to use it. I was going to return and read there after seeing you, but I suppose if you wish for some fresh air, it would be in both of our interests to remain there."

The Pavillion of Stars was the smallest of the Pavillions but by far the most luxurious. Whilst the others had plain seating, and were decorated rather sparsely, the Pavillion of Stars had cushioned seats and a beautiful glass roof that allowed an unobstructed view of the stars. Harry had rarely approached it, due to the spot being frequented by Bellatrix and those who followed her. Penny, likewise, had claimed the Pavillion of Light, which was bigger, contained floor seating that was much preferred by the young children, and had a stained glass ceiling that projected rainbows onto the surroundings during sunny days.

They ascended the steps, Thomas slowing to guide him carefully up them, which made Harry blush. The man settled them on the round bench in the middle, right under the roof. Despite it still being daytime, the view of the blue sky dotted with clouds was nevertheless rather beautiful.

"I wished to speak with you, Harry."

The informality of his speech snatched his full attention, and Harry ripped his gaze away from the sky to watch the man beside him. "Yes?"

"I had something created for you. Consider it a gift for carrying my child, if you will. And as something to celebrate your second year within the Court." Thomas withdrew a square box from seemingly nowhere, presenting it to Harry with care, his lips seemingly fighting away a smirk.

Harry took it carefully, meeting the man's eyes with trepidation, and gasped when he opened it. Inside was a beautiful, small crown, composed of glittering diamonds and a central emerald which shone in the sunlight.

He was awestruck, barely managing to croak out his thanks as he gently ran his finger across its silver frame. "I- I already have a crown?" Harry contested, meeting the Emperor's prideful gaze. "You gave me one for my ascension. Is this for our child?"

"No, I intended it to be for you, my Concubine. I am giving you another for daily wearage. The other is much too bejewelled to wear outside of occasions. This is smaller, tamer."

"It will incite jealousy like nothing else." He stated, still staring at its glistening form.

Thomas chuckled, picking it up and gently placing the crown atop Harry's head. "You incite jealousy by simply existing, my Concubine. Besides, I give gifts to each of my concubines when they are expecting. It isn't usually so shiny, however. Perhaps I am feeling inspired by your beauty."

Harry blushed, stuttering under his intense stare. The Emperor's hands were gentle as they cupped his face, and Harry blinked, confused, humming in surprise when their lips met.

"There," Thomas' voice was filled with satisfaction. "Perfect."

As Harry bent over to place his teacup on the table, he groaned in pain suddenly, breathing heavily through his nose as his baby took that moment to deliver a harsh kick to his lungs. Breathless, he straightened, collapsing heavily back into the plush pillows surrounding him.

Despite the reduced strain, sweat beaded on Harry's brow, and he groaned again as the pressure on his lungs didn't abate.

He was now past his due date to the point that his Healers were becoming concerned. Two days ago had been forty-one weeks, and he was feeling every one of them at that moment. His baby still showed no signs of wanting to greet the world, and within the next few days, if they didn't make their long-awaited appearance, they were going to be forcefully evicted.

The healers had been reassuring him that going over was usual for first pregnancies, but Harry could see that they were beginning to fret as he passed forty weeks, and then forty-one to everyone's surprise.

In contrast to a couple of weeks ago, all Harry wished to do was sit on the sofa, enjoying the release of tension. However, as opposed to their earlier advice, the healers seemed to wish for him to be more active now, in an attempt to coax his child into the world.

His birthday, which he had expected to spend lavishing in the comfort of holding his baby, no more pressure on his organs, was instead spent wheezing and twisting with discomfort, much to Harry's absolute *joy*. He was grateful his child was still healthy and comfortable, yes, but he was sure they would be just a comfortable *outside* of his body, where Harry could enjoy relaxing, sleepy cuddles without the constant pressure.

"Your Highness, do you need another pillow?"

Anya stood in front of him, eyebrows scrunched in concern. The Healers had left the room on his orders to 'let him breathe!', so it was only the pair of them for the first time in what felt like forever. Harry gave her an exhausted smile.

"It won't help," He huffed. "They just don't seem to want to settle today-"

A sharp pain suddenly stabbed sharply up his side, cutting off his sentence, and Harry doubled over in pain. He groaned, batting at Anya's hands as she fussed over him. The shocks didn't abate for a few more moments, before ceasing abruptly.

"Your Highness! Are you alright?"

He panted deeply, clutching onto her hand for dear life as another agonising stab rippled through him then. Harry crumpled further, feeling his legs begin to shake. The waves of pain continued, abated, and then came rushing back with ferocity.

"I think-" Harry forced out, eyes squeezed shut. "I think the baby is coming."

1st August 1999- Sunday

Cedric's knees ached, a bone-deep numbness having spread from his feet and up his legs a little while before. His back and neck were stiff as well, and he hissed as he shifted, restless. Before him, the Eunuch overseeing them stared at him disapprovingly, and Cedric shrank back, wincing as his feet began to tingle.

They had been called to Harry's Palace hours ago now, when the Healers had announced that his labour had progressed enough that they were imminently awaiting the birth of the Concubine's child. However, it was taking longer than Cedric expected.

The front row of their kneeling forms were the only ones not in perfect formation, those few who outranked the Secondary Concubine in the room. There were only five now. However, they were each stiff, watching the door with hard eyes.

By the Emperor's side, Consort Penny shifted, attempting to make small talk with the imposing man. He shushed her every time, arms folded as he, too, stared at the door

A yelp of pain startled him, and Cedric looked towards the sound along with the rest of the others, waiting for further noise. Silence was the only thing that followed. Cedric glanced at the candle on the altar that denoted the concubine's health, relieved to see that it was still flickering strongly.

The Emperor, who stood closest to the door, shifted, clenching his fists as the door swung open. There in the doorway stood Harry's Head Maid- Annie or something- her hands folded before her and head bowed demurely.

"Your Majesty," The woman spoke, voice soft. "The-"

A shriek cut her off, the wail different to the others that had come from the room before. Without a word, the Emperor pushed past the maid, an expression of wonder clear on his face.

Cedric felt his heart clench with jealousy.

The wails of the newborn child continued, and he bit his lip harshly, feeling tears sting in his eyes.

He and Harry had both been the only male Nobles together, Cedric had been higher ranking than him in fact. Now, Harry was a Concubine, and his child had finally been born. Before this, Cedric felt he could lie to himself a little and believe that they were still as close as he thought, being only a rank apart and being tentative friends. However, now, Harry had something Cedric didn't. A child.

No matter what gender his child was, he currently held the Emperor's sole attention, whilst Cedric was left to clamber to his feet, legs stiff, and struggle forward to take in the view of the happy family.

It had been a whirlwind of movement after his labour had begun. Anya had called for his Healers immediately, and they had somehow managed to get him into one of the spare rooms, decked out for maximum comfort during what would turn out to be a long and arduous labour spanning thirty hours by the end.

In the evening of the following day, having spent his entire birthday and the rest writhing in pain, Harry finally welcomed his baby into the world.

There were a few tense, heartwrenching seconds of terrible silence, in which Harry's heart shuddered with panic. He was filled with anguish as those dreadful seconds stretched and stretched and-

His child began to scream, their wail relaxing the tension in the room and sending Harry into blubbering, relieved tears. He reached eagerly for them as soon as the midwife had finished swaddling them in a soft, green blanket, hands shaking.

He took his child into his arms carefully, staring at their face obsessively. They looked perfect, all pink and swollen, tiny eyes closed, lips pursed as they settled. Even still covered in gunk, they were the most beautiful sight he'd ever seen.

Harry looked up grudgingly as he heard a rustle, and Thomas was by his side in the next second, staring down at the pair of them with nothing but devotion in his eyes.

"Harry, well done." His voice was calm, although Harry thought he could hear a tinge of emotion in his tone. It was deeper than usual, a sign that he was clearly affected.

He smiled at the man, shifting so he could see the face of their child clearer, whose wails had trailed off into hiccupy coos now that the bustling had abated. The whole Palace seemed to be holding their breaths, allowing them this moment to themselves.

The midwife wrung her hands as she waited before them, and Thomas nodded at her. "Congratulations, Your Majesty, Your Highness, on the birth of the Sixteenth Princess. May your reign last forevermore, Your Majesty, and your newest child inherit Your immeasurable power."

Harry heard the sighs of apparent relief from the other concubines, who he noticed were now gathered around the door, watching the scene intensely. His attention however was quickly turned to his daughter. He cradled her tighter, examining her features as she shifted.

"She has my mother's hair." He whispered to Thomas, who leaned down to stroke the red, wispy locks plastered to her forehead. There was quite a lot, enough that it trailed into her eyes, and by the way her nose scrunched, she didn't enjoy the feeling.

"So she does." He looked enamoured, red eyes fixed on their daughter, who was making tiny sounds that melted Harry's heart.

Sleepy, tiny eyelids fluttered, and both parents leaned in closer, eager. Her eyes opened then, revealing bloody red orbs identical to the Emperor's. Harry thought he could see tiny flecks of blue-maybe-green around the centre, but her eyes were too slitted from exhaustion to tell.

Harry unwittingly gasped, although it contained a tinge of horror. At the Emperor's sharp look, he hurried to explain. "Red hair and red eyes." He met the man's eyes wryly. "It's a combination."

The man's disbelieving chuckle revealed his thoughts on that. "I think it's perfect. She's certainly the most visibly vibrant child I have."

Their moment as a family of three was broken as Penny inched forward, clearing her throat. She didn't appear happy, but there was some satisfaction in her gaze as she stared down at him and his daughter. "Congratulations, Your Majesty, Brother. It is such a joy to welcome yet another Princess." Penny smiled serenely, hands folded in front of her. "I congratulate you and His Majesty on her birth."

Harry bet it was for them, but he couldn't find it in himself to care much about their glee. His daughter was perfect, and he loved her no lesser than he would have if he'd had a son. And by the Emperor's glance, he didn't either, unlike the assumptions of the concubines watching them eagerly.

"Thank you, Sister."

"Have you decided on a name, Your Majesty?" She continued, and Harry gritted his teeth at her presumptuousness to ask that before even he could.

Thomas nodded, meeting his eyes instead, which soothed Harry's ignited ire. "I have. I thought to honour the Black family, as the Potters don't have a distinctive naming tradition. She shall be named Alsephina, after the star system within the constellation Vela. I hope you like it, my Concubine, I spend many days deciding on what would suit our daughter."

Harry sniffed as he looked down at the baby in his arms, attaching the name to her. It fit, it honoured his family, and most of all, it was perfect with the middle name he had chosen. "It's a beautiful name."

"Have you thought of a middle name for our daughter, My Concubine?"

He had. It was one that had taken weeks to decide on. At first, he had wished for it to be a homage to the Black family, names along the lines of Mariela and Hespera coming to mind. And then it had become Rosalia, to honour his mother. Felix, however, had used a similar middle name for his daughter, and not wanting there to be a misunderstanding, he had searched for another. It still did honour his mother, but it fit much better with the Emperor's unusual naming pattern. "Ruellia. It is a beautiful flower, I have many growing in my garden. I thought to honour my mother if I had a daughter."

Thomas nodded, humming. "Perfect. Alsephina Ruellia Slytherin."

The baby in his arms made a noise as if agreeing with her Father, and Harry couldn't stop the wet chuckle that escaped him, feeling tears trail gently down his cheeks. A warm thumb drew across his cheek, and Harry met Thomas' eyes, which were warmer than he'd seen before.

"Thank you, darling." Harry's breath caught in his throat. "I will treasure our daughter, our first child together, dearly."

He managed to croak out a 'Thank you', eyes filled with tears that refused to spill. Harry gulped, squeezing Thomas' hand which had slipped into his own.

"And as my final thanks for our daughter's birth, I wish to bestow upon you the rank of Fifth Consort."

Chapter End Notes

Do you know how long I've had to keep this a secret for? Over a YEAR! I am so surprised I didn't cave in and tell people, but it's better as a surprise :)) And Harry's a Consort now!!! His tenure as a Concubine was actually his shortest at 10 months, his time as a Consort will be a little longer ^_^

Now that Alsie [Or Allie, Phina, Rue] has been born, things should get more interactive between Harry and Tom [As before, it was a little boring writing the same thing over and over again]. I absolutely love her, she's the sweetest of their many children [and, btw, Tom builds her a private Palace for her 12th birthday :))]

[Harry will be going by Dada, daddy and dad to his kids. Tom will be Papa and Father]

Also, as my Twitter followers already know, a Tournament is coming up next year! It will be from June-August 2000, and Harry is pregnant during it :)) Of course, none of the Harem competes, but I think it'll break the monotony. There's also the final Harem selection in 2000 as well! And soon, Jasmine and Patricia will have their kids, after which, there will only be 2 more non-Harry kids :))

I also had the idea to do an Intimacy AU with Harry as the Emperor [I have a snippet on my Twitter], and it'll most likely be a short story, only posted when it is mostly done :)

Also, I'll be linking my Pinterest on here and my twitter so you can see the images I have in mind for many things- I have the crown up on twitter already, it has a single emerald at the front :)

Thanks for reading! I'm really excited to read what you think, so much so that I don't think this author's note makes sense since I had so much to write ^_^

Twitter: xStrawberryJam_

Chapter 34: [Unexpected]

Chapter Notes

A 6.3k chapter this time :)) I think there'll be only one more update before the new year, and that'll take us to halfway through ^-^

Ch.35 will definitely be a shorter chapter, however, unless I suddenly gain more inspiration for it than I have at the moment

Anyway, hope you enjoy this chapter!

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

2nd August 1999- Monday

The official announcement of Harry's promotion to Fifth Consort wasn't until the next day, as the first of August had fallen on a Sunday. However, the Harem had all been there to hear it directly from the Emperor, so the reactions were swift and unhidden, although thankfully dulled by trained public facades. The room had filled quickly with harsh whispers, but none had dared to speak louder than that, not under the watchful gaze of the Emperor. Harry had mostly ignored them and their stares, until they were finally forced to file out of his Palace once the spectacle reached its end, leaving Thomas and him to watch over their daughter.

The man remained in his Palace for the night, overseeing her whilst Harry recovered and slept. The Emperor then left in the early hours of the morning to draw up the announcements needed for the daily meeting, having spent much of the previous day hovering in the hallways of Harry's Palace.

Harry wasn't attending the meeting today, he wouldn't want to even if he hadn't been exempt. But, how he wished he could see their faces as Penny announced it, the formal confirmation that he was now on practically equal ranking to the most powerful members of the Harem.

In two years, he had gone from Noble to Consort. It had taken Bellatrix nineteen years to reach the rank in 1995, Regulus twenty as he'd been promoted just earlier in the year, Isla fifteen by 1997 and Penny nine and a half by the time of her third child in 1998. Evangeline had become one after eight years, and a Noble Consort six years after that.

And, most of all, his promotion proved how it wasn't the gender of the child that granted the promotion, despite the Harem's staunch belief that boys were worth more to the Emperor. It was the matter of who gave birth to the child, and the affection the man held towards them.

Whether this would register with them, however, was another thing.

Harry was leant over the side of his daughter's crib, staring down at her tiny, swaddled form with glistening eyes, tracing her dainty features with his fingers. Soft as a feather, he brushed back the fluffy curls on her forehead, watching as Alsephina's lips pursed in her sleep.

She was everything he had ever dreamed of and more. Her tiny face was framed with bright, red curls, a full head of hair that was silky soft and unique. She had a cute button nose and lips that pouted cutely, tiny little hands and even tinier feet. He could see his own features in her- the nose, most prominently. From her grandmother. Alsephina, however, looked more like her father to him than Harry. Her eyes were shaped exactly like Thomas', her facial shape also more prominently defined than he's expected to see on a newborn. Other than that, they would just have to wait and see what their daughter looked like as she grew.

"Your Highness." Anya's soft call from the doorway barely registered to him as he continued to observe Alsephina. "You shouldn't be leaning over the side like that, you are putting pressure on your stomach."

"I just want to stare at her all day, Anya. She's just so perfect." He whispered gently, stroking a gentle finger down her cheek. She snuffled, and he drew back quickly, but that didn't stop her from waking with a distressed whine. Her eyes, hazy with sleep, fluttered, before closing once more after a few breathless moments

"You can stare at her all you like, sitting down with her in your arms. It is time for a feed." Harry turned and spotted the bottle in her hands, a grin forming quickly. He hurried to the rocking chair a few feet away, eagerly waiting as his maid reached into the crib and oh-so-carefully picked up his daughter.

Alsie fussed a little, waking up from her nap again, but Anya expertly shushed her, rocking her side to side before placing her in his arms. He awkwardly cradled her for a few moments, before relaxing and shifting his daughter into a more comfortable position. Red, sleep-filled eyes blinked lazily up at Harry, and he cooed at the disgruntlement so clearly displayed.

"Hello, sweetheart," He spoke softly, cut off from speaking further by the grumble of her stomach, and the plaintive whine she let out. He chuckled a little, careful not to jostle her much, before drawing her attention with the bottle. Her eyesight wasn't focused enough yet, so he doubted she truly knew what was going on, but he wanted to alert her nonetheless. "You're hungry aren't you, darling. Here, be good and take this for me, you didn't finish the last one."

"Fifth Consort!?" The maids huddled at the walls flinched as a cup went flying, crashing into the floor. Tea splashed over the floor and up the walls, and Penny sighed at the mess. She waved a hand, and a maid of her own quickly scurried to clean it up, dodging the fuming woman still ranting. "This is absurd, Sister! You must talk to His Majesty!"

Patricia was pacing back and forth in front of her, robes and hair a mess, her fingernails bitten down into bloody stumps. She was rubbing at her stomach whilst doing so as if reassuring herself it was still there. Penny swallowed a drag of tea, breathing out hotly through her nose with her eyes closed.

She huffed. "Sister, His Majesty-"

"That brat has been here two years- Two years! And he's a Consort?" Patricia scoffed. "If all it took to become a Consort was spreading your legs and popping out a girl, I would have been one back in 1983! Are you not annoyed as well, Sister? This- this promotion," She spat. "It makes fools out of all of us who have served as concubines for years, decades! Who have borne the Emperor child after child, only to be outranked by a mere boy?!"

Penny refrained from commenting that the woman's daughter had died in suspicious circumstances, and before that, Patricia had only held a sliver of the Emperor's attention. She would have never been promoted so soon.

More concerning to Penny was that she had the Emperor's favour, yet she was only promoted to Consort with the birth of her third child, and after nine years at that. Either the Emperor had become soft, or Harry was a more serious competitor than Penny had foreseen.

The boy wasn't all too popular with the rest of the Harem, not as she was. Nor was he Head of the Harem, something which Penny took pride in gaining from the old hag who had controlled the position for so long. He was also only the father to a single child, a girl at that.

She had three precious children, and hopefully, she could soon secure a fourth, a boy at that, before she grew any older. Within the next year, hopefully, a chance which was heightened now that the Emperor was obliged to spend ceremonial nights with her as his highest-ranked spouse.

Penny wanted her position to be safe before she raised any higher. Becoming Noble Consort with the birth of her next son, a position which had only been held once before, would be perfect.

Then, she could set her sights on the ranks of Imperial Noble Consort, and Empress.

With luck, the Emperor would realise her Rastus was surely the son most suited for the throne, and she would secure the role of Empress Dowager for herself with his standing as heir, ensuring her power was solidified for decades, even centuries to come.

No, Harry wasn't a threat. Yet. He had no claim to power further than his Lordships and the eventual marriage alliance his daughter would secure long in the future.

But Penny would keep an eye on him, and ensure his loyalty. She wouldn't target him unless absolutely necessary, and hopefully, he'd keep producing his 'darling' girls so that her own sons would have no more competition.

"Are you listening to me, Sister? I said-"

"It will all be fine. Princess Alsephina is that, a girl. She won't be under his control for long, only five years and she'll be within the children's Palace. And then, before long, she'll be engaged to some foreign Prince. His Majesty has shown us that he is willing to send his daughters abroad with the engagement of Princess Evana and that Prince of Italy."

Patricia scoffed. "You and I both know that was the girl's own decision. She fell in love with the boy when they met at that ball recently."

"Yes, well, we all know that His Majesty is lenient with his children. But what we also can infer from this is that the man has high expectations for his children's marriages. Marrying a Prince is the only title close to equal for our daughters. What will be more interesting, however, is who he will allow his sons to marry, as they will be carrying on his name."

"And which of his grandchildren he will allow to carry royal titles." Patricia piped in. She patted her swollen stomach. "I'm sure the Prince's children will receive royal titles, even if they aren't chosen as the next Emperor. It is so in almost every other Royal, European household."

Penny hummed. "Times are changing. I would be ecstatic to have all of my grandchildren carry royal titles."

8th August 1999- Sunday

The first time Harry laid eyes on his official Consort crown, he sighed.

Yellow was most definitely *not* his colour. He hoped, selfishly, that he wouldn't have to wear it for long, even though another promotion was improbable at this time.

Of course, the orange of Noble Consorts wouldn't be a much better colour, in fact, Harry was positive he would look worse in it than he did draped in yellow.

Once he was finished with the ceremonial promotion, Harry would order some robes in light yellow, mostly white to look somewhat natural. Nothing like the bright yellow robes he had to wear for his formal ceremony, the colour identical to the gem symbolising Consorts.

The crown was placed on his head, fitting perfectly. It was much grander than the crown he was given as a Concubine, covered with diamonds, yellow gems dispersed evenly with a larger gem taking up the center. Harry found himself glad that the crown would be worn only for traditional occasions, and that he could return to using the smaller crown he was recently gifted soon enough.

Of course, he didn't *have* to wear yellow robes or the Consort crown after this if he didn't wish to. Harry was entitled to wear any colours that ranked below, but that would mean separating himself from the other Consorts, who wore their colour proudly. And standing out in this way specifically wasn't something that attracted appropriate attention.

Sighing, he smoothed down his robes once more, eyeing himself critically. His maids had done well, and Harry looked good despite his internal complaints. There was golden eyeshadow surrounding his eyes, which made the green pop, blending his features in with the robes he wore instead of the contrast he had expected. The inky darkness of his hair looked far deeper wearing such bright colours, and his eyelashes stood out far more than before.

"Your Highness,"

Harry turned with Anya's call, nodding. "I'm ready."

The pageantry of the event amazed Harry, despite having witnessed two Consort ceremonies beforehand. However, nothing could have prepared him to experience his own, walking down the aisle towards where the Emperor sat, surrounded on all sides by spectators.

Smoothly, he made his way up the dias steps, wincing slightly at the strain the movement was placing on his body, still not fully recovered from his daughter's birth a week ago. Still, Harry

pushed himself, coming to a stop before the man.

Thomas, as ever, was the most attractive being Harry had ever laid eyes on, and he didn't believe that title would ever change. The man almost seemed more god than human as he stood there in black and gold robes, his imperious stare lightened with the perhaps-fondness within it. Although, calling the Emperor a god wasn't too far off of what he truly was-Immortal, all-powerful, and breathtaking beyond imagination.

As if reading his thoughts, the man smirked briefly, the twitch of his lips caught only by Harry due to his proximity.

He knelt. "I greet His Majesty, the Supreme Emperor of the Slytherin Dynasty. May His Reign last forever more, immortalised both in Body and in Mind."

Despite not being able to see the man's face, Harry felt as the man's magic swelled, tinged with appreciation.

"Harrison Potter-Black, Son and Heir of the Potter Family, Heir of the Black Family, faithful and beloved concubine of mine, Father to an Imperial Princess, an heir to my throne." The Emperor began, his voice strong and proud as he spoke. "You have served me attentively in the short time I have called you mine, fulfilling your role as was expected, and further than that. With this edict, accepting the responsibility this role possesses, I formally proclaim you; His Highness, Fifth Consort Slytherin-Potter-Black."

Head lifting from the floor, Harry breathed in a stuttering breath. "I am most fortunate, Your Majesty. I will endeavour to uphold my position and bear the responsibility such a status requires. With my heart, I swear to raise our daughter, and any future children we may bring forth into this world should Magic bless us, to honour you. Us."

The formalities finished, Harry clambered to his feet, breathing in heavily as Thomas helped him gently. Their eyes met. They leaned in, drawn to each other like magnets, never kept apart for long.

Their kiss was long and far more passionate than perhaps was appropriate for such a public gathering, but Harry could not find it in him to care the slightest bit as he practically melded with the man. When they finally broke apart, the Emperor sat him in the chair next to his throne, brushing the hair back from his forehead.

"It seems I was slow with gifting you your most recent crown. Yellow is your new colour, after all. Perhaps I will soon gift you another." He tucked one of Harry's curls behind his ear, sitting next to him in one smooth motion. Harry chuckled, although grimaced a little.

"Ah, perhaps that can wait a little while longer? There will be plenty of time for you to gift me a Consort one in the future, after all."

The man hummed.

9th August 1999- Monday

"I congratulate you on the birth of your daughter, Brother." Penny clasped her hands around one of his own, smiling ear to ear. "Her arrival was impeccably timed, you must feel blessed for the Sixteenth Princess to share such a connection with you. Receiving your daughter as a birthday gift was a blessing from the gods."

"Thank you, Sister. I am overjoyed she finally decided to make her appearance." Harry gritted his teeth, wincing a little as he jostled his stomach.

He had been forced to host the woman and Erin, who had trailed behind her, for tea when the pair turned up unexpectedly on his doorstep. With little time to prepare, they were taking their tea in the front room, which was less personal than the rest of his house. He could hear his daughter's quiet grizzles from another room, every instinct within him fighting to comfort her. However, Harry knew that she was in safe hands, and that he was unfortunately obliged to host his two guests until they left.

He couldn't exactly kick Penny out, after all. Much as he'd love to do just that.

"Still, you must be somewhat disappointed. Both Sister Jasmine's and Sister Patricia's children are supposedly sons, and you ended up birthing a daughter." Penny giggled, hiding her smile behind her hand. "Ah, I apologise, it was rude of me to bring up such a sore topic."

"Why would it be a sore topic?"

She spluttered, clearing her throat to take a moment to compose herself again. In that time, Harry had fixed her with a raised eyebrow, goading her into answering the way he predicted. "Well, I mean, aren't you disappointed that she is going to be overshadowed soon by her brothers?"

Harry frowned, barely refraining from scoffing. "And why would she be overshadowed? They will be new children for His Majesty, yes, but my daughter is still only a few days old."

"Oh, you can't be so naive, Brother! It's to be expected that she will be. The Emperor has so few sons, after all, and sixteen daughters now. The arrival of a fifth and sixth Prince will be greatly celebrated." Erin butted in, looking dubious. "Even I admit that, and I love my daughter to pieces!"

Harry huffed, but kept his expression as genial as he could. "He has only a few sons, yes, but His Majesty treats all his children equally, as I have discovered. I admit, when I first entered the harem, I thought the same as you, that he wanted sons to succeed him. But now I can see that it's the rest of the harem that imposed those views on the general population, not His Majesty himself."

Penny scoffed, swirling the tea in her cup. "The succession laws state-" She cut herself off suddenly, a thoughtful expression on her face before realisation bloomed. "There are no succession laws." She muttered with dawning horror.

"No," He stated. "There are not. Because the Emperor is immortal." Harry pointed out, leaning back. He had looked into it once Thomas had given him a tutor, wanting all the information available to protect himself and his own. "There is no need for a successor, not

for a long time, at least. There is, therefore, no need to favour sons over daughters. Only power matters, in the end. And as of yet, His Majesty believes none of his children can fill the void he'd leave if he abdicated in their favour, or are not yet of age to do so."

She blinked. "There are no succession laws," Penny repeated blankly, and Harry scrunched his eyebrows. "There's no succession laws!? That man!-" Expletives spilt from her mouth, and Harry's eyebrows climbed further up as she continued. "What will happen if he suddenly dies-"

"He's immor-"

"Or incapacitated!" Penny pointed a serious finger in his direction. "What then? Oh, I'll tell you what! The whole realm will be in shambles, pillaging and killing galore! They'll break into the Court, murder us all and our children to get rid of the Slytherin bloodline!" She stood in a hurry, looking harried. Harry gaped as she hurried from his palace as if the fire was at her heels, halfway out of his seat as he heard the door slam.

Harry shared a look with Erin, who looked equally confused and followed the woman at a pace.

They managed to enter the Emperor's Palace after the Head Eunuch allowed them in, heading immediately for the man's office. The door was thrown wide open, and they could hear the discussion from within clearly.

"-make such an idiotic oversight? Were you even thinking of the children?" Her cool tone spilt out into the hallway, venom lacing it. She sounded confident and controlled, but the way her voice quivered with the word 'children' revealed otherwise.

Thomas was calmly observing Penny as she leaned over his desk, hands slammed onto the papers he'd been working on. The Emperor's eyes flitted over to the pair of them as they entered, nodding slightly. They froze, simply watching the scene unfold.

"And what about our own children? Am I just supposed to sit back, uncertain about a clear future, worrying that you may leave the realm in shambles just because you place such confidence in your immortality?"

The Emperor sighed, placing the quill he'd been spinning between his fingers down on the desk with a clack. "There are succession laws." Thomas bluntly revealed, clasping his hands together and giving her a bland look.

Harry faltered. Penny's cool anger stopped dead in its tracks.

"There are?" She questioned silkily, drawing back from her aggressive lean. Neatly, she folded her hands in front of her, straightening. "I wasn't aware, but I had assumed there would be some sort of succession in place."

As if her questions were a massive inconvenience and not crucial, unrevealed information, the man sighed again. "Yes. I am not, in fact, 'idiotic', Consort Haywood." The Emperor gave her a hard stare, which Penny bowed under. "I had thought of such a scenario, and many others in fact. Therefore, I created a contingency plan for my own sake of mind. The eldest child of my highest-ranked concubine will inherit the throne, regardless of gender. If they are unequipped for the position, it will go to the second born, and so on, as long as they are over the age of majority. If that is not the case, the adult with the highest-ranking parent will become my heir. Does that satisfy you, Consort?"

Harry could see Penny calculating in her head.

"Do posthumous titles count?"

He leaned forward. "Of course."

That put all children except First Princess Evana out of the running immediately, leaving her as the sole inheritor of the throne at that moment, if only because she was the sole adult child, but also because her mother had been a Noble Consort. Whether Penny became a Noble Consort soon or not, she would remain heir until Ninth Princess Aurelia reached the age of seventeen. In eleven years.

"Then I apologise sincerely, Your Majesty. I have gravely misstepped and accused you irresponsibly. However, I would not have come to such a conclusion unless Brother Harry hadn't-

Thomas raised a hand, and she fell silent. "I am busy, this incident shall be forgotten. It is a matter I had been wanting to discuss since my eldest daughter's entrance into adulthood, anyway."

"But, your Majesty, we have-

"Please, return to your duties. I am a busy man," His lip quirked. "Ruling an Empire is perhaps not as easy as I make it seem."

Once his concubines had left, Thomas allowed his ire to finally show. He clenched his jaw, breathing in deeply through his nose, thoughts swirling.

Thomas wondered, sometimes, why he still put up with many of them. They were insipid, power-hungry, incessant vultures. They were the mothers and fathers of his children, yes, but divorce was common enough that it wouldn't be a problem.

The only true reasons, he reminded himself, were that they knew things, they could be used as leverage, and some were useful. Such as the Black Family, the Nott's, the Greengrass', the Smith's, and the Malfoy's. The Potters. Their families were some of the biggest in the UK.

The Rosenbergs and Lauriers were his most influential outside of the country. It had confused some at first why Thomas refused to fill his Harem with a candidate from each country, to ensure loyalty of some sort. However, he didn't truly feel the need to. Those who relied on politics to rule an Empire were doomed to fail. What people recognised most was power. They were more likely to rebel, yes, but power could stop that. Often, diplomacy fell short of the desired result.

That was why he was so eagerly awaiting the descendant of his that could match him in that area. The closest were but babes in arms for the time being, and Thomas hoped that there would be more prospects to come.

Evana, as much as he could sense her will to succeed him, would be a poor Empress, indeed.

10th August 1999- Tuesday

"Harry, sweetheart," His Mum's warm voice brought tears to Harry's eyes, and he sniffed as her arms wrapped around him strongly. "You're looking wonderful, healthy."

"You're as beautiful as ever, Mum." He returned, uncaring of the stares drilling into their embracing forms.

It was the celebration for his daughter's birth, and everyone even slightly blood-related had turned up for the chance to mingle with royalty. The Blacks were huddled in a far corner, swarming Bellatrix and Regulus, who looked to be in their element. The Selwyn's were similarly present, less related but still enough to weasel in. The hall, however, was devoid of any of his maternal relatives. The Dursleys, the family his Mum's sister had married into, despised magic. He hadn't seen them since he was a young boy.

Also in attendance was the man of the hour, the Emperor. He was sat on his throne, surrounded by Knights, surveying the crowd. His gaze always drew back to their daughter, who was nearby, guarded zealously by Knights and maids alike. Their eyes met then, and the man smirked before sipping at his wine.

"Hawwy!" A little voice gurgled, and Harry span so fast he got whiplash. In his Dad's arms, there sat his eighteen-month-old sister, her ginger curls wilder than ever, beaming at him with glistening brown eyes. He smiled at her gently, taking her into his arms when she reached for him. Her hands immediately came up to swipe at his crown, and Harry chuckled but didn't let her remove it from his head.

"Florence, have you come to see your niece?"

A look of confusion passed over her features. "Neece?" She lisped, and Harry was surprised for a moment that she had even attempted to repeat what he'd said.

"Yes, my baby, Alsie." Harry brought her over to where Anya stood over the bassinet containing Alsephina, bending so his sister could see the squirming bundle inside. "You're her Auntie."

Red eyes met brown, and Alsephina's squirming abated when Florence reached hesitantly down. Harry held his breath, ready to back away if his sister made any sudden moves, but the toddler surprised him by gently poking a chubby finger into the Princess' cheek. Harry laughed lightly at the look of disgruntlement on Alsie's face, pulling Florence away when the pressure she was using grew stronger.

"She isn't much younger than you, I'm sure you're going to grow up loving each other. And when she gets to Hogwarts, you'll take care of her for me, won't you?"

The childish enthusiasm which Florence put into nodding in agreement made him chuckle, despite knowing she most likely understood little of what he'd just said.

"Oh, she's a bright one!" His dad's voice came from behind him, and Harry snorted at the look on the man's face.

"Blame Mum, she's the one who introduced that red into our genes!"

"I'm talking more about those eyes!" James gaped, staring down at the pools of bloody red, shivering slightly. The appearance of slight flecks of green was the only thing stopping him from gulping despite the eyes belonging to a baby. His granddaughter.

Sirius, who had snuck up on them after being dragged into the Black Family's swarm, arm wrapped tightly around Remus', let out a whistle as he leant over the bassinet. "Wow, now that's a combination!" He sent a wolfish grin at Harry, who was preening despite himself. "You better hope she grows up to wear duller colours or your eyes will strain soon."

Harry rolled them. "She will wear whatever she likes, whether that be red, green, orange or yellow."

The baby in question gurgled, wide awake and looking around due to the commotion. Her eyes looked far clearer than they had previously, but Harry knew that Alsephina's vision still wasn't perfect. He cooed down at her, eliciting further noises that weren't quite intentional giggles yet.

Harry couldn't wait for that.

15th August 1999- Sunday

Two weeks after the birth of his daughter-

"Congratulations, Your Majesty, Your Highness, on the birth of the Fifth Prince."

Jasmine gave birth to her son, the Fifth Prince, named Atticus Orrick Slytherin, at just over forty weeks.

He was a tiny little thing with her brown hair, and baby blue eyes that had yet to change colour, grizzling constantly as they performed their formalities.

Jasmine looked exhausted, but she was grinning widely, her grip tight on the Fifth Prince. If the boy minded, the discomfort couldn't be recognised over his incessant whining. He hadn't

stopped making noise from birth, not even when Jasmine had momentarily passed the Prince off to Thomas, who cradled him gently.

She had watched him intently as he did, licking her lips, a hopeful expression flashing across her features. The man's lips had quirked, and he'd given her a peck on her forehead, but apart from that, he only gave her the expected congratulations.

Oh, they weren't half-hearted by any means, the Emperor had been sincere as he'd thanked her, cuddled their baby softly to his chest, and revealed the name of the Prince with pride. There were also the many gifts she could expect to arrive soon, once they had been tweaked to fit the boy. But there had been no mention yet of a possible promotion, not like the sudden announcement of his own whilst he had still been reeling over the fact that his baby had finally arrived.

She didn't make any move to ask, either, and as Penny crept forward to break their moment, something sparked within Harry's heart.

It was cruel of him to be relieved the Emperor wasn't promoting her on the spot, or even announcing an intention to do so at the start of the next month. She surely would be getting some sort of promotion, after all, even if it was only one within her current rank of Concubine. But he was relieved. It only further separated the treatment Harry received compared to the other's, and further drove the fact that, despite having borne a Princess, he was the one who became a Consort.

By now, word had to have spread that the Emperor had a succession plan set up, with no preference for gender in sight. And that was for if something unfortunate happened to the man. Outside of that, clearly, the man would be choosing the descendant of his that impressed him the most. It must have been a shocking fact to discover, but he was still resting in his Palace from the strain of birth, so he had yet to attend a morning meeting since and therefore was unaware of his fellow concubine's responses.

However, there was also the fact that, with this news, those who only had daughters had renewed hope and ambition of gaining the title of Dowager once their child or grandchild ascended the throne. That large group contained Bellatrix, who would waste no time in grooming her daughter into the perfect heir and improving her own position to ensure she would be the one chosen.

His competition had only gone and expanded whilst he was resting.

23rd August 1999- Monday

A couple of weeks after the birth of Alsephina, Harry re-entered the Harem formally, joining the morning meetings once again. He could have left it longer, enjoying free mornings with his young daughter, but he had a duty to uphold, and now that she was past her most vulnerable, he felt secure enough to leave her in the care of Anya and his personal maids for an hour.

Which was why, following behind him instead was June, grinning from ear to ear, and Lien. The pair hadn't been his first choice, not June, anyway; but the twins were preoccupied with a task he had assigned to them earlier, and his other maids weren't suitable for the position. Therefore, Harry had to content himself with the knowledge that Lien was at least reliable enough. June was a wildcard.

He entered the Hall to silence, blinking as he registered the small gathering present. Only Penny, who sat up on the dias, and Isla, were present.

"Ah," Penny exclaimed, smiling broadly. She was tapping her nails on her armrest, the noise echoing in the expansive hall. "Brother, I'm glad you are able to join us once again. We have missed your presence dearly, as one of the pillars of this harem. Please, sit, you must still be feeling strained."

Harry approached them, taking his seat second to the right of Penny. Next to him was Isla, who was watching his every move intently. Harry hadn't interacted with the woman much despite knowing her for two years now, their last momentous interaction being when she had to apologise for her son's behaviour. Despite that, their relations weren't frosty, to Harry's surprise.

"Good morning, Brother," Isla spoke, her voice slightly raspy. Her expression was neutral as always, but she seemed more present than usual.

"Good morning, Sister, and to you as well, Sister Penny."

The doors flew open with a bang then, and in came a stomping Bellatrix. Fearing confrontation, Harry sighed, but was surprised as the woman simply continued past and practically threw herself into her chair to the left of Penny. Notably, there was no entourage today.

Moments later, Regulus came gliding serenely into the hall, Felix and Aleto trailing after him. He sat down, giving Harry a small smile, but ignored the woman next to him completely.

Harry and Isla shared a look unmeaningly, whipping their heads away as they registered their instinctive camaraderie.

1st September 1999- Wednesday

"His Majesty announces that he is delighted to welcome his Fifth son, and conveys his deepest gratitude to Concubine Lafington."

Jasmine sat forward, eyes eager.

"And so, His Majesty has decided to promote Sister Jasmine to the rank of Secondary Concubine."

She was so obviously disappointed it would have been amusing if she didn't look so heartbroken. It looked like she wanted to refute that, say something along the lines of; 'But, I

had a son?', or similar.

Looks were shared around the room, whispers following quickly, despite Penny's attempt to move on swiftly from the topic after a round of congratulations.

Harry felt some stares being sent his way, steadfastly ignoring them as Penny spoke, despite the thoughts swirling in his own head. Jasmine, overhearing the mutters, had tears gathering at the corners of her eyes, but none spilled.

What this meant to them all solidified everything.

The Emperor had made his beliefs clear.

2nd September 1999- Thursday

He was called urgently out of bed in the early hours of the morning to assemble in Patricia's Palace, with the news of her labour. However, her baby arrived before he reached the room, so as Harry joined the crowd of concubines, he heard the announcement of the new child's title.

"Congratulations, Your Majesty, Your Highness, on the birth of the Seventeenth Princess. May your reign last forevermore-."

The woman was cut off as Patricia sprang upright suddenly, the midwife's words finally registering after a few moments of shock, eyes wild as she began unravelling the swaddle wrapped around the tiny baby in her arms. The shriek she let out was inhuman.

"What!? No, no, there must be a mistake," She muttered hysterically as she fought with the cover, the Emperor grabbing at her hands as she jostled the Princess harshly in the process. "I

have a boy, I know that I have a baby boy!"

"Patricia-"

The blanket finally loosened enough for the woman to push it hastily aside, and her gasp of absolute horror confirmed the midwife's words.

The baby was a girl. A little Princess, whose Mother was now staring down at her with dread and dawning disgust. She was wailing pitifully, the sudden cold and harsh treatment a shock. Whilst the concubine was still motionless, Thomas plucked her from Patricia's arms, cradling her gently and holding her out of reach.

That seemed to snap her out of her trance. "No, no, that's not our child, Your Majesty! They must have switched our son for it, I know that we have a son!" She reached for the baby as if to grab her out of the man's arms, and he stood quickly with a sneer.

"Patricia, stop this nonsense at once. This is one of the reasons why I don't allow gender scans, to avoid circumstances such as this. She is our daughter-"

"No, no, I know what I saw! My Healer, she confirmed that we were to have a baby boy!"

"Then she was mistaken. This little girl in my arms, terrified and screaming, is the beautiful babe you have bore me. She is your daughter!" Despite his view of the scene being obstructed, Harry could hear the rage within the man's voice as he hissed, the baby in his arms yowling.

The Concubine fell silent, eyes wide, dropping to finally look at the girl's face. It was red from the strain of wailing, her tiny body flailing. Patricia blinked, tucking the blanket back into place carefully, even as the Emperor twitched.

"She has your hair." She muttered, voice hoarse. "Dani had mine."

The Emperor's face twisted. "She is smaller than her sister was."

Patricia licked her lips, at a loss for words. "I- What will we name her? I thought we were going to finally have our son, I didn't even-"

"I prepared for this." Thomas still didn't sound trusting, his voice cold. "Freyja, meaning noblewoman. I hope that our daughter will grow up to exhibit the grace and cunning needed to fight the battles she will face.." The biting tone softened a little as he spoke whilst looking down at his newest child.

"I hadn't thought of any names for girls, but..." She stared down at her daughter's face, conflicted. "Francine. I had Francis in mind for a boy, but... It suits her. Freyja Francine Slytherin."

Chapter End Notes

I feel like I really need to start adding more of the Royal kids in now, especially since Harry is a parent now. The older ones will definitely feature, Harry and Evana have a scene with each other in the next chapter, but the younger ones are a struggle. Maybe play dates?

Anyway, thoughts on the chapter? This one was surprisingly easy to write, except for the ending scene, which went through so many changes. In fact, Freyja was originally born as the Sixth Prince. Then, due to complications, the baby passed away within another version. I then settled on a healthy baby, as I couldn't stomach writing about child death, and she became a girl to keep the tension of Patricia's child's birth

I'm also trying to open Tom up a little as a character. It's from Harry's POV, and we all know Harry barely truly knows Tom. I literally have a scene in the next chapter where Harry calls Tom's conquering of the world necessary and just... yeah. His parents shielded him from the worst of it, but he's still been a little indoctrinated :/

As clarification for the succession: Tom will choose. However, if he is incapacitated before giving up the throne, it will pass to the oldest adult child, who has the highest-ranked parent. So, at the moment, that's only Evana. 2nd Princess Sylvania will be second in line when she turns 17 in April 2000, but when 3rd Princess Carina turns 17 in October 2001, she will go down to third in line, since Regulus ranks higher than Emma. Only adult children have a place in the succession.

Also, I recently posted a link to my Pinterest on my Twitter: xStrawberryJam_ It has boards on each subject :)

Thanks for reading :))) Just a heads up, I may not post in January, as I have 5 essays due that month :/ At least my course has no exams

Chapter 35: [Truths]

Chapter Notes

People on Twitter voted for an earlier chapter as I finished two ahead instead of the usual, so here's a chapter :) Ch.36 is finished at 4,0k [31st Dec], and ch.37 has 3.0k, so there's a possibility of a January update, but I'm not sure ^-^

Word Count: 5.2k

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

6th September 1999- Monday

After the long Monday morning meeting, Harry gratefully retreated to his new Palace, the Palace of Great Favour. He had moved in a little later than usual as the nursery had also needed to be moved over, the unexpected but delightedly received promotion making the time he had spent on the room for nothing.

Now, at just over a month old, Harry was beginning to see his daughter as more than an attachment to himself and instead as a baby with her own unique personality. She was finally staying awake for more than a few minutes at a time, nearly a whole hour as of a few days ago. It allowed them more time to bond, despite Harry's love for their sleepy cuddles on the sofa whilst she was napping.

"Alsie," He cooed, catching his daughter's attention. Her eyes were unfocused for a few moments, but she blinked up at him as if understanding he wanted her attention. Of course, Harry knew it was far too early for that, but it made his heart warm when she would stare up at him so trustingly. "You're going to meet your Auntie Luna today. She's my friend, and I bet she's going to love you dearly."

Alsephina blinked, head turning to the side as a flash of movement caught her eye. Harry huffed as she began to wail, hefting her up onto his shoulder, and cradling her head close as he did so.

"Hush now, sweetheart. It's okay, it's only Anya."

"My apologies, Your Highness. I didn't mean to startled the Princess."

"I know," Harry sighed. "She's been a bit sensitive the past few days. I think my recent actions have unsettled her."

His daughter had a small sniffle that started a few days back, and Harry had overreacted to the extreme. It had begun the night of Princess Freyja's birth, and Harry had ordered every Healer available to his Palace. It had turned out to be a very mild cold, mixed with agitation that her Dad hadn't been available for a few hours. The jostling she had gone through in that hour had startled her, and she was still unsettled even days later.

Thinking on the Seventeenth Princess-

Patricia's baby hadn't been removed entirely from her care, but the Emperor was keeping the Concubine on a tight leash. Maids were to care for the little Princess for the most part, despite the baby living within the Concubine's Palace, and the woman was only allowed supervised visits. Harry was surprised she was even allowed that, but he thought it was the best solution overall. The Princess was reliant on her mother, after all, and it would be cruel to refuse her the time she needed with her.

There had been calls for the Princess to be adopted out, most vocally from members such as Penny and Bellatrix, who cited that they had young children that would be beneficial for the Princess to develop around, but old enough not to be overlooked in favour of a younger and more needy baby.

The same discussions had come up when Evangeline's three children had been orphaned, but the creation of the Children's Court, Evana's own vocal derision for being adopted- aged ten at the time- and the Emperor's knowledge that many would use them for personal gain quietened them eventually. There had been little conversation when Eighth Princess Amelia had been orphaned at birth, having been born to a Second-Class Attendant, and therefore, not as useful in the harem's eyes.

The Emperor had given the discussion on the Princess' proposed adoption much thought, individually speaking with his Consorts and Concubines, Harry included.

When Harry had been asked if he would put an argument forward to claim the Princess as his adopted daughter, he had hesitated. It would be lovely, however, the backlash he would receive would have been horrendous and barely tolerable.

With such a young child depending on him already, Harry had denied the opportunity to fight for a claim.

The Emperor eventually decided that the Princess was to remain in her mother's Palace but under strict supervision, Knights and wards surrounding Freyja's rooms- a section cut off from the rest of the Palace.

What had influenced his decision was perhaps the greedy expressions others had taken at the thought of gaining control over Patricia's only child. Another, that had surprised them all, was the flip Patricia had seemed to make once settled.

There were no more reports of violent outbursts, usual from the woman, nor any screaming rants heard from outside the Palace. In fact, it was said that Patricia had taken to practically creeping around her own Palace, watching the door to her daughter's nursery forlornly.

However, it had only been a matter of days since the Princess' birth, so they were all still walking on eggshells, hoping the woman wouldn't attempt anything rash or snap out of the calm state she had descended into.

"Is the Princess hungry, Your Highness?" Anya spoke, breaking Harry out of his thoughts.

Looking down at her little face, and seeing that her eyes were beginning to droop, he shook his head gently.

"No, let's leave that until she wakes up on her own. I don't want to distress her any more than I have."

Sasha brushed over his legs then, and he reached down to stroke the cat gently, smiling at the purrs she elicited. Alsie seemed to enjoy them, as she smiled sleepily, head lolling on his arm. Harry smiled at seeing his daughter so relaxed, continuing to pet Sasha as she leaned herself against him.

9th September 1999- Thursday

"You have so many kids now, it must be incredibly confusing."

Harry and the Emperor were once again in the Pavilion of Stars, soaking up the last warmth of the year together. In Harry's arms, his daughter tiredly murmured but didn't wake, snuggling sleepily into her blanket. He had brought her with him when Thomas had suggested they meet at the Pavilion, wanting Alsephina to spend as much time in fresh air before she was bundled inside for the upcoming winter.

The man chuckled, his deep tenor sending a shiver down Harry's spine. "I do have many children, yes. I'm surprised I have managed to name all of them in unique ways. And with the three new additions, our daughter included, I now have twenty-two children to divide my time with."

"How do you do it? Spend time with all of them?"

"I'm sure you've noticed how infrequent my visits to my other concubines are by now. That is because I choose to spend my free time mostly within the Children's Court, where they cannot bother me. Perhaps I run into some of them within there, but most, like me, enjoy spending time with their children. It is only the most... zealous, that disturb me."

Thomas sighed, leaning back on his hands. It made him look younger than he truly was- a man of many years behind his facade of youth. His black hair was askew, falling out of the perfect style he'd had when he'd arrived. Harry fought the temptation to fix it.

"Then... why continue having more?" He continued to distract himself.

The man's expression hardened. "I will never allow my family name to die out again." He spoke resolutely. "My daughters may take other names if they choose when they marry, but they will always be Slytherins. My sons will hopefully grow and continue my dynasty, although that is still a long way off. That is, if they don't grow to dislike me, and throw away the name I have given them."

"Why would they dislike you? You've always given them all they could need."

It showed clearly in the way the children spoke about their Father, rambling about his visits, twirling in the new dresses and jackets he'd had sent to them. Even the oldest weren't afraid to show their appreciation for him, trailing after the man with incessant questions and boundless enthusiasm.

It was one of the reasons even Harry sometimes struggled to meet with the man. He would love to meet with him daily if he could, but more often than not, one of the Princesses was with him, and Harry was loathe to disturb the man's time with his children.

The Emperor huffed out a breath, amused. "I am a conqueror, Harry." He stated, as if that was all the explanation needed.

Harry supposed it was. He'd ruined the world, terrorised each country until they submitted to his control, and then moulded its remains to his liking. Ruthlessly, quickly, and without care of inhabitants.

He blinked, clearing his throat. "But, much of what you did was necessary, wasn't it? To stamp out the Order, and bring control to the world."

The Order had been a group of Light terrorists, hellbent on keeping Britain under the rule of Albus Dumbledore, and therefore forced into stagnation as a society. They had preached openness and tolerance, but the Emperor's takeover had revealed the depths of their discrimination towards many forms of vital magic and the creature populations in general.

The Emperor's methods had been harsh, and Harry was sure he didn't know even half of what had truly occurred, but the Order, and Dumbledore, had needed to be eradicated to see Britain finally progress.

Thomas smiled bitterly, an expression which sent coldness through his veins. "Was it?"

In Harry's arms, Alsephina gurgled, and he shushed her gently, apologising for the way his arms had tightened minutely.

"May I hold her?" The Emperor's tone switched suddenly, and Harry brightened.

"Of course!" Eagerly, he passed her gently into the arms of her Father, and despite her wiggles of dissatisfaction, blessedly she didn't wail. Thomas stared down at her as he gently cradled their daughter, and Harry watched as the pair stared into each other's eyes, the shade identical.

Then, the Emperor began to hiss, and Harry's eyes widened at witnessing the coveted ability of the Slytherin line. Parseltounge.

If Harry had thought red eyes were a rarity among the Emperor's children, held first by Second Prince Silas, and followed by Twelfth Princess Delphina, Fifteenth Princess Fiona, and his own daughter Alsephina, then the ability to truly use Parseltounge was less seen now. Evana, the First Princess, was one of those who could, and she had been followed many years later by Prince Alexis and most likely Princess Delphina, if Bellatrix's crowing was to be believed.

Harry leant in, mesmerised by the tone changes he could hear as the man hissed, and he watched as Thomas began to smile. Alsie was cooing up at him, also intrigued.

He stopped after a little while, making eye contact with Harry. "Perhaps I am being hasty. Evana didn't show an aptitude for Parseltounge until she was seven, and Alexis was three when he first hissed at me." The man looked fond as he recalled that interaction. "I am still waiting to see if any of my younger children show the ability. It is only Delphina who has surprised me so far and spoken so soon, although I don't know if I'd count baby mumbles as-

A little hiss sounded from the blanket, and it was almost comical how both he and Thomas rounded on their daughter, who was staring up at her Father intensely. Her mouth puckered, and she frowned, another hiss slipping out, followed by a hiccup.

"I- what did she say?" Was the first thing out of Harry's mouth.

"As I was saying," Thomas continued smoothly, a hand coming up to stroke through their daughter's red locks. "I wouldn't count the babbling she is doing as speaking. It's the snake equivalent of hatchling hisses."

Harry leaned closer, watching his daughter with awe as she blinked lazily up at their faces. Her eyes fixed on Harry's, and a happy expression brightened her features, Alsephina burbling cheerfully. He couldn't help but laugh, almost tearfully.

It was relieving, as well as incredibly wonderful, to know that his daughter held an ability so important to the Emperor. She would always be significant to him, with this rare and coveted ability, other than being his daughter. A daughter who had his red eyes, and spoke his family's ancient ability.

15th September 1999- Wednesday

One evening, surprising Harry and his maids with its unexpectedness, the Emperor invited him to spend the night within his Palace, the summons sent by the Head Eunuch himself.

It was obvious to them what the invitation expected of him.

Harry had entered the dining hall nervously, relaxing as a dinner awaited him, finely plated dishes that lasted for many courses. He and Thomas had chatted until the sky turned dark and all the plates had been whisked away by inconspicuous maids, absorbed in one another's presence. It wasn't until the man led him into his bedroom that Harry stopped dead, blushing, reminded of why he had been requested.

The man smirked, collapsing lazily back on the sofa. The man was staring up at him, amusement dancing in his eyes. He didn't seem submissive, despite Harry staring down at him, his posture relaxed and confident.

Harry fiddled with the sleeves of his robe, looking up at the man through his eyelashes. That smirk was still present, but it had taken on a more sultry lilt. He attempted to fight back the blush he felt creeping up his neck, but the widening smile he received revealed his failure.

"I hadn't thought you so eager, Harry." He practically purred, and Harry gulped down the words that wished to escape on impulse.

Of course, I'm eager. You're enchanting.

It would be too embarrassing to say such a thing out loud.

"I- you know that I desire you, Your Majesty."

The man blinked, beckoning him forward, which he did so tentatively. As soon as he was within reach, Thomas reached forward and encircled his waist with his hands, pulling Harry onto his lap, who let out a surprised yelp.

He blushed deeper, avoiding the Emperor's amused gaze as their faces hovered inches away from each other.

"You desire me, do you?"

Harry couldn't have stopped the scoff if he'd tried. "Of course, I do. Is the existence of our daughter not enough proof?"

"The numerous other children I call mine tell me that many others find me desirable. Except, with you, it is different. You desire *me*. They desire the me they perceive me as."

"Don't you hide your true self from me, as well, Your Majesty?" Harry bitterly muttered. After their last conversation, Harry had been thinking a lot about the matter. There was no way the man who presented himself to Harry was the same Emperor who had conquered the world with an iron fist. Thomas was obviously altering his personality in some way to appeal to Harry more.

The man let out a chuckle, sounding a little deranged. "Of course." He bluntly agreed, surprisingly brazenly open about such an exposing topic. "I wouldn't deny it. However, you do see more of me than I allow others to. More temperate sides, may I say."

"You don't let me see your harsher ones, though."

He got a kiss on his brow for that. "No, I do not. I like how our relationship is now. It would surely change if I allowed you to see another side of me. Are you not content with the me you see now?"

Harry sighed. "I-," He hesitated. "I am content. I wish, however, in the future, that you may trust me enough to reveal your true self." He looked up at the man through his eyelashes, blushing at Thomas' intense stare, his eyes darkened.

"Oh, Darling," The man purred, tightening his hold on his waist. "It's not that I don't trust you. I don't trust myself."

23rd September 1999- Thursday

"My Consort, I was hoping to see you today. It is lucky that we bumped into one another so fatefully."

"Your Majesty." Harry bowed in greeting, hearing the rustle of cloth behind him denoting that his maids had bowed also respectfully.

Harry was on his way back from an awkward lunch with Jasmine and Erin, who had invited him after the morning meeting that morning. Nothing of note had occurred, for which he was thankful, but it had still been uncomfortable to spend time with the pair. There was still obvious tension surrounding them, and the jealous stares that Erin had sent Jasmine when Prince Atticus had gurgled had been downright discomfiting to witness.

He hadn't brought along Alsephina, but since they had retreated to Jasmine's Palace- The Palace of Peaceful Beauty-, Prince Atticus was obviously present, and so was Princess Serina, whom Erin had fetched from the Children's Palace for the day.

Erin had clung to her daughter, the girl squirming in her arms, as they had eaten lunch, despite comments from Jasmine that the Princess might like to explore the garden. Harry had departed after that, seeing the other woman's expression darken.

Presently, the Emperor held out his hand to him, and Harry placed his own in the others. It was warm, and the other had a tight, comforting grip that reassured him in the face of the man's serious expression.

"I wish for you to spend Mabon with me."

"Mabon?" Harry questioned, a faint sense of familiarity sparking at the name.

"The Autumn Equinox."

Was this perhaps an event for the Consorts only? Harry voiced his thoughts. "Who else will be in attendance? I haven't heard of such a celebration yet."

"No one. I have made many attempts to turn this practice into a Court-wide celebration alike All Hallows Eve, however many were not interested in partaking, and those who were held different traditions to heart. I had hoped you would know of it, but perhaps it is more suitable that you are unaware of the traditions. It will allow you to avoid preconceptions like the others."

"I would be delighted." Harry smiled, taking the man's arm.

'Spending Mabon' with the man turned out to be building a fire within a firepit in his private garden, and waiting for dusk to fall before they could begin. According to the Emperor, Mabon was a time to celebrate the harvest and the coming of darkness, therefore, they needed the liminality of dusk to begin. Surrounding the firepit were bowls of food- apples, grapes, wheat, corn and more. Harry wondered what role they were going to play.

"I will throw them in the fire when the time is right," Thomas explained when he noticed Harry's stare. "After we take a bite out of them."

"Even the wheat?"

The man huffed, amused. "No, not the wheat. But the bread made from the wheat, yes."

Something must have caught the man's attention, because he suddenly began to chant, sitting up straighter. Harry watched Thomas' lips move, understanding little of what he was saying. Then, lines of magic began to appear in the air surrounding him, and Harry gasped in amazement.

The magic within the room pulsed, growing and growing as the man chanted, reaching forward to pluck an apple out of the bowl. It reached a peak, before something *snapped* , and the magic coalesced in the fire.

Harry was enchanted, watching as the man's face relaxed, his shoulders slumping, leaving himself as defenceless as Harry had ever witnessed. He let out a deep breath, the sigh grateful, as if a giant weight had been released.

The man's red eyes blinked open a few moments later, and his lips twitched into a lazy smirk that caused havoc in Harry's mind. "Your turn, my Consort." He took a bite out of the apple in his hand. "You don't have to say anything, just express your thanks for the harvest, and eat whatever you wish. Apples represent immortality and fertility. Grapes also represent fertility, alongside wealth and a myriad of other aspects. Pick whatever you want."

Hesitantly, the air still heavy with magic, Harry grabbed a handful of grapes from the bowl closest to him, being the easiest thing to eat. He could feel the magic growing as he ate one after one, sparks tingling up his arms and focusing in his fingertips.

The reaction wasn't as great as Thomas' had been, but when the energy snapped, he slumped sideways, caught by the man. The Emperor huffed, settling Harry's head more comfortably on his shoulder.

After a few minutes of silence, the man spoke. "Thank you for humouring me, Harry."

He grinned sleepily in response. "S'alright. I enjoyed it. What other celebrations have you been hiding from me? I want in."

24th September 1999- Friday

As they exited the meeting hall, pouring out, laughing and chatting, a group of maids came hurrying up the path, focusing specifically on Patricia.

The woman, in the middle of conversing with Alecto, turned reluctantly, clicking her tongue in annoyance. "Susan? You're supposed to be looking after Freyja! Can I not leave you for-"

The woman, Susan, along with the other maids, collapsed to their knees, pressing their heads harshly into the gravel. Panting, she spoke, cutting her mistress off. "Your Highness! Your Highness, I'm so sorry, I'm so-"

"What is it, woman? Is something wrong with my daughter?" Patricia snarled, touring over the maids, who seemed moments away from fainting.

"Your Highness, the Princess! The Princess has taken ill!" Susan wailed, reaching forward to grab at the woman's robe. "She just got so warm all of a sudden, we called for a healer and she-"

Patricia stopped listening to the maids rambling after that, as did they all, descending into devastated silence. Harry watched, feeling cold creeping up his spine, as Patricia lunged, cutting and cursing the sobbing heaps on the floor, her screams of pure rage and agony rattling in his brain.

It only quietened when the Emperor appeared, pulling her swiftly off of the floor and into his arms. She fought, kicking and clawing, but he kept a sturdy grip on her shoulders.

It is reflective of his state of mind that Harry barely noticed the Emperor's arrival, watching Patricia collapse into herself as she heaved hysterically.

The Emperor led her away quickly, Knights swarming them, leaving behind the heap of maids still writhing in pain on the floor- one with a bloody face, another curled into herself, the third simply weeping into her hands.

Knights likewise steered each of them back to their palaces, each going willingly as the shock refused to abate.

Later, news would reach his ears that the young Princess had caught a fever, which, with aid from the best Healers available, and access to the Emperor's limitless reserves, she had pulled through in the end.

He held Alsephina tighter that night, spending long hours weaving protection over protection around her nursery.

1st October 1999- Friday

The morning meeting that day was a tense one. After the shocks of the month, centring around Concubine Patricia, they were all awaiting what damage her actions had caused to her standing in the harem.

Penny cleared her throat. "His Majesty would like to express his joy at the birth of his nineteenth daughter, the Seventeenth Princess Freyja. The Emperor is relieved to announce that Concubine Rakepick has sought a mind-healer in the aftermath of their daughter's birth. His Majesty reiterates his standpoint that the Princess shall remain with her mother with the understanding that nothing shall befall his daughter in Concubine Rakepick's care.

However, His Majesty decrees that, despite his joy in welcoming a healthy baby, he does not believe Concubine Rakepick displays the correct attitude for a promotion, nor does the Emperor wish to reward our Sister for her reaction towards Princess Freyja. Therefore, she is to remain Fourth Concubine."

Patricia's expression was stony but unsurprised. She raised her chin pompously as the stares and whispers began.

"Do you have anything to say to that, Concubine Patricia?" Penny questioned her, raising a sleek eyebrow. Her expression was hard, focus unyielding. "I'm sure that we're all curious about your remorse to your unsightly outburst last month? Do you accept His Majesty's rightful punishment?"

Patricia sneered. "I believe His Majesty took the correct actions. I will endeavour to prove to him that my reaction was a mistake, a moment of grief to mourn the son I believed existed."

"And you will celebrate the Seventeenth Princess' arrival, I hope?"

Her expression remained cold. "I am glad that a child of mine was born healthy, that I gave His Majesty yet another heir to the throne, as I am overjoyed to declare with the recent reveal of the Succession laws. I will raise her to be a strong and worthy contender for the title of Heir. His Majesty has nothing to worry about, I would never harm an Heir to the throne."

Penny's smile was brief and uneasy. "Quite. It was something we all were surprised but delighted to discover. It gives our daughters a chance to inherit His Majesty's esteemed title when he believes them worthy of such a venerable position. I for one am incredibly curious to discover which of our children shall become the next ruler, although I suppose we may have to wait a while." She let out a laugh, and the rest of the harem joined in, many faking enthusiasm.

5th October 1999- Tuesday

Harry waited with bated breath as his Healer scanned the results of the test, feeling his heart beat wildly.

He had been feeling relatively queasy the past few days, and on discovery of his ailment, had hailed for a Healer as soon as possible.

If he was pregnant yet again, he wished to know sooner than later.

The Healer shook her head, and Harry's heart sank as his hopes were dashed. "I apologise, Your Highness, but I cannot detect a pregnancy."

Harry collapsed back onto the sofa, dejected. "Are you sure this isn't like last time? Perhaps it's too early to notice?"

"It has been long enough since you last slept with the Emperor to detect, Your Highness. I apologise, but I am almost wholly certain. I must say, however, that I personally believe that this is for the best." She began, and his head whipped up to glare at her.

"Excuse me?"

"You may feel that your body has healed enough, but it has only been a matter of two months since the birth of Her Highness, Princess Alsephina. Please give yourself a little more time, even if that is only a few more weeks. Your daughter needs your sole attention at such a young age, if you had a pregnancy to worry about, it would only cause strain on both yourself and the Princess."

Harry-

Hadn't thought of it like that. He was horrified to realise, in his quest for another child, that he hadn't been thinking that this would mean he'd have to split his attention between his daughter and the pregnancy.

If he had become pregnant, as he wished, they would have been under a year apart in age, eleven months if he carried to full term. That would be incredibly draining, and Harry could see now how it would detrimentally affect his budding relationship with Alsie.

"I- Thank you." Harry blurted, interrupting her packing. "For reminding me of that. And for everything else, actually. You have been a steady presence and confidant, all throughout my pregnancy with Alsephina and before that."

The woman smiled softly. "I am just doing what I love, Your Highness. My job."

11th October 1999- Monday

"Royal Uncle," A calm voice spoke from behind him, and Harry span, coming face to face with Princess Evana. The woman looked formal in her light blue robes, far more decorated than any Noble could get their hands on despite the similarity in colour. She was smiling widely at him, but Harry could see the steel in her gaze as she stared into his eyes.

Harry didn't quite know how to respond. "First Princess." He settled on.

Evana's grin widened, and she stepped forward. "I was hoping to speak with you, if you will. We haven't had the chance to speak properly since you joined, it is a grave oversight of mine."

Nodding, Evana took that as permission to link arms with him, which caused Harry to shift in discomfort.

"Let us talk in the Pavilion of Light. I heard you have not yet visited it. I believe it to be the most spectacular Pavilion of them all-"

The Princess leaned forward, arms folded on the table. Placing his tea down, Harry steeled himself for the apparently serious conversation she wished to have with him.

"I know I have not spent much time around you these past couple of years, but as we were once acquaintances at Hogwarts, I wished to rectify that, and ensure our relationship is

deeper from here on out. Support my claim to the throne as His Majesty's rightful heir, his firstborn child." She stopped there, watching him intently with a slight smile, confident in herself.

Harry blinked, picking his tea up again to take a long drag from it as he thought. Support her claim?

Evana continued seeing he made no move to respond. "I had thought that Father would choose from his male heirs, but as he has announced there to be no preference, I wish for him to realise that, other than me being his eldest child and therefore temporary heir, I am also the one he should choose as his successor. I believe you will be most helpful in convincing His Majesty of this."

"And how would this benefit me?"

"Excuse me?"

Harry folded his hands, staring into her bewildered, blue eyes. She seemed shocked at his rejection. "Why would I support your claim to the throne?"

"I-" She huffed. "Look, Potter-" He raised an eyebrow, and she mentally backtracked. "Royal Uncle. I am the only adult child of the Emperor. The eldest. It is my right to be the Heir."

"Why so?" She went to interrupt, but Harry continued. "His Majesty made clear the throne isn't being vacated anytime soon. Your siblings will have plenty of time to reach adulthood before then. And once that is so, the heir will be chosen by His Majesty's will, not by birth order."

She scoffed. "I had my suspicions, but I didn't believe you were like the rest of them. You just want my rightful throne for your own child."

"Yes," Harry answered honestly, seeing nothing wrong with stating it out loud. Everyone would be thinking the same, after all. "If Alsephina finds herself to be worthy of it, and there is still a chance for her to assume the title of heir, then I will support my daughter's claim to the fullest. Why would I not?"

Evana huffed, sneering. "If I hadn't proved myself over the years, I doubt my sisters would even be considered for the succession! I have proved my worth as greater than my brothers for years, that is why Father has decided to scrap male primogeniture!"

"Then why has he not formally declared you as heir? If you're so confident, Princess, then you will surely become heir by your own merit, without my help. Good day, First Princess."

Chapter End Notes

:)))

This chapter reveals a little, and I tried to incorporate some things I saw people asking about that weren't in the chapter at first [Sasha. I always forget her, but now that I've remembered, I can add her into a future scene that will make it a lot more humorous :)]

This is the last chapter until after Christmas, so I'll say Merry Christmas now :) I'm looking forward to the food the most, especially the turkey and prawns ^-^

Also, I finished Side 8 [Regulus] before Side 7 [Tom] so I'm going to switch them :) It works out, since Tom's side chapter contains spoilers of the next pregnancy, and I need the reveal in the main fic before I can reveal it. Maybe I should stop numbering them and just write them as they come?

Also, here's the Wiki link again: [Link](#)

It contains all current Harem ranks and information, just for when you're confused who's which rank :)

And, as always, my twitter is [xStrawberryJam_](#)

And I've also got a Pinterest which is now organised: [xStrawberryJams](#)

[I've just learnt how to link ^-^]

Thanks for reading! :))

Chapter 36- [Two]

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 4.3k

Happy birthday to TMR :)

And a Happy New Year to those who are already in 2024! [Although it's still 2023 for me for a few more hours yet]

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

23rd October 1999- Saturday

Harry watched his daughter from his place on the sofa, content to observe as she patted the mat underneath her with clumsy hands.

Alsephina was hitting milestone after milestone now that she was quickly approaching three months, and it made Harry slightly teary seeing her grow out of her tiny newborn stage and begin looking more and more like a baby.

The first time she had smiled at him, all gums and drool, he had burst into tears, which had then set off his daughter. It had all been very embarrassing once he had calmed, but he looked back on the moment with fondness now.

Sipping his tea, Harry chuckled as she focused intently on the bright red spot on the map under her, tracing it with clumsy, stubby fingers. It was fascinating watching her grow and develop, both mentally and physically.

Another exciting development was that Alsephina now seemed to be making sounds with intent. More specifically, hissing sounds that Thomas proudly announced were attempts at speaking, although ineligible.

Her non-Parseltounge babbling was also becoming more common now as well, especially since she could finally recognise him. Even now, she kept on turning her head, lifting it from the map, to stare at him for a few moments, as if making sure he was still there.

Every time, Harry would smile and speak to her, receiving a gummy grin and some sort of response, before Alsephina's attention was once again caught by the mat.

A clatter to the side drew his attention, and he frowned as he spotted June sheepishly holding one of his ornaments.

"Sorry, Your Highness. I knocked it when I was dusting."

"Please take more care with my belongings."

"Yes, Your Highness. My apologies." June placed it back on the shelf, and continued dusting for a few minutes. Harry watched this out of the corner of his eye, noting as she kept glancing at him when she thought Harry was preoccupied.

"June," He called out, catching her attention. "Have you anything to report to me?" Harry questioned. She was still his most prominent source of information, especially for the things not revealed within the daily meetings, and the gossip that was shared around the maids. Many forgot that the Maids and Eunuchs were more valuable in information than even they may be. Most had been within the Court for far longer than Harry, his assigned maids included. Harry was slowly attempting to phase out June's importance and replace her position for Lien, Hannah or his newly gained maid, Lola. With his promotion to Consort, he had gained three more maids, one personal and two assigned. Lola was a new maid that his parents had hired for the sole purpose of sending into the Harem on his next promotion, perhaps a little presumptuous of them. But he was glad to have her. His other two maids, Charlotte and Madison, were still too unknown to trust.

The woman brightened, dusting forgotten. "I do! Ah, I mean, I have discovered some information that may be of interest to you, Your Highness."

"Pertaining?"

"I have heard that Princess Evana has recently been engaged! The Crown Prince of Italy and the First Princess reportedly got along so well at a ball recently that the Princess requested a betrothal directly from the Emperor. The wedding is supposedly to take place next year. How exciting!" June seemed to have forgotten she was relaying information to him, as she grinned. "Oh, I'm sure it will be a marvellous occasion! There's never been a Royal wedding quite like it!"

"I'm thrilled to hear of it," Harry spoke softly, and the woman flinched. "I'm sure Her Highness will be a wonderful bride, and His Majesty will spare no expense in making the day a grand one."

Hopefully, this would also ensure that the woman would be around the Court less now. Ever since his refusal to side with her in the fight for the title of Heir, she had been sending him glares every time their paths crossed. He ignored her childish attempts to intimidate him and carried on with his day, but it was beginning to grate on Harry's nerves.

"Of course, Her Highness is the First Princess and His Majesty's first child. It is surely to be a momentous occasion. Hopefully, we will soon celebrate the coming of an Imperial Grandchild."

Harry cut her off before she could continue down that line of thought. "Have you anything else to convey?"

"There is something I've heard the faintest of whispers about." June smiled slyly, forgetting herself and dropping the duster to approach him. She leaned down to whisper in his ear, and Harry gripped tightly onto the armrest as her breath hit his ear. He shivered in disgust but steeled his expression. "I've heard some rumours that the Emperor is planning something big to celebrate the millennium. I'm not entirely sure what it is, but something is being built just outside the city. A stadium of sorts- one of massive proportions."

Harry leaned forward, searching her eyes as she smiled. "How big exactly?"

"I've heard it could be a 250,000-capacity stadium, some say it's even larger than that. If there's standing room, I'm inclined to believe it."

"Find out more about this stadium if you can, I wish to know more about why it's being built, and for what future purpose it will serve. And if you can, June, please ask around and find further information about this celebration."

The woman looked giddy at being given a task. "Yes, Your Highness. I won't disappoint you."

1st November 1999- Monday

"His Majesty has recently congratulated me on becoming a Master Potioneer," Penny announced proudly after finishing the statements within the scroll she held, smiling down at them with contained smugness.

The coming of the colder months had hit them hard in the past week, so the members of the harem were each bundled in layers of robes despite the heating, with their maids pouring cups of tea, the clinking of crockery echoing in the room.

Harry was taking a sip of his- Rose, a flavour recommended by the Emperor which he had taken a surprising liking to- swallowing harshly with the news. He winced, feeling the scalding liquid travel down his throat uncomfortably, placing the cup down quickly to hide his reaction.

"Oh, congratulations, Sister! I hadn't heard that you'd taken your test!" Jasmine called out, clapping her hands together joyfully. The woman was always so outward and lively in her reactions; Harry wondered if they were genuine.

The woman sighed, giggling with put-on bashfulness, her cheeks flushing a pretty pink. "I wished for it to be a surprise, seeing as I've been working on it for so long, and many of you were invested in my success."

Bellatrix snorted, the noise loud as she had been drinking from her cup, slamming it down with a cackle. "Don't act as if all of us truly cared about that."

"And why wouldn't we, Sister?" Isla raised a sleek eyebrow, always ready to challenge Bellatrix, with no concern of the individual. "It is an achievement to be proud of. Not many of us continued on the path of education after joining His Majesty's Harem. I, for one, commend Sister Penny's perseverance."

"Thank you for your support, Sister Isla. It is true, perhaps, that this may not matter to you, but I wished to share the news. After all, His Majesty has been rather busy lately, he doesn't often spend time with us anymore."

"He doesn't?" Harry questioned, blinking when eyes turned to him.

"Of course, you must have noticed, Brother Harry. I only meet with His Majesty during the morning nowadays, he is incredibly busy otherwise. With his eldest children reaching adulthood now, the political situation has become more restless, as they wish for the Royal children to be more engaged politically."

"Oh yes, his advisors are truly being rather daring these days. The nerve of them! Do they not wish for more royal children to be born? There are no pregnancies recorded at the time being, and after such a boon to the number of children recently!" Patricia ranted, seeming genuinely incensed despite the issue meaning concubines other than her would be having children.

"Peace, Sister," Penny hushed her and the consequent grumbling of agreement her loud proclamations had produced from the other concubines. "As you said, we have recently welcomed three Royal children in the past few months, there is a lengthy time until we have to be concerned. In fact, the last few years have produced more children than ever, I do hope that this trend prevails."

Patricia harrumphed. "There are still only five Prince's of the Royal blood. Despite there being no preference for succession of the throne, there can only be one heir. The rest of the children will go forth and continue the Slytherin bloodline, and as it stands, the Princes will perhaps be the only ones to pass on the Slytherin name. We need to produce more Prince's, if only for this reason."

"Then we can be thankful for the recent addition of the Fifth Prince, right, Sister Jasmine?" Penny pointedly spoke, smiling at the giggling Concubine.

"Of course, I felt so blessed to give birth to my son, another Prince for His Majesty. It had already been over three years since the birth of your son, Fourth Prince Rastus, after all."

Her smile wavered a little, but it remained bright in the face of an audience. "Yes, it had been a little while since then. Frankly, we had all been expecting a Prince to be born in 1998, that is perhaps why so many children were born within that year. The Prince's have amusingly come in a pattern, every two years. The First Prince Alexis was born in 1990, and his brother the Second Prince Silas arrived in 1992. We didn't think anything of it until Third Prince Elias came in 1994 and my son Rastus was born in 1996. I suppose we all had our hopes up for the future Fifth Prince being born in 1998."

Jasmine grew a little teary then, surprising them. "Then perhaps my little Atticus is the baby I lost, returning to me."

Penny stared at her, smiling fakely. "Perhaps. On another note, I am delighted to share with you all that His Majesty is in the process of planning a Royal tour for next year, in honour of the new millennium. It is just one of the many events he has in store to celebrate, but it is the one that he wishes for us to begin planning for from now."

"How exciting!" Isla spoke, her book thudding on the table next to her. "When will it take place, Sister?"

"His Majesty plans for it to occur before the next Harem selection and another important event, so it will begin in early February, and hopefully meet its conclusion before the end of March."

"Where will we be going on this tour?"

"His Majesty plans for it to be a world tour, so it seems likely for us to visit every country's capital city, beginning with those in the British Isles. His Majesty has confided in me that there is also a reason he is visiting each country, although he has not divulged the details."

That, perhaps, had something to do with the stadium that was being built. Perhaps there was to be a tournament of some sort, on a similar level to the Quidditch World Cup, which was yet to be held again until 2002.

10th November 1999- Wednesday

Once again, he and Thomas were residing within the Pavilion of Stars, staring up at the quickly darkening sky, just absorbing each other's presence calmly as discussion had wavered long ago.

Harry stiffened as the Emperor's hand suddenly settled on his waist, tugging him closer. In his arms, Alsephina squinted at her Father, her expression adorably put out.

Thomas clucked her chin with a gentle finger, humming. "I'm sorry, did you not want me touching your Daddy, hm?"

The baby seemed to grumble in admonishment, and Harry chuckled at her annoyance.

"My, are you getting sleepy Alsie? Perhaps we should head back to the Palace now." Harry aimed at the Emperor, apologetic for having to cut their time together short.

"Mayhaps I could join you, my Consort? Our daughter can rest, and we can continue our conversation."

He rocked his daughter, blushing slightly as he nodded giddily. "Of course, you're always welcome. It will take a little while to get Alsie settled, however. She's been quite clingy lately, she goes down well, but I swear she can sense when I leave because she always wakes up when I do."

"I'd be glad to assist in that. Perhaps she would like to spend some time with her Father." He held out his hands, and Harry passed her over gently, smoothing her hair when she didn't make a slight fuss. In fact, she seemed quite intrigued at the change in perspective, being higher off the ground in Thomas' arms.

Lifting her head off of his shoulder shakily, Alsephina took in the scenery as they made their way back to the Palace of Great Favour, which Harry had moved into with his promotion to Consort. She looked enamoured with everything, and Harry was glad he brought her along.

His maids scrambled to prostrate themselves before the Emperor when he unexpectedly entered, and the man walked past them without a second glance, heading for the nursery.

Alsephina's nursery was a paradise of colour compared to the yellows that ran throughout the remainder of the Palace. Her cot was placed directly in the centre, with colourful hanging animals over it. The rest of the room was designed for his own comfort, with plush chairs and even a beanbag area for when he wanted to lay next to her.

Thomas headed straight for the cot, cradling Alsephina's head gently as he began to lower her. She went without fuss, cooing up at the man as he talked softly to her. Harry couldn't hear them from where he was observing from the doorway, but the sight made his heart melt.

He wanted to sear the domestic image in his mind for eternity.

21st November 1999- Sunday

Thomas observed the man beside him, tracing his eyes over his waking form. Harry seemed to have relaxed since the last time they had spent the night together. Instead of immediately rushing to the bathroom, blushing and spluttering as he went, he curled up next to him, and Thomas surprised himself by staying in position.

With the other concubines, he would have left the bed himself soon after. Instead, he allows Harry to rest his head upon his shoulder, the man blinking sleepily up at him, green eyes hazy with drowsiness.

"Are you tired, my Consort?"

The man grumbled, rubbing his cheek against Thomas' shoulder, nose tracing a chilly line down his neck that caused him to shiver. Tilting his head back, Thomas allowed the man to mouth gently at the spot behind his ear, hissing as he felt a bruise form.

Now, *this* was truly unlike himself. Thomas hated being marked by others, feeling *owned* .

But he allowed the man to continue. Because it was *him* .

And Thomas could always hide the marks with his magic to conceal them from prying eyes. Allow only himself the pleasure of laying eyes on Harry's handiwork. A little secret between just the two of them.

Harry pulled away from his neck, looking up at him with round, doe eyes, searching. Thomas smiled softly. Harry's eyes dropped to his lips, and they leaned in simultaneously, lips brushing together gently.

"Is this fine?" The man questioned, voice husky. Thomas huffed, amused.

"We have gone far beyond this, there is no need to ask."

"But I wish to. I don't want to cross any of your boundaries, you're a scary man." It was spoken cheekily, teasingly, but a cold shard of ice stabbed him from within.

"You believe I am 'scary'? And what has warranted such a belief, especially from you, my Consort?" He questioned, keeping his tone light. He searched the man's eyes as he chuckled, probing for any hint of fear, anything that could break the firm but yielding image Thomas had created of himself within Harry's mind. There was nothing but affection.

"Oh, just the fact that you're the ruler of the world, oh Supreme Emperor Slytherin."

It spoke volumes how comfortable the man was with him now that he could tease Thomas like this, and how fond he himself had become with his Consort. He had noticed a shift between them since the birth of their daughter, a positive one that allowed Harry to be more open, and trusting with him. It was pleasant.

His darling was too naive.

Dipping down, Thomas caught Harry's lips with his own once again, this time more forcefully. The man leant in, chuckling as he reached up and tangled his slim fingers within his hair, tugging at the strands as the kiss deepened.

It grew more assertive, and Thomas could feel the man underneath him beginning to squirm, pressing on his chest gently. He was not ready to let up, not willing to let him escape him-

"Ow!"

Harry yelped, and Thomas pulled back sharply. All he could see was red for a few moments, until his eyes focused once more, and he registered a sharp taste on his tongue.

Blood. There was blood trailing down his Consort's chin.

Harry reached up, trailing his trembling fingers through it, staring at Thomas with wide eyes. He felt his breath catch in his throat, emotions warring between arousal and the little-felt feeling of guilt.

Thomas reared back, a hand still cradling his husband's waist, although his grip had gentled. "I apologise, I didn't mean for this to get so out of hand."

Harry blinked up at him with big, green eyes, before cracking a hesitant smile. "It's fine, no big deal." Blood stained his teeth.

Thomas reached forward, and Harry's eyes contracted, following his movement. He swiped his thumb across the cut on the man's lip, and he hissed as he placed pressure upon it, watching as fresh blood welled to the surface.

"Thomas-"

"*Episkey* ." He spoke, swiping in the opposite direction. The cut healed where his thumb touched, leaving behind only a smear of blood.

"Oh, thank you," Harry muttered, bringing his own fingers up to brush over the healed skin.

"It was my doing in the first place, I apologise."

They were both still breathing heavily, staring into each other's eyes, feeling something shift in the air. It was as if the world had shrunk to encompass just the both of them, and there were no important engagements Thomas needed to attend to, even though there were many. But he didn't think of them in that moment.

Taking a chance, Thomas dipped his head again, and Harry met his lips eagerly.

1st December 1999- Wednesday

Penny seemed to be far more smug that morning than Harry had seen her since the birth of her daughter.

When she finally finished reading the Emperor's decrees and began socialising, however, Harry realised why.

"His Majesty has complimented my aptitude in matters of politics most recently. As his Primary Spouse, I have been overseeing the arrangement of the First Princess' marriage to the Crown Prince of Italy. His Majesty is very pleased with the progress so far, and is eagerly anticipating the Royal wedding that will take place in Spring next year."

There were claps of approval and calls of wonder at the announcement of the Princess' engagement, something which many had yet to hear about. However, the light mood was soured with the snide retort of Felix, who was brooding.

According to June, the man's requests to meet with the Emperor had been rebuked often recently, and his mood had been dropping with every refusal.

"He did not think to promote you, Sister?"

That seemed to sour Penny's mood momentarily. "No, he did not." She snipped. "However, I am the highest-ranked Consort, and I'm sure being promoted to the esteemed rank of Noble Consort warrants more than a little bit of help in the office." Penny chuckled, twirling one of her blonde curls around her finger. "After all, only late Noble Consort Evangeline reached the position, and she was honoured with the birth of the First Princess and the First Prince. Perhaps with my next child, His Majesty may promote me, which I would be endlessly delighted with. However, this is mere speculation, and we are getting rather off-topic."

"And what of the Royal Wedding, Sister? How is it coming along?" Patricia questioned.

"Oh, it's going to be a splendid, wonderfully sacred occasion! His Majesty is sparing no expenses to ensure the wedding will be exactly what the Princess wishes, and a wedding a Royal deserves."

"Oh, I can't wait to attend!" Jasmine squealed, clapping her hands. "Is the groom of a similar age to the Princess? I can't imagine His Majesty would allow much of a difference." She chuckled behind her hand.

Penny echoed her. "The groom is actually younger, only eighteen currently. He is a year younger than the Princess, but they match each other well. I believe His Majesty prefers this arrangement, as it benefits Princess Evana. The Princess has always had quite a dominant personality, and as the Prince has only recently begun attending official duties, he is still new to the ways of the world."

"Oh my, I am looking forward to the occasion greatly!" Erin giggled. "I'm sure it's going to be perfect, a reflection of your capable planning, Sister Penny."

5th December 1999- Sunday

She sat back on her heels and met his hopeful eyes. Harry felt his lips purse, containing the surprise and elation he felt long enough for the Healer to confirm his suspicion.

"Congratulations, Your Highness."

Harry lost his breath, mind whirring. "Can you tell me how far along I am?"

"It is hard to say, I can barely detect it at this moment, but I suppose you are measuring around two to three weeks. In a few weeks, I will be able to date your due date more accurately."

So early, Harry thought, elation thwarted as reason took over the moment. Too early to hope, perhaps.

"What can you detect this early on?" He asked, heartbeat thunderous in his ears.

"That you are, in fact, pregnant. Not much else beyond that, I'm afraid. Within the upcoming weeks, I will be able to tell you more, but for now, I implore you to take care, and unfortunately not to get your hopes up. The first few weeks are especially fragile, with higher chances of ending in miscarriage." She took in his expression. "I apologise if I have dampened your joy, Your Highness."

Harry drew in a cold, deep breath through his teeth, trying to calm his rapidly beating heart. His hands were shaking slightly where he had them folded on his lap, and he tried to still them without much success. "It is better for you to inform me now whilst the news is still fresh. I will be careful, you have my word. I will ensure that my baby-" Harry's breath hitched. "That my baby remains as safe as I can ensure."

The woman gave him a kind look, patting his hands gently. "And I will try my hardest to ensure you deliver a second healthy child soon. Your Highness."

14th December 1999- Tuesday

Harry rocked Alsephina smoothly as she sucked from the bottle, staring down at her tiny face, tracing and memorising her features. She was blinking up at him with her red eyes, crinkling them whenever she noticed his stare, noises of joy muffled. He chuckled down at her, holding Alsie gently as she continued to feed, content to watch her as she did so.

Despite his Healer's reasonable warning not to get his hopes up, Harry could not help himself but think of his daughter and how she was hopefully soon to be an older sister.

She was so young herself still, Harry felt a little disappointed that he was going to shake her world so greatly with a new addition, splitting his attention whilst she still needed him.

However, he was also ecstatic about the news. Having another child so soon meant he wouldn't get rusty with caring for a newborn in the meantime, and it wasn't necessarily a bad thing to have a sibling so similar in age.

Alsephina would get to experience a childhood he hadn't- one with siblings, close in age and not born nearly twenty years later. She and her future sibling, and more if Harry was fortunate, would share their childhoods together, and hopefully form closer bonds due to that.

It was consolation in his mind that, luckily, she would have the independence of being within a different school year to her sibling. Being born in August, Alsephina was one of the youngest of her year, as Harry had been. This child would be in the year below, or even two if they were born in September, an entirely possible scenario if he got to forty weeks, given that he had carried Alsephina to forty-one weeks- much to everyone's alarm at the time.

Alsephina made a noise of distress, ripping away from the bottle with a whine. Harry hushed her, gently rocking her as she continued to fuss.

"What's got you so worked up sweetie?" He lifted her up so that her head was leant on his shoulder, and patted her back. "Are you-"

She made a noise of discontent, and Harry made a noise of fond disgust as he felt wetness of his shoulder.

"Yep, of course. The joys of parenthood."

Chapter End Notes

Happy New Year everyone! I hope I'll be as active next year as I have this one :) I've written 21 chapters this year, and there are 30 left to go :)

I posted a side chapter yesterday- Side 7- Regulus :)

Thanks for reading!

Twitter: xStrawberryJam_

Chapter 37: [Meltdown]

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 5.9k

This is quite a big chapter, and it has been complete for a little while now :) Writing ahead is a whole lot less stressful, but I keep forgetting what I've revealed and what I haven't ^-^

Also, with this, the word count is now over 150k!

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

20th December 1999- Monday

Harry groaned dejectedly as he once again had to grab hold of a wall, breathing heavily out of his nose. As if sensing his irritation at the situation, his stomach roiled more violently, and he practically curled into himself, deaf to Anya's concern.

Morning sickness had hit him earlier this time around, and far harder. Harry was sure he couldn't be more than four weeks along by now, yet his body was already obviously projecting the signs of pregnancy.

At the current time, it was more annoying than anything, especially as he had to keep a straight face and composed facade during the morning meetings. There had been a few slip-ups already, but they were luckily easily explained away as feeling a little 'under the weather'. How long that excuse would last, however, was debatable.

The concubines seemed to have a nose for sniffing out falsities, and already some had been giving Harry glances, despite the morning sickness having started only a couple of days before. The most worrying was the looks coming from those who had children, as they were the most likely to realise his predicament. Penny, especially, had stared at him hard this morning, meeting his eyes with no shame.

Harry was heading back to his Palace after the morning meeting, grateful that he had kept his composure throughout for the most part. However, his body now seemed to be protesting vehemently, and it left him feeling light-headed.

"Your Highness, would you like me to call for a sedan?"

Harry groaned, nodding. They were near enough to a garden that he could wait in there for the time being, hidden from view in the maze of bushes and winter roses.

After being settled on a bench, Anya hurried off to call for a sedan, and Harry leant back with a sigh, feeling the dizziness abate slightly. He breathed in the cold winter air deeply, his stomach settling after a little while.

A rustle to his side had him cracking an eye open, straightening as he caught sight of a human-shaped shadow. It was lucky Harry had composed himself, as a few moments later, First Prince Alexis rounded the corner, a faithful gathering of maids and Eunuchs trailing behind him from a distance.

It took him only a couple of moments to recognise the Prince, although the circlet in his hair was a dead giveaway to his status. The boy, despite having the Emperor's hair colour, looked little like the man, perhaps sharing only his eye shape.

The Prince blinked at him, blue eyes piercing as they observed Harry coldly. The man made to stand, gripping hold on the armrest, before the boy brightened.

"Royal Uncle!" Prince Alexis chirped, and Harry faltered, bowing. "I've wanted to meet you properly for ages!"

The boy, much to Harry's astonishment, skipped forward and sat next to him, patting the bench he had just vacated. Harry sat, and Alexis beamed up at him, legs swinging where they dangled off.

"You have, Your Highness?" Harry murmured, feeling uneasy. He had never had a proper conversation with one of the Prince's before- the 'confrontation' with Second Prince Silas notwithstanding. All of them were much too young, at nine, seven, five, three and newly born.

The Prince hummed brightly. "Mhm! But you're always so busy, and I'm never out of the Palace when you are free."

The First Prince was nine now, having celebrated his birthday a couple of months ago. He had grown a lot since Harry had entered the Court two and a half years ago, and it showed by how he approached him.

As a Consort, Harry was now trusted, in some respects, to interact with the Royal Children, granted that they were the ones to approach him. Evana had already taken advantage of that new benefit, and it seemed the First Prince was as well, although perhaps for differing reasons.

"Do you like the Winter Garden?" The Prince questioned him. "It's always, obviously, prettier this time of year, but it's nice in the other seasons as well. I've heard that my mother-" He made a choked noise, but carried on swiftly. "My mother loved this garden the most. That's why nothing has changed since her death, the Emperor wished it to be a memorial of her for us, so we could feel more connected with her despite her absence."

"That's lovely," Harry spoke softly, and the boy hummed happily.

"Yep. Oh!" Alexis gasped, turning to him with a grin. "I heard you are the Dad of one of my newest sisters! They say she's really pretty, like a flower!"

Harry smiled, charmed. "She is, she's certainly as bright as one. I named her after one, with her middle name being Ruellia."

He nodded his head more vigorously. "Red hair and red eyes, Father was very happy when he told us."

"He was happy, was he?"

"Well," The Prince drawled, contemplating. "He doesn't show his happiness like others do, but I could tell! Father seemed especially pleased to inform us that she was your daughter."

"He was?"

"Yeah! Can I meet her one day, sometime soon?"

Harry bit his lip, debating. It would be wonderful for his daughter to meet her eldest brother, but at the same time, Harry didn't wish to be accused of currying favour with the young Prince. Even with his elevated rank, there were still four concubines who ranked higher than him, and Harry didn't want to bet on any of them- perhaps besides Regulus- siding with him.

"If you receive express permission from His Majesty beforehand, Your Highness."

The boy tilted his head, contemplating. "Can't I just come round? I won't be any trouble, I promise! I just want to meet Alsephina."

"And I would love for you to, once you get permission from His Majesty."

The boy pouted and huffed, but nodded. "Fine. But Father is always so hard to convince! I barely even get to leave the Palace!"

The sound of footsteps drew their attention, heads turning, and Harry saw Anya making her way through the garden, looking worried. He called her over, and she visibly relaxed, although remained poised when she spotted the small form of the Prince next to him.

"Your Highness, the First Prince, I greet you. Your Highness." She bowed to the both of them. "I am regretful to interrupt, but the Sedan has arrived to take His Highness back to his Palace."

The boy pouted up at Harry but huffed when the man gave him an apologetic smile. Smiling, the boy hopped off of the bench, waving at him jovially. At his movement, the maids and Eunuchs that had followed him came into motion again, surrounding him. "I'll see you around, Uncle! Please ask Father to visit more often!"

30th December 1999- Thursday

Harry steeled his nerves as he entered the Emperor's Palace early in the morning before Penny and her entourage had the opportunity to arrive. He knew that if he left it any later, he would talk himself out of informing the man.

Harry had decided not to tempt fate, and place his trust in Thomas this time, informing him of his pregnancy despite having discovered he was only just over five weeks along as of a couple of days ago.

His Healer had been to the point as she explained the development so far, without the use of an ultrasound. She said it would be too early to see much as of yet, so Harry had to anxiously wait for his first scan at twelve weeks to see his baby for the first time.

She was apprehensive that his morning sickness was so strong whilst measuring so early, but it was yet a major concern. If it got any stronger, however, she had advised Harry that he may need a week or so of bed rest to ensure his continued health.

Noticing his entrance, Thomas stood from his desk, rounding it and meeting him halfway across the room. The door slammed shut behind him, and Harry knew that anything he said now wouldn't leave this room unless it was out of the Emperor's own mouth. The man stepped forward, hands assuming their now regular placement around his waist.

"What has you seeming so troubled, My Consort?" Was the first thing the man said to him, his eyebrows furrowed.

Heaving in a deep breath, Harry decided for certain that now was the time to reveal it. It had only been a couple of weeks since he had discovered his pregnancy himself, but already, there was a gnawing feeling of guilt perpetuating his days. "I'm pregnant."

Briefly, the hands around his waist tightened and then loosened quickly in favour of moving to the front. Thomas smoothed his palms over Harry's stomach as if attempting to feel a bump that was nowhere near existing.

"You are sure?" He asked rhetorically, but Harry nodded anyway, now smiling giddily at seeing the clear emotion in the man's eyes. "How far along are you?"

"Nearly six weeks."

"Six weeks... you have informed me so soon," Thomas smiled. He gently kissed him, and Harry couldn't help but grin into it, chasing after the kiss once the man drew back. He was still smiling down at him. "Can I presume this is an early birthday gift?"

Harry was confused for a few moments before realisation dawned on him. It was the day before Thomas' birthday. "Ah."

The Emperor hummed in amusement. "Shall I forget until tomorrow so you can surprise me once more?"

"No, no," Harry waved the thought away. "A pregnancy announcement should be something celebrated separately from a birthday. It's your day."

"And it's my baby growing within you. It is the greatest gift someone could give. I would have no qualms sharing it with my own child."

"You say that, but wait for the day a child is born on your birthday. You wouldn't be so happy then."

The man kissed him again. "I'm not so sure about that."

They devolved into silence, the man's hands still holding his waist, and Harry felt himself beginning to sway. He had to inform the man of the wishes he had before he and his weak stomach ruined the aura of the announcement.

"I want you to announce my pregnancy on the first."

The Emperor pulled back to look seriously into Harry's eyes. "Are you certain? You were rather apprehensive last time, and you are earlier in your pregnancy this time."

Harry smiled unsurely. "I won't be able to conceal it for long at all. I'm already experiencing morning sickness to a worse degree than I ever did with Alsephina. I don't want to throw up in a meeting one morning, revealing to the harem that I'm carrying in such a humiliating way."

The man kissed him breathless, and Harry gasped at the suddenness of it. "Thank you for trusting me, my Consort. I will ensure nothing harms you or our child. Whether or not you are pregnant at the time."

Harry smiled, brushing Thomas' cheek. The declaration was heartwarming, but Harry knew the man was incapable of protecting him from all the dangers he would face. If he was entirely serious about such a thing, he would have to do away with the Harem as a whole. Whilst they were still present in the Court, Harry didn't feel secure. "That's all I ask."

The Emperor's birthday was an ample opportunity to dress up in the finery he had assembled over the past couple of years. Perhaps it had been a time since he'd last been able to, but Harry was looking forward to dolling himself up.

Harry was dressed in one of his newest robes, a loose one made of white silk with yellow edgings and decorations. Paired with it were the citrine earrings decorating his ears and the bangles of silver sliding over his arms. His crown was placed atop his head, the one the man had gifted him but with the central emerald replaced with a citrine gem he had been gifted recently. The Emperor had handed it to him with a sly look, promising that it was only a temporary measure, which Harry still refused to think on.

If he received yet another crown...

Alsephina looked lovely in her green robes, tailored to be loose so that they didn't restrict her movements. She was five months old now, and Harry couldn't believe how she had developed in such a short amount of time. His daughter seemed to want to be on the move constantly now, shuffling herself about on the floor and sticking everything in reach into her mouth, Luckily, today seemed to be a cuddly one, as she was content to be held.

She was sat up in his arms, resting her head on his shoulder as she patted his arm, a look of concentration on her face. He smiled down at her, dropping a gentle kiss on her forehead which she followed with a gummy smile.

"Your Highness," Anya spoke gently from the doorway. Harry turned, patting his daughter's back as she gurgled, and smiled. "Are you and the Princess ready?"

"Yes, let us leave now or we'll never arrive on time."

Attending to them for the evening would be Anya, Kia and Lola, the maids his daughter was most comfortable with. He didn't wish to bring with him too many attendants, as the hall would already be quite full with the guests and other Court personnel.

He carried his daughter carefully down the steps, flanked by his maids, gripping hold of the bar to balance them. The main hall was only a short walk away, but Harry already knew it would be a struggle for him.

It would only take him a few minutes, and Harry savoured the fresh air and relative silence that permeated the Court now that most were busy in the kitchens or on break, before he was thrust into the hubbub of the hall.

The hall was bustling, a record amount of attendees having shown- the event being a celebration both for his birthday and the eve of the new millennium.

Thomas had watched from his throne as the crowds had entered, buzzing with excitement at being granted the privilege to attend the Courts' New Year's celebration. Only he could arrange such a high-profile celebration, with world leaders, politicians, royalty, nobles and his Court all gathered under one roof. He had spent most of the day discussing with them his plans for the new millennium and consequently fending off any offers of marriage to their relatives with the excuse that they would have to enrol them into the Selection in the coming year. It had left many disappointed, but none dared to show their dissatisfaction, simply agreeing to his plans and then scuttling out of the office with their proverbial tails tucked between their legs in defeat.

On the matter of concubines, Thomas had watched with rapt attention as his Harem filed in once the festivities had commenced, each dressed splendidly and according to rank. Most of his attention, however, was on the first group that arrived, dressed in varying shades of yellow that denoted their rank as Consorts.

A hush had settled over the room when they had entered, stealing the attention of every being in the Hall with their overpowering presences and desirable appearances. It had made Thomas smirk with pleasure that his Consorts were so alluring, yet untouchable to all but himself. He had truly collected the finest of each generation, ensuring his bloodline would continue only through the blood of those worthy. The powerful, the desirable, the coveted.

His eyes had widened minutely when his newest Consort had entered, rounding off the pack of yellow in a white robe that made him shine like an angel, gold patterns twirling at the

hems glowing under the light of the Hall. His Consort looked captivating, an angel of light surrounded by faceless figures dressed in yellow.

The little girl in his arms looked fascinated by all the pageantry, eyes wide as she tried to take it all in. Her head was turning side to side, with Harry cupping it when she leant back too far to see more of the hall. Her siblings were the same, clasping onto the hems of their parent's robes- except Carina who stood straight-backed by Regulus' side.

A path was formed by the crowd leading to the dias, and the Hall watched as his Royal Consorts, five strong now compared to the two he had held previously, made their way to his side, bowing in greeting.

As the head of his Harem, Penny spoke for them. "Your Majesty, on this momentous day, I convey my, and the Harem's deepest congratulations to you. As another year passes, and we enter a new millennium, we pray to reside by your side for the rest of our lives, and that your reign will long surpass us."

Thomas wanted to snort at the blatant lie she told to his face, but that would be undignified of him. The woman wanted nothing more than to be the Dowager Empress, Mother to the future Emperor or Empress. To achieve that, Thomas would have to abdicate in favour of one of her children. She coveted the position of Empress for herself, yes, but she would have far more power as Mother to the future ruler than as the Primary wife to himself.

"Thank you, Consort Haywood. Your congratulations are appreciated. Please, sit. And my children," He spoke mainly to the oldest of them, Carina, as the others were much too young to leave their parent's side. "You may socialise if you wish. But do be sure to keep a Knight by your side at all times."

"Yes, Father." His third daughter smirked, bowing shallowly before leaving her father's side, who watched after her with bright eyes.

His Consorts sat accordingly, Harry with his daughter cradled carefully on his lap, furthest away from him although still on the top dias. Bellatrix seemed to be struggling with her daughter, as Delphina was fighting in her arms. Silas stood faithfully and solemnly by his mother's side, who was on the opposite side as Penny. To his right, Penny was hissing at her daughter to 'sit still', whilst their son and younger daughter clung to her skirts. Taking a

moment to observe the situation, Thomas bent down and plucked Cecilia off of the floor, to her mother's surprise.

"Your Majesty, I-

Ignoring her, he smiled down at the curious child in his lap, who seemed endlessly intrigued by her younger sister, Alsephina, now within eyesight. The girl was now just a few weeks from turning two, so it was no surprise when she pointed at Harry's daughter and spoke. "I go."

"You want to see your sister?" He spoke as gently as possible, hoping that she would agree so that he could approach his Consort without the others creating a fuss. Despite the onlookers, Thomas had no qualms in humouring his youngest children. His children, his blood, were above such frivolities. His daughter nodded, so the the surprise of those watching, he stood and approached Harry, who was staring up at him with big, green eyes filled with confusion.

Cecilia made a grabbling motion towards Harry, so swiftly, hearing Penny making a choked sound behind him, Thomas deposited her into his Consort's arms. He was quick to cradle the girl as Thomas stepped back, eyes wide as he stared down at the Princess babbling in his lap.

"I thought it best to humour her before she grew upset. If you wish to have another child soon, it is best to have experience handling a toddler and a baby at the same time." He spoke, smiling knowingly down at the man, who blushed and nodded.

"Of course, Your Majesty."

As he sat back down, Penny looked as if she would say something, her lips pursed, but seemed to think better of it as the doors opened once again and the Concubines entered with their children in tow.

Seeing that the entirety of his Harem was now settled, Thomas stood, gathering the attention of the Hall. A hush quickly descended as they noticed his form, until no sound other than his strong voice could be heard.

"On the eve of this new millennium, I wish to announce that I have great plans for a grand tournament to take place in the Summer months of the next year, in celebration of this momentous occasion."

Whispers began, filling the hall with a hum. The Emperor smirked as he watched the crowd lose themselves in the excitement of the unexpected announcement, the sight of the usually dignified upper classes descending into a tizzy amusing.

"More details are to be released tomorrow, with additional information sent to each government of the countries of this glorious Empire. It is with eagerness that I invite them to send their best Wizards and Witches to compete for a grand prize at the conclusion of the tournament. However, to ensure the audience receives the best viewing possible, only the top thirty-two contenders will enter the tournament after vigorous testing. I await this contest eagerly, and invite the citizens of my Empire to look forward to the events with great anticipation."

The Hall practically shook with the force of the cheers, chants of praise forming as the crowd devolved into hysterics.

Thomas raised his goblet and took a sip, hiding his growing smirk.

The trap had been set. He wondered if anyone was stupid enough to take the bait.

1st January 2000- Saturday

"It is my pleasure to open the first Meeting of this year, and the first of the millennium." Penny began, smiling down at them with her bright teeth. She seemed to have dolled herself

up further for this morning's meeting, her ringlets tighter and yellow robes more bejewelled than usual. "The Emperor wishes to convey his anticipation of the upcoming tournament, and hopes that his Harem will enjoy the festivities on the Royal balcony with him during its course. His Majesty also reminds us to keep in mind the upcoming Harem selection this year. My, it feels like yesterday that we welcomed our newest additions into the Harem, yet it has already been two and a half years. And already, what an impact some have made, especially you, Brother Harry. You have already given birth to a Princess, fulfilling your duty to His Majesty with little delay."

"Thank you for your kind words, Sister." Harry acknowledged, hiding back the smirk that wanted to form on his face, knowing, and anticipating the information she soon had to reveal.

She smiled at him, eyes darting back to the scroll after she had conveyed an appropriate amount of cordialities. "And His Majesty also announces, with much delight, that Consort-" She stopped suddenly, and Harry watched on as her hands began shaking. The concerned stares sent her way were enough to snap Penny out of her stunned silence, and she began again, clearing her throat and plastering an unsteady smile on her face. "That Brother Harry is expecting once more, and has informed His Majesty in prudent time."

You could have heard a pin drop in the silence that descended on the hall. Harry smiled brightly, straightening so that he'd be able to see the expressions of the others.

They were, as he expected, positively delighted by the news.

Not.

Patricia looked as if she'd swallowed a lemon. She had been one of the most vocal about the lack of pregnancies within the Harem. Perhaps she should have been more careful with her words if she hadn't wished for this.

Similarly, many others looked completely put out by the sudden, unexpected announcement, trying but failing to plaster smiles of congratulations upon their face. Felix, Alecto, Pippa and his yearmates excluding Luna didn't even try.

It was Penny's reaction that drew his attention the most.

"Congratulations, Brother." Penny gritted out behind clenched teeth, her smile stiff. "I am surprised to hear of this. His Majesty announces that you are to become Third Consort in light of this joyous news."

He smiled at her in a way that felt so refreshing, so carefree and genuine in a way he'd forgotten outside of the privacy of his Palace. "Thank you, Sister Penny. Your congratulations mean a lot. His Majesty was incredibly pleased to receive the news, especially as there has been a lull in the past few months, as Sister Patricia noted."

"Yes," The woman spoke faintly. "Perhaps- Perhaps your pregnancy shall encourage His Majesty to seek out other concubines for company." Her smile was brittle, and Harry grinned sweetly.

"Yes, I have felt a little ashamed for monopolising His Majesty's attention over the past few months. He is so enamoured with our daughter, however, who am I to refuse his visits?"

Once the final concubine had left the hall, Penny tightened her grip on the scroll and threw it at the wall with a shout of rage that echoed loudly. She stood, filled with burning fury that didn't seem to fade despite her many attempts, stomping down the dias steps to approach her loyal Head Maid. Penny was shaking with fury so great she didn't know if she'd be able to contain her magic for much longer.

She gripped her shoulders harshly, fingernails digging into the woman's skin. Ever calm, she didn't even flinch, her gaze lowered respectfully to the floor. If she hadn't resumed such a submissive posture, Penny would have had her eyes plucked out for her insolence. She was barely refraining from striking her to relieve some of her anger, but she knew that to do so would be unwise. The mark would be suspicious, and surely reveal to the beady-eyed vultures she shared the Court with that Harry's pregnancy had gotten under her skin more than she had revealed.

And she had revealed far too much emotion already, something which the smug brat had clearly revelled in.

Remembering his sweet, gloating smile at the announcement of his promotion only heightened the sheer rage Penny was feeling.

"You," She hissed. "Get me more information now!"

"Yes, Your Highness." Her head maid whispered dutifully, demurely backing away once Penny had loosened her grip, bowing lowly.

"And find out if any of those other bitches are carrying currently! I can't have His Majesty's attention split further, not when I'm so close to getting what I want!"

"Yes, Your Highness." She left quickly, and Penny raised her hands to grip at her hair once alone, knocking the small golden crown off her head as she did so.

Gasping, she lunged to catch it, forgetting entirely about her magic- a muggle habit she had yet to stamp out. Penny missed by mere millimetres, and watched in horror as the small crown clattered harshly on the marble floor, the single tiny gem at the front shattering.

"No!" She yelled hoarsely, dropping to her knees and sweeping the cracked gem into a small pile. Tears now blurring her vision, she began to heave violently, hands shaking as she held onto the crown tightly. "Stupid, stupid, fuck!"

She threw it to the ground, uncaring when it dented. The useless hunk of metal wasn't the important part, it was the gem.

Penny had commissioned the crown for herself with her promotion to the rank of Primary Consort, secure that no one could demand she refrain from wearing it. She was nearly apoplectic when she'd seen Harry wearing a daintier but far more bejewelled one as a Concubine- a gift from His Majesty with permission to wear it.

No, it was the gem she mourned. The very gem placed into her palm on the day of her selection, dark blue to signify her rank as an Attendant. Penny had kept it safe for years, chipping away at it slowly to add it sparingly to her clothes and jewellery, which she had thrown out with every promotion to begin her wardrobe anew in her latest colours. What she had placed at the centre of her crown had been the remaining shard, but it had been oh-so-worth it to place it there- the only piece she would keep as the Empress, the only acknowledgement of her previous rank as the lowest concubine.

And now it was shattered, dust, unfixable due to the nature of the stone chosen by His Majesty for the Selection.

Penny wept for the loss, feeling more lost and alone than ever.

6th January 2000- Thursday

"Well, I, for one, am delighted by the news." Regulus smiled charmingly, a cup held daintily in his fingers. "Weren't we all just discussing the lack of pregnancies in the Harem? Harry has outdone himself, he is already pregnant yet again."

"I suppose that brat is proving his worth." Bellatrix tsked, looking dissatisfied. "The birth of the Sixteenth Princess seemed important to His Majesty, far more than the births of his successive children. There is now a blood link between the Potter and Slytherin families and a further connection to the Black family. That little girl will perhaps be named as the heir to the Black or Potter families when Potter is the Lord, since he appears to have no gender preference. The Princess is more important than many have pinned her to be, even I admit so."

"We need to present ourselves as a united front, Brother Harry included. We are the highest of the Emperor's Harem, his favoured. Therefore, it means that whatever is going on between you and Brother Reglus needs to be resolved. And we also ought to invite Brother Harry into our fold. I or one of yourselves will request him to attend our next tea. His presence is far overdue, he has been a Consort for over five months now." Penny sighed, her hands folded neatly before her.

Isla hummed. "As Brother Regulus and I have been saying for months now. He is a Consort, a pillar in the Harem. It is a disservice that he has yet to join us like this. Just because he is young does not mean he doesn't have anything to bring to our discussions." She had a book on her lap, but it was unusually closed, her full attention on the discussion.

Regulus nodded, placing his cup down with a clack. "Then I shall ask him next week. I am the closest to him, after all."

10th January 2000- Monday

Harry began the day with the worst bout of morning sickness he'd experienced yet. It was so terrifying in fact that a Healer had been immediately sent for, fortunate as he had begun to feel faint soon after.

"Do you believe I can still attend the meeting this morning?" He slurred as he sat forward to meet her eyes, the light-headedness having barely abated.

The Healer shook her head. "I believe you should remain resting, Your Highness. You are rather dehydrated, and the dizziness is worrying. The risk to your child would be high if you were to strain yourself or faint on the way. I recommend you remain on bed rest until this abates."

Harry sighed, leaning back on the pillows, exhausted despite the early hour. "And how long do you think that will take?"

Thomas' arrival was unexpected but greatly appreciated, brightening his dour mood immediately.

He was carrying Alsephina in his arms, the baby babbling up at him joyfully as he gently stroked her hair, nodding along when appropriate. It made Harry's grogginess vanish, and he sat up with a smile.

"Your Majesty." He greeted when the man continued to stare at him, sitting himself on the chair beside his bed. Alsephina, oblivious of the tension that had begun to grow, sat happily on her father's lap, now strong enough to support her upper body without much support.

"You are to be on bed rest for the next two weeks," Thomas stated, his expression blank.

Ruffling his messy hair self-consciously, Harry laughed self-deprecatingly. "I underestimated how much the sickness would affect me. This pregnancy has taken a lot of energy out of me so far."

"You are only seven weeks along, correct?"

"Just over, yes."

"It is quite early for you to be feeling the effects of pregnancy so harshly. Has your Healer considered the possibility that this may be a multiple pregnancy?"

His Healer, who had entered the room mere moments beforehand, blinked. "It is possible that may be the case, Your Majesty. However, at the time being, I cannot confirm that for certain. I was going to check for such at His Highness' twelve-week scan in February, but I can perhaps catch the chance at ten weeks in late January at the earliest."

"Do so." The Emperor commanded, turning back to Harry. "However, I hope that your sickness had abated before then. I'm sure you'd wish to witness your child's scan whilst healthy."

26th January 2000- Wednesday

After over two weeks subjected to bed rest, confined within the walls of the Palace by his own body, Harry finally felt well enough to attend the morning meetings once again.

He regretted that decision the minute the meeting had concluded, and the harem descended on him like starved vultures.

"Brother, I must say, your sudden departure was sorely felt. We have missed your presence in the last couple of weeks. Please, do tell us, has the cause for your severe sickness been uncovered?"

"No, Brother. I suppose this pregnancy is just affecting me differently, especially since It hasn't been long since the birth of my daughter."

"Yes, it was rather irresponsible of you to conceive yet another baby despite having such a young daughter to care for still. Are you perhaps hoping for a son despite your insistence that you were grateful to have a daughter?"

He coolly observed the man. "Please watch what you say, Concubine Rosier. His Majesty was the one to invite me, after all. It is not my fault that I am so favoured."

The man's lip twitched, scowling. "Apologies. I have overstepped."

"However, Brother," Penny entered the conversation, voice filled with haughtiness, and Harry struggled not to openly glare at her. "I do have to agree. This may have adverse effects on both yourself and your daughter."

Harry huffed. "His Majesty and my Healers have been attentive to inform me and guide me with this. It is why they are being so cautious, which I am grateful for. I am sure Alsephina

won't be overlooked, after all, His Majesty and I are attentive, loving parents. My daughter already has experience with siblings, over twenty of them, in fact, two of whom are younger. She will just be more involved with the baby I am carrying."

"Still-"

"Sister," His voice hardened. "Are you a Seer?"

"I-" The woman stuttered, clearing her throat. "I am not, Brother."

"Then why are you attempting to proclaim the future? Please bear in mind that His Majesty is dearly awaiting the birth of this child. They are not unwanted, and they are most certainly not a mistake on my behalf." Harry coldly spoke, leaning back on his chair. "Please, mind your words, Brother, Sister. I may take them as you wishing my baby didn't exist."

Nothing more truthful had ever been spoken in that hall.

Chapter End Notes

Next update will be on the 28th :) Ch.38 is nearly done, but I'm thinking it's going to reach 6k by the end ^-^

I've been busy with essays, 1/5 has been submitted so far, and my next one is due in two days :/

On other news, I posted some ideas for future fics on my Twitter, and I've already begun to write option 4 :) Its a Murderers Tomarry oneshot that should be around 5k words, and I'm planning to post it in the next couple of weeks [or whenever it's complete ^-^] A title I've thought of is: Metamorphosis

There's also a LOTR crossover, option 2, that I love the sound of. That one, however, would be a longer fic :) Same with option 1

Anyway, thoughts on the chapter? I'm glad to see everyone enjoyed the last one, and I'm anticipating releasing the next one already :)

For those who follow my other HP fic, Serenity: The chapter is finally coming along well :) It's at 3.2k

Twitter: [xStrawberryJam_](#)

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Fandom Wiki: [Intimacy Wiki](#)

Chapter 38: [The World Tour]

Chapter Notes

This chapter is nearly 7.0k long ^-^ And, I hope you like it! Next chapter won't be quite as long, but I do have a lot to pack into the next few chapters as we approach Harry's ascension to new heights of power :)

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

27th January 2000- Thursday

Already, Harry had fended off three invitations to tea, lunch or a walk in the hour and a half he had been out of his Palace. The first had come from an energetic Erin, who had clung to his arm with pleading eyes and promises that she'd had 'premium mint sourced just for her Brother'. Then, whilst the meeting had yet to start, Jasmine had sidled up to him with an invite to lunch, with many Attendants- Dahlia, Daphne and Theo included- on the guest list. He had declined simply because he wanted a drama-free morning, and it would be a hassle to interact with his classmates who had been an annoying thorn in Harry's side since he'd joined. The third had unexpectedly come from Felix, who was also meeting with Patricia, Alecto and Lukas for a walk. For the same reasons, Harry had refused.

"Harry," The voice of Regulus rang clearly from the steps of the meeting hall, and Harry turned to watch as the man approached. He waited in place with folded hands, slightly anxious. "Have you any plans for this afternoon?" The man questioned when he was close enough.

"No, I do not."

"Then, I would like to extend an invitation to join me and the other Consorts in our weekly meeting."

"Your... weekly meeting?"

The man smiled, seemingly slightly abashed. "Yes, we meet every week on a Thursday. I apologise that it has taken us so long to inform you of this, Bellatrix was against your admittance for a while."

Ah.

"I would be delighted. Are you meeting presently?"

"Yes, we are gathering within the Pavilion of Light to discuss the meeting and the week's events in depth. Sisters Isla and Penny, and Cousin Bella should be on their way there already."

"Brother Harry," Penny stood, clasping her hands together. "I am so glad to finally welcome you to our company."

"I am surprised, I hadn't heard of anything such existing."

The woman chuckled. "Yes, well, we can't be having the lower concubines listening in on our private conversations. I apologise it has taken such a time to invite you into our fold, the months have just seemed to fly by since your promotion, and you were so obviously busy caring for your newborn daughter. Please, have a seat."

Harry sat on the seat next to Regulus and the remaining empty seat, Penny, Isla and Bellatrix on the other side of the round table.

"How is the Sixteenth Princess?" Isla questioned him as he settled, her expression curious.

"She is growing well, His Majesty and I are very proud."

"Ah, yes, I had heard of His Majesty's pride in his daughter, especially since it appears the Princess is capable of Parseltongue. How proud you must feel, Brother! Only a few other children have shown themselves capable of such talent."

"Such as my Delphina," Bellatrix announced proudly, puffing her chest out. "Her speech has been growing stronger now that she's older, His Majesty is most pleased."

Penny smiled briefly. "It is my hope that my children will also display an aptitude one day. They are still younger than Princess Evana was when she displayed her talent."

Isla hummed. "It is such a rare talent." She spoke pointedly, staring at Harry. "I believe I understand now why the Slytherins, and then the Gaunts, interbred."

"Sister Isla!" Penny gasped, affronted. "Please do not discuss such delicate matters so openly! His Majesty's family...." She pulled a face.

Isla continued despite her interruption. "Most Slytherins and Gaunts that intermarried bore parseltounge children. Those who married someone with no ancestral connection bore no parseltongue children. Of course, His Majesty is an outlier, but his children are seemingly not."

Penny coughed pointedly, frowning. "As I said, let us not discuss such matters at this moment. I am-"

Bellatrix interrupted her by leaning over the table, grinning. "The birth of your daughter just confirms our theory that only those with Slytherin blood somewhere in their line can have Parseltounge children. The Potters are descended from the Peverells, which married into the Black family, and the Peverells married Slytherin women many times over the centuries, of which the Gaunts are descended directly from." Bellatrix seemed giddy. "We all had our suspicions when both Princess Evana and Prince Alexis spoke, their mother being distantly related to an offshoot of my family, but with the birth of our daughters, it has almost been confirmed."

The frown on Penny's face had only been growing deeper as Bellatrix continued. "But as you said," The woman spoke, sounding affronted. "His Majesty himself was an outlier. That means that all the children have a chance-"

"But none have shown it." Isla drawled. "I am honestly surprised that your daughter has not shown an aptitude for it, Brother." She spoke to Regulus, who did not comment in return. However, Bellatrix was quick to support him in her own way. She waved her hand flippantly.

"Carina could be taking a while. And besides, I said most children inherited, not all."

Harry sat back, having much to think on whilst the other Consorts delved into trivial matters that he had no interest in discussing in what he thought was supposed to be a serious meeting. But, it had been useful to attend, Harry had discovered a lot in his time here.

That there were additional conditions for inheriting the ability to speak Parseltongue, which apparently lay in his blood and awakened within his daughter with the addition of the Emperors. And that Penny, for all her haughtiness, was as vulnerable as the rest of them, with the knowledge that she had no control over the situation, and wants she had no hope of obtaining that her rivals held just by being born into the right families.

30th January 2000- Sunday

The morning of his first scan dawned on Harry quicker than he had anticipated. Already, he was a quarter of the way through his pregnancy, and the time since he had learned of it seemed to have flown by.

He leant back on the sofa, trying to relax himself as his Healer knelt on the floor, her wand tracing along his stomach gently as she cast the spell to begin the scan. Harry let out a heavy breath, tensing as the screen popped into existence.

The projection was static at first, slowly focusing until a grey image began to form, solidifying. His baby, still a tiny little thing, appeared on the screen then, a clear speck of life in the midst of darkness, and Harry gasped emotionally. It filled him with the same, heart-wrenchingly strong feeling of love as he had been when he had seen his daughter for the first time, and relief that the baby was still growing strong.

His Healer smiled at him, shifting her wand a little. "From my first observations, I'd say that your baby is growing well, Your Highness. I'm just going to check for any-" She stopped then, and Harry's eyes widened as the screen shifted, and yet another blip appeared. A second area of darkness, with a pulsing star of light within.

"Is that..." He trailed off, feeling as if the air in his lungs had escaped him.

Clearing her throat, just as shocked as he was, his Healer nodded. "Another baby, yes." She confirmed, and Harry sank back further into the sofa, his breath leaving him shakily.

Licking his lips, he brought his hand up to wipe at his face, covering his eyes from the woman watching him carefully. Her hand was a steady, grounding presence on his arm, and Harry breathed deeply, wiping at his eyes.

"Are you well, Your Highness? May I continue?" She asked him carefully, her voice steady and filled with empathy.

He nodded, breathing in sharply, trying to control his rampaging emotions. "Yeah- Yes. Yes, please. I want to know if-if my babies, if they're okay."

She nodded, eyes compassionate. "Yes, Your Highness." Turning their attention back to the scan, they both observed the image with scrutiny. "From what I can see, both babies appear to be growing well, although baby B, the baby placed further down," She pointed to the second baby, and Harry focused on them with a sharp pinch of concern. "Is measuring a little behind of baby A. However, this is not of great concern, Your Highness, as with twins, there are often discrepancies in their growth rate. You can expect, also, there to be a difference in the way the twins grow compared to Her Highness, the Seventeenth Princess. As twins, they will most likely be smaller, as there are two babies sharing the same space. Therefore, I implore you, Your Highness," His Healer looked to him, expression serious. "To take care during this pregnancy, as it may take a further toll on you than your previous."

1st February 2000- Tuesday

"The favour you have gained over the two years you have had a place in the Court, and the attitude you have shown in the face of all situations you have encountered, has assured His Majesty that you are most deserving of your promotion. Therefore, the Emperor proclaims you are to become the Secondary Consort. Congratulations, Brother." Isla smiled at him, looking strangely gleeful at the news.

It was obvious to everyone then that this was why both Penny and Bellatrix were absent from the morning meeting. Bellatrix, because she had been replaced once again, now the third Consort compared to the Primary position she had lauded for years.

And Penny, because she was finally seeing Harry as the threat he was.

They had obviously caught wind of his promotion beforehand, perhaps from the mouth of the Emperor himself. As the Primary and Secondary Consort's, they were entitled to more than the rest of them. A position which Harry had just usurped from Bellatrix, sending her yet again further down the ranks.

"Thank you for your congratulations, Sister." Harry received it genuinely. Isla had been far more open with Harry ever since he had surpassed her, something he had not been expecting. Perhaps she had foreseen something such as this occurring, and her dislike of the Bellatrix outweighed her disappointment and ire at being displaced. "I am thankful that His Majesty has honoured me with this promotion, it is unexpected yet honestly welcome. I hope that I may surpass His Majesty's expectations, in gratefulness of this opportunity."

The woman continued despite the attention of the harem now being focused on Harry, each concubine staring- eyes filled with warring emotions as they gritted their way through congratulations.

"His Majesty would like to remind everyone that the world tour begins tomorrow, and to ensure that all preparations have been made. The Emperor has also requested to ask whether you still wish to participate, Brother Harry. Given that you are pregnant."

"I do."

2nd February 2000- Wednesday

Despite his pregnancy, there was no chance that Harry was going to sit out on the World tour, a perhaps once-in-a-lifetime occurrence specifically to celebrate the turn of the new millennium.

Of course, as recompense for his involvement, Harry was under constant supervision from both Healers and Knights. His personal Healer was by his side from the moment they exited the floor, and there were far more Knights accompanying them on this trip than there had been the last one. Of course, this could have been due to the fact that the tour circumstances were different, but it made Harry feel warm inside all the same.

One of the reasons he felt comfortable going on the tour as well was that they were allowed to return to the Court whenever they wished, something which Harry would be utilising hopefully daily to ensure Alsephina was properly cared for and wouldn't go ignored. At six months old now, he was risking missing vital progressions in her development with every hour that he wasn't by her side, so Harry hoped that she'd wait just a little longer before she began crawling. Luckily for him, his Healer had assured him that it could take until she was ten months or older for that. He had given his maids express orders to contact him if his daughter asked for him, no matter if he was at a banquet or in the middle of greeting the leader of the country. His daughter came first- his children would always come before anyone else.

They had just exited London, having started the tour there. They were now in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales, for their second stop. Today, they would be visiting the Capitals of each Country within the British Isles, starting in London, then to Cardiff, Dublin, Belfast and finally Edinburgh.

Already, there seemed to be tension between the Emperor and the Magical Minister of Wales, a short, stubby man who was plainly inferior compared to His Majesty. The Emperor seemed highly unimpressed, staring down at him with a blank expression, which the man seemed not to notice, or perhaps disregarded entirely.

By Harry's side, Bellatrix made a noise of disgusted amusement that echoed. Penny, from her position at the right of the Emperor, shot a look at them, her glare poisonous and sharp.

The purpose of the tour, foremost, was so that the Emperor could discuss in person with the leaders- muggle and magical- of each country, whilst also publicly displaying himself and his Harem in all its glory to the masses. It would, hopefully, leave a lasting impact on the populace, and entice them further into the festivities the Emperor had planned for the year.

Already, many countries had held their own contests on a national scale to select the champion that would represent them in the tournament to be held in the upcoming months, and the whole world seemed to have dissolved into a fanatic frenzy surrounding it. Harry had even received letters with his Dad's enthusiasm for the upcoming event, and James usually avoided speaking to him on matters that concerned the Emperor.

The man in question, whilst Harry had been preoccupied with his thoughts, had headed towards the offices of the Ministers, and Harry and the other concubines were ushered to where they would be staying whilst the discussions were taking place, and to prepare themselves for the feast that would occur later, after the discussions had taken place.

Sighing, Harry allowed himself to be guided into a large communal room with several offshoot apartments, readying himself for the hours of tedious discussions they would surely be having.

By his side, Luna leant her head on the window, staring out at the bare trees and cloudy skies that dominated the landscape during winter. She seemed lost in her thoughts, and he settled next to her with a book, dressed in his decorated robes although missing his accessories for the time being. They were within one of the smaller rooms, just the two of them with maids guarding the door from the outside, as Harry had wished for privacy. His friend, despite being a royal concubine, could not stand crowding any more than she had at Hogwarts.

After a little while, Luna shifted, blinking her eyes rapidly. It drew Harry's attention, and slowly, he closed his book, giving his friend his full attention as she stared at him intensely.

"Luna?" Harry probed gently, watching as her eyelids fluttered a few more times, before settling, her blue eyes losing the sheen of mist that had covered them.

"Two." She breathed out gently, reaching for his hand. He drew in a sharp breath, understanding before she looked towards his stomach, the bump there already visible. It had only been a few days since his scan, he had told no one, only his Healer knew of his twins' existence, yet Luna seemed certain. Hesitantly, he nodded.

"Yes," Harry whispered, cracking a smile. "I know."

Reaching forward, her hand steady, she hovered it over his bump, and Harry drew her hand to rest on it. She smiled, fond and gentle. "The first will be your star. Small, but bright, and so strong. The second your serpent. Larger than life, protective." Luna's tone was firm, and she met his eyes with a nod. "They will be strong."

Clasping a hand over her own, Harry stared down at his stomach with wonder, Luna's words ringing in his ears.

3rd February 2000- Thursday

They were in France bright and early on the morning of the third, and Harry sat at Bellatrix's side, already dead tired. Greeting after greeting, banquet after banquet, he was beginning to tire of them, and they had only just left the British Isles for mainland Europe. He was already regretting his previous enthusiasm to attend, having not known it was going to be quite as boring as it was.

The French Minister was a pompous man who put the Welsh one to shame, flaunting himself like a peacock- except, he didn't stand out quite as much as he'd hoped, far paling in comparison to the Emperor and his harem.

"Ah, Your Highness, you are looking as radiant as ever, may I say. Your golden hair of woven gold, your bright blue eyes as breathtakingly clear as the sky, you are an angel on earth! May I congratulate you on your promotion to Consort, and the birth of your third child? His Majesty obviously adores you, It is clear for all to see, and how could he not!" The Minister lavished Penny with praises as they sat at the main table, the man waving his hands about theatrically as he did so, drawing unsavoury attention.

In between them, Thomas looked amused as he ate, and Penny was blushing as she twirled her 'woven gold' hair around her finger, sending coy looks towards the Emperor.

The Consort, sounding demure, giggled. "Thank you, Minister Garnier. Your compliments are most appreciated. His Majesty chose me for my beauty, and perhaps my intelligence as well."

The man blushed, and Harry spluttered a little into his glass at the blatant attraction the man was exhibiting to the woman whilst sitting next to her husband. "You honour me, Your Highness. I see every reason to comment on your marvellous beauty-"

The Emperor's goblet thudded onto the table then, cutting the Minister off, and the man wisely shut up after that, cowed under the man's blank stare.

The man's attention now on her, Penny giggled yet again, and Harry's mouth fell open at the blatant informality she was displaying as she wrapped herself around one of the Emperor's arms, blinking up at him. "Your Majesty, Minister Garnier is rather bold, is he not?"

The man hummed, staring down at her with lidded eyes. "As are you, Primary Consort. One would think you weren't sat at your husband's side, to accept such flirtation so readily." His tone was light, but there was an undercurrent of darkness within it, showing especially within his eyes.

Rearing back a little, sensing his hidden ire, Penny bowed her head. "My apologies, Your Majesty. I simply did not know how else to respond. The Minister is such an important man, how could I reject his sincere compliments and jeopardise your relations with France?"

The Minister, at her praise, puffed himself up, opening his mouth.

"Powerful?" The Emperor scoffed. "You jest. If you do not wish to accept advances from another, don't do so. Your position is second only to mine as my Primary Spouse."

Penny brightened at the Emperor's public acknowledgement of her powerful position, smiling as she picked up her goblet. "Of course, Your Majesty!"

To the man's other side, the French Minister deflated, staring at the man's back with terrified eyes.

6th February 2000- Sunday

Erin exited his temporary office, a skip in her step and a bright smile on her face. Behind her, her maids were shuffling after her, both keeping close to support her if she stumbled in her daze.

She had finally decided to inform the Emperor of her pregnancy, now that she was assured of their continued health at her most recent scan. Erin was now eleven weeks and four days along, further along than Brother Harry surely, even though he had announced his long before she gained the courage to do so.

In fact, after weeks of mulling over his announcement, Erin had decided that she needed to announce hers before twelve weeks, despite her previous reluctance.

Her previous pregnancy ending in such a disastrous and painful way weighed heavily on her mind since this pregnancy had been unveiled, and Erin was unendingly cautious. She couldn't allow this baby to face the same fate.

She stroked over the small swell of her stomach, a fond smile forming. She was ready for another baby. Her Serina was older now, having turned six, and it had been far too long since she had proved herself to the Emperor. Their main purpose, of course, was to bear him heirs. The fact that most of the concubines were childless baffled her, as their objective was unfilled, yet they remained so haughty.

Shaking off those thoughts, Erin focused on herself once more.

Finally, she was pregnant yet again, and carrying this baby well. Erin would ensure this baby would make it to birth, and give her Serina a true sibling, one that would assist her attainment of the throne once the Emperor saw how smart her daughter truly was.

20th February 2000- Sunday

They had finally entered the North American portion of the tour, and their first destination was the United States, one of the most anticipated destinations- politically wise.

The Emperor headed their company, a dashing figure in black and gold that drew every speck of attention towards himself. Harry and the other Consorts directly followed behind him with the rest close on their heels, the man's presence invigorating and attracting.

Evana had joined them for the day, having expressed interest in meeting the presidents of the United States. As her wedding date drew ever closer, she was becoming more and more involved in political matters- a queen-to-be once her future husband ascended the Italian throne. She was by the Emperor's right side, a space usually reserved for the Head of the Harem. Penny had instead been pushed back, so she was standing beside Harry, internally fuming as she stared longingly at the man's back.

Harry, too, watched on as they came to a halt, Thomas' imposing form towering over the congregation ahead of them. It took every ounce of restraint to pull his eyes away from him, especially when they began to lower, entranced by the patterns of gold adorning his robes.

The President of MACUSA was standing next to her Muggle counterpart, a surprise as usually the parties were split, with the Magical Minister meeting them first, followed by the Muggle President.

The man beside her was a blond man of average stature, straight-backed with a no-nonsense expression on his face. Harry disliked him immediately, the way the man's eyes drifted over them as if they were dolls in a display case sending chills up his spine, but kept his thoughts to himself as the muggle bowed deeply to the Emperor.

"Your Imperial Majesty," The man rasped, his voice surprising in comparison to his youthful appearance. "I am honoured to welcome you to our great nation. May the relations between His Majesty and our country last for many centuries to come."

"President," The Emperor accepted his cordialities, his expression revealing nothing of his thoughts. "And President Knowles."

The woman, now acknowledged, greeted the man amicably. "Your Majesty, I am delighted that you have deigned to visit despite the weather conditions. The people are most honoured to welcome you."

Nodding, the man shook her hand, which she scrambled to clasp, awe in her eyes. "Of course, this is a world tour, after all. And there are matters I must discuss with you both, although separately."

They dispersed soon after that, the meetings occurring before the banquet would take place later in the evening. It was to allow the concubines to dress in their finest robes, which had been planned out according to the country they were visiting. For the United States, Harry had chosen robes of white, with the merged crest of his houses adorning its back in yellow. Paired with citrine jewellery, his rank as a Conosrt was obvious, but much less jarring than the pure yellow or gold the other Consorts decided on.

As Secondary Consort, the emphasis of his position as the Secondary spouse to the Emperor needed to be bolder. Now, Harry was directly competing with Penny, and the woman's agitation seemed to have increased sharply after his promotion earlier in the month. She had become snappier, quicker to rebuke him and make snide comments.

The daily meetings had become scarce since the beginning of the tour, now one every few days, so Harry wasn't forced to interact with her all too much. A blessing, especially since his pregnancy was becoming more and more obvious as the weeks passed, and he entered his thirteenth week.

He hoped that their time within the United States would be as uneventful as many other visits had been. Although, the muggle President, perhaps, would make that difficult, as he would later learn.

The door closed behind them, clicking shut as the Muggle locked it. On the other side, he felt his Knights shift, their magic revealing their anxiety with being separated from him. Invisible as they were, this meeting needed to be witness-free.

Thomas glided towards the desk situated overlooking a splendid view, settling himself in the plush seat behind it. He took in the papers strewn across the desk his haphazard piles, capturing glimpses of words here and there. Of course, nothing incriminating would be left in plain sight. He was glad those who despised him were at least minutely intelligent. Gesturing without breaking his consideration of the paperwork, Thomas ordered the muggle to take the seat before him.

The man was stiffly standing by the door still, shifting from foot to foot in a highly suspicious way. Calmly, Thomas observed him, his arm dropping from its place under his chin to grasp the wand in his robe pocket.

"Are you not going to obey me, President?"

There was no response from the man as he continued to stare at him, and Thomas tutted as if responding to a misbehaving child.

"I am a rather impatient man, I must admit. I am being far more lenient than perhaps I should. But, I will allow you another chance to listen to me. Now, sit." Turning back to the scenery, Thomas stared at the snow falling heavily, and despite his bored facade, a part of his attention remained on the insolent, idiotic muggle, who had placed a hand within his pocket at Thomas' dismissal.

The man slowly slid his hand out, and Thomas watched out of the corner of his eye as the man brazenly lifted his gun to point it directly at his head. The President had a smug, satisfied look on his face, gleeful as he stared down the barrel at him, confident enough to begin speaking before shooting.

He barely refrained from rolling his eyes but deemed it a plebian action. No, this was perhaps one of the most entertaining events that had occurred on this tour yet. And Thomas had thought perhaps that the French Minister would remain the Minister to irritate him the most.

"I received a little advice from a dear friend of mine. He told me, that for all the magic you hold, a bullet is fast enough to avoid any spell you may attempt to cast." The Muggle spoke, a condescending drawl to his words. He took a step closer, eyes shining with anticipation. "He said it would be the best way to get rid of you, to finally free my country from you and your freakish fiends!" He spat the word, sneering. "Magic has no place in America. I'm going to enjoy this, you bastard!"

"Perhaps," Thomas drawled, staring at the gun in the man's hands, his eyes not leaving the object as the muggle steadied himself.

The gun clicked, and the bullet shot at him, faster than his eyes could see. Thomas had no time to blink before the bullet was upon him, staring as it approached his head. He could make out the bloodthirsty grin that had overtaken the President's, and savoured the expression, before the bullet slowed to a halt in mid-air.

It spun lazily for no more than a moment, before reversing.

Silence fell over the room as it hit the wall opposite, cracking it with a dulled thud, and Thomas gleefully stared down the now sweating, squealing man who was staring at the bullet

hole just above his head.

"I-I-" The man stuttered, staggering backwards, gaping like a fish.

"Perhaps it may hit." Thomas continued, leaning back in his chair. "If I had no warning, of course. And even then, I would never leave myself so defenceless. Are you an imbecile?"

The man fell to his knees, eyes wide, pupils shaking as Thomas' magic swelled with his contained fury. "Please, Your Majesty! I was only doing what I was told! I-I have nothing against you, I assure you!"

Standing slowly, Thomas made his way leisurely over to the man's sobbing, shivering form, tutting as the President shrank beneath his gaze. With a smooth movement, he slid his wand out of his holster, lifting it with clear movements. The man lifted his head, only to shrink back as he locked gazes with him, eyes dilating as his entire form trembled.

"Plea-Please! Please, Your Majesty! I-I didn't, I-I-"

"Crucio." He muttered, watching boredly as the Muggle keeled over with a squeal, already frothing at the mouth after only a few scant seconds. The unforgivable curse of torture, Thomas had found, was far too much for such an ordinary creature to handle. Thomas loomed over his viciously writhing form, watching as the man's eyes dulled as his mind gave out under the intense torture, and smirked.

He dove into that cracked and open mind and peeled from it all the information he had expected to find, and so much more.

This global conspiracy was, in fact, quite large. His enemy had been thorough.

But not thorough enough.

1st March 2000- Wednesday

The Harem had remained back at the Court on the first, as it was the first of the month, and there were important announcements to be made. The Emperor was in Senegal, on the third day of the tour in Africa. He would be visiting several other countries nearby in the afternoon, which some of them would be joining him for. Harry was remaining in the Court, however, to spend a full day with his daughter, who seemed on the verge of a major development.

"His Majesty is delighted to announce the pregnancy of Noble Erin, whom he promotes to the rank of Secondary Noble." Penny smiled, looking tired. As the Emperor's Primary Spouse, she was subject to much more attention than the rest of the Harem, as the mindless masses seemed to think that the highest-ranking spouse was the shoo-in for Empress. That couldn't have been further from the truth, as the Emperor currently showed no interest in promoting any of the Consorts, Penny included, to even the rank of Noble Consort. "Please, let me congratulate you, Sister. I am overjoyed for you, especially as you have waited for so long for another child."

Erin smiled giddily as she accepted congratulations from the other concubines around her, the simpering and pandering already starting. Harry had disappointed them by ignoring their attempts, not even entertaining their false flattering.

The interest surrounding his pregnancy seemed to have finally dimmed down in the two months since his announcement, his lack of flaunting, paired with the two weeks he had spent isolated from the Harem and the distraction of the tour taking much of the attention away from him. Harry was glad for it, the lack of whispers and stares settling his mind and allowing him to focus on his daughter and his twins without the overarching worry of taking a fall 'on accident', or perhaps suffering yet another poisoning. Anya tested all his drinks and food these days, and he used a detection spell on everything he and his daughter consumed.

And with Erin's pregnancy, Harry would hopefully have a few more weeks of peace before he began to show in earnest, already larger at a few days passed fourteen weeks with his twins than he had been at twenty with Alsephina.

Erin tried to keep the smirk off of her face when Jasmine congratulated her earnestly, simply smiling back at her, before turning to accept congratulations from Cedric.

She was now the Secondary Noble, a position so close to the rank of Concubine that she could almost taste her impending graduation from the lower ranks.

It wasn't the promotion her friend had earned when she had announced her pregnancy, but Erin had yet to give birth to her child. When she did, surely, they would be on the same level once more, and they could forget their discrepancies, putting the last few months of hostility and coldness behind them for good.

But Erin couldn't let go of her ire just yet. Jasmine was still a rank higher than her, and until she was also a Concubine, she could not find it within herself to make amends.

At fifteen weeks, there wasn't much of a belly to flaunt to the jealous stares observing her, yet she still puffed herself up and preened under the attention.

Yet, she hadn't joined the harem yesterday. She knew the harem could be dangerous, they had already taken four babies from her, her third pregnancy the only one she'd ever carried to term due to her hasty announcement of the gender soon after the formal statement. Serina had been born without issue, her gender the only thing that had saved her.

She had lost her first at five weeks back in 1985, two days after announcing. Her second had made it to eight weeks, but a fall in May 1991 had ended in a miscarriage. Her fourth, a baby only known to her and her maids had made it to a mere four weeks, and her fifth and most recent baby still rested heavily on her mind. Erin was still a week away from the stage she lost her son, the only baby other than Serina she had carried for long enough to know the gender of.

Clasping a hand over her belly, she flinched at Bellatrix's questioning. "And how many weeks are you? I assume you informed His Majesty in prudent time?"

"Yes, I told His Majesty in early February. I am fifteen weeks."

She blinked as Brother Harry spoke gently to her, once they were leaving the hall. She had endured a full hour of questioning from the other concubines, internally seething that they seemed to have forgotten she wasn't a first-time mother. They were curious, staring at her stomach, proclaiming that the way she was carrying seemed to point to a daughter. As if she was showing enough for them to tell.

"You are further along than I am then." He spoke, smiling slightly.

"Pardon?" Erin questioned, forgetting all formalities at that moment.

Brother Harry, however, unlike some of the other official spouses, didn't bat an eyelid. "In your pregnancy. You are fifteen weeks, I am still within my fourteenth."

Erin hummed, looking down at his stomach. She had thought she was, although perhaps not by as much as she had assumed. He appeared larger than she was, but perhaps that was due to this being his second pregnancy in quick succession.

Brother Harry was admittedly a little intimidating. He had joined the Harem not even three years ago, yet he was already the Secondary Consort, the father of the Seventeenth Princess, and carrying his second child so soon. She wished him well with his pregnancy, she really did, yet carrying children to term back-to-back had a considerably low success rate within the Harem. In fact, only the late Noble Consort Evangeline and Penny had done so before.

The concubines didn't allow for His Majesty's attention and favour to remain unpunished, after all.

She smiled at him gently. Despite his high position, the man in front of her was only nineteen, competing with Consorts a decade or two older than himself. At thirty-six, she felt strange for a moment, discussing pregnancy with a man nearly two decades her junior. "Our

babies have the chance of being born very closely then, perhaps even on the same day." Erin laughed with him, feeling something twinge within her chest.

Something was telling her that wouldn't be the case.

12th March 2000- Sunday

On the first day back from the tour, Harry, in a move unlike himself, ordered for a section of his garden to be prepared to receive guests.

His Consort Palace sported an absolutely massive garden, incomparable to the one he'd had as a Concubine, and it made his Noble garden seem laughably small. At its centre stood a small Pavilion, where he and those Harry had invited would be taking tea, with a cushioned area surrounded by gates set up for Alsie to crawl around in.

Luckily for Harry, he had been present when his daughter had begun to crawl a week ago, just passed the seventh-month mark. Now that she had passed that milestone, all his daughter seemed to wish to do was escape his eyesight and strain his heart with panic, so the acquisition of a playpen had been the first agenda on his list.

She was rolling about in it at the moment as they waited for their final guest to arrive, content to self-soothe, enamoured by the clouds passing overhead and the multitude of toys scattered about. Kia was hovering over her, and Tabitha wasn't far away, two of his most trusted maids.

"Brother Harry, thank you dearly for inviting me!" Cedric greeted him as he arrived, the last to do so. The man was smiling brightly and went in for a hug.

With the spring months finally upon them, the weather was agreeable, and it lightened his mood enough that Harry replied with his own enthusiasm.

"Of course, Brother. We haven't talked for a while, and over tea is the best setting to do so."

They weren't alone, however. Harry had invited all those he could tentatively call his 'allies', a pitifully small collection.

Luna was sat on one side of the table, and Regulus on the other. Apart from them, only the maids they'd brought along and those he had watching over his daughter were present.

Luna had already eaten half the plate of cookies Maia had prepared for them, and Harry grimaced internally as he met Regulus' bland stare.

Cedric continued to babble, turning to Regulus occasionally to question about him and his daughter. Luckily, it seemed his uncle was receptive to the conversation, as he humoured the man, although not without shooting Harry a suffering look.

"And how is your second pregnancy progressing, Brother Harry?" Cedric smiled at him, and Harry couldn't help but tense despite the innocent line of questioning. He was incredibly protective over the tiny lives growing inside him, enough that even the man's attention set his instincts off. He was now sixteen weeks, and very obviously showing, so comments were to be expected, but it still internally grated him.

He tried to relax his posture to appear as if he hadn't tensed, but Regulus seemed to have noted his defensiveness already. "It is progressing well, thank you for your interest, Brother. They are healthy, and so am I."

"That's wonderful!" The man cheered, his smile as sunny as ever. "It is so wonderful that you are carrying His Majesty's child once again, and so soon. It seems as if it was just yesterday that we were both Nobles, discussing over tea in the Noble Garden. Now, you're a Consort, and well on your way to giving His Majesty another child." His smile changed then, turning conspiratory, and he leaned in to whisper into Harry's ear, who refused to flinch back despite his discomfort. " *Do you know if you're having a boy or a girl yet?* "

Harry drew back, frowning. "No. His Majesty has requested we do not, and I will respect that, especially knowing his reasons."

Cedric was still sporting that grin. "Aw, Brother, but everyone else finds out. Some keep it a secret just to themselves, but haven't you heard? Apparently, Sister Erin is having a girl. She and Sister Jasmine were talking, and Sister Jasmine is so excited for her. The others are relieved, despite their constant chatter that His Majesty needs more sons. I wonder if you'll have one, you've already given him a daughter, I'm sure he'll appreciate a son as well."

He shook his head. "I won't, it will be a surprise. What's the need? I'm going to have a baby in the end anyway."

After having shared the news of his pregnancy with the Emperor, and therefore the Harem, so early on, perhaps the fact that he was carrying twins, at least, could remain his secret for just a little while longer. Harry would tell Thomas eventually, of course, but the other concubines?

Well, perhaps Harry wanted to blindside them further. And seeing their faces when they walked into the room and saw a second baby would be priceless.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

I think I was a little too heavy on the hint of twins in the last chapter, most of you seemed to figure it out ^-^ But, genders are under wraps for now, although in the Additions chapter I'll be posting in a little while, their appearances will be revealed :)

3/5 of my essays are complete by now, and I've got 2 of them back already :) Got a 65% on my first and a 75% on my second, which I think is good for my first term at Uni ^-^ Hopefully, I do well in all of them :)

The Selection of 2000 is coming up soon, and I'm debating what POV to follow for it. I'm thinking one of the participants, one of those that is chosen, so we can get an outsider view on Harry who isn't a concubine :)

Also, I'm really hoping the development of Alsephina is okay, I've never been around anyone under the age of three so babies and development isn't really my expertise, so I'm relying on google and common sense mostly :/

Did you like the Tom POV? I'm trying to slowly reveal whats going on outside of Harry's bubble as the story goes on, but I'm so used to writing Harry Pov by now ^-^

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Chapter 39: [Conspiracy]

Chapter Notes

Word Count: 5.2k

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

14th March 2000- Tuesday

Seven and a half months after her birth, Alsephina was taking solids alongside her bottles, and it made Harry sigh in both relief and regret that she was advancing so swiftly. He couldn't but think that he was perhaps subconsciously pushing her to grow up faster, due to the arrival of his twins. He knew it was detrimental to think in such a way, but he couldn't help it.

She had just finished gumming at the small amount of food he had placed in front of her, not truly having eaten anything, but she seemed to understand the concept now.

He picked her up with a groan, smiling at the giggles this elicited. She wasn't truly that heavy, but she was definitely growing, looking nothing like she had even a couple of months before.

He carried her into the living room, noting the strange lack of maids dogging his heels as he walked from the dining room to his more private living room, eyes flitting from side to side.

Entering the room, Harry shut the door with a little more pressure than needed, his eyes widening.

Thomas was sat on the sofa, and Harry startled at his unexpected presence, tucking his daughter closer to his chest.

"Your Majesty," Harry breathily exclaimed, his heart beating furiously within his chest for a number of reasons. "I was not expecting you."

The man, lounged back on the sofa and sipping from a mug of tea, looked so domestic as he flashed Harry and their daughter a fond smile that he almost physically staggered back from the shock of it. Sasha was curled at his feet, resting peacefully, her large body heaving with every heavy breath. She didn't even blink an eye open at their entrance, content that the man was no threat to either of them.

Thomas hummed, meeting his eyes. "I had a spare moment, I thought to come and visit you and our daughter, and to see how your pregnancy is progressing. You are well?"

"I am, thank you for your concern." Harry smiled, approaching the man. He settled next to his husband with a little sigh, already feeling the weight of his stomach at just sixteen weeks. Sixteen weeks with twins, something he hadn't informed the man of yet.

Harry bit his lip, suddenly anxious. Unexpectedly, a warm thumb brushed itself over his lips, smoothing over the area he had bitten. He met the Emperor's searching gaze with a guilt-ridden expression, and the man sighed.

"Harry," Thomas murmured, his voice low and calm. "What is it you wish to tell me?"

"We're having twins." He whispered, licking his lips shakily. He had forgotten that the man's thumb was still pressed on them, and his tongue brushed it. Leaning back with a blush, Harry looked up to gauge the man's reaction.

Thomas was frozen, staring down at him with such an expressive face that it startled Harry. The man was usually so composed and unshakable.

"Twins?" The man whispered, sounding shocked. Harry nodded, biting his lip to keep his smile from growing. His husband's eyes were practically sparkling, having shifted to stare down at his curved stomach.

"Twins. I found out a few weeks ago. I'm sorry I didn't tell you, I really wanted to, but..." Harry shrugged. "I liked keeping it to myself for just a little while. And I wanted to surprise you, I got you a-"

He was engulfed in a warm embrace before he could turn and fetch the gift, gasping lightly as the man's arms wrapped tightly around his waist. Between them, Alsephina giggled happily, reaching up to bat at her father's face.

The embrace was warm and steady. With their daughter in between them, and their twins growing healthily, Harry felt complete despite never having realised he was missing anything in the first place.

It was a while before the man drew back, his expression changing for a moment, before reverting back to fond as he brushed a hand over Harry's slightly rounded stomach. Harry noticed it, tilting his head.

"What is wrong?" He asked, and Thomas glanced up, an emotion flashing through his red eyes.

"I was thinking of the reactions of the rest of my Harem. They won't be... pleased, to say the least. However, they may be as displeased as they like, I won't let any harm come to you." He spoke quietly, so as not to startle their daughter, who was staring up at them with a bright smile still, happy to be within her parents' embrace.

"Then let them find out about our twins at their birth." Harry sent the Emperor a conspiring grin. "It's hard to hide a pregnancy, hiding twins is easily explained. Besides, I want to see their faces when they see both of them."

The man laughed deeply, staring into his eyes. "Perfect."

Later on in the day, Harry was on a walk of the grounds surrounding his Palace, wanting a bit of fresh air and to escape the constant watchful gazes of his maids. He had brought Enid and Ellie with him, knowing the both of them were far more outwardly relaxed in comparison to his personal maids, whom he had informed of his twins once the Emperor had left.

Rounding the corner, his eyes widened as he nearly collided with Dahlia, stopping himself just short. The girl's eyes widened as she grabbed hold of Daphne's arm, letting out a tiny gasp. Both took a step back, and there were a few moments where the three stood in awkward silence.

"Consort Potter," Daphne spoke coldly, and Harry broke eye contact with Dahlia to look at her.

"If my name is too much of a mouthful, have the decency to be polite, Attendant Greengrass. I may take offence." He responded silkily, raising an eyebrow when her lips pursed. Neither of them bowed, despite his hint.

"We are heading for lunch with some of our fellow Attendants." Dahlia unexpectedly announced, meeting his eyes again. "Would you like to join us?"

" *Dahlia!* " Daphne hissed into her ear, appearing aghast. " *Why would you-* "

Harry tilted his head. "I would. However, I won't be eating, as I have already had lunch with His Majesty."

"The rest of us just want to see you." Yet again, she didn't speak his name nor one of his titles, a passive-aggressive yet technically valid way to not address him properly. Dahlia was smiling, but not acting overly concerned whether he joined them or not. "You've been rather standoffish with the other members lately. We are worried about you, when you're in such a... delicate state, you should rely on your Brother's and Sister's."

"I have been preoccupied." Harry raised an eyebrow. "And rather drained. I cannot entertain even my closest friends most days. Luckily for you, you have caught me at a good time."

Harry linked arms with Enid as he followed after them, realising they were leading him to the Pavillion of Raining Flowers. Good, an open space such as a Pavillion was much preferable to being stuck in the Attendant Palace and its grounds.

As they ascended the steps, Harry realised that Dahlia had been understating when she said 'some' of the Attendants would be attending. Only Penelope and Merula were absent, and around the table sat Theo and Zacharias next to each other. On the opposite side, Adrian, Cassius and Lukas were staring as they approached, facing the stairs.

The Third First-Class spoke, sounding slightly affronted. "You didn't inform us that Consort Pot- Slytherin-Potter-Black would be joining us, Sisters." Lukas raised an eyebrow, staring at the women, who sat next to Theodore.

Daphne sniffed. "We ran into... Brother Harry, Dahlia invited him."

"How could I not?" Dahlia demured, waving over a maid to pour her a tea. "Brother Harry is rather elusive, It would be respectable to reassure our other Sister's and Brothers of his continued wellbeing."

Harry sat at the head of the table, noting that it had been left free, and also noticing the sudden switch up of how Dahlia and Daphne were addressing him. Sighing, he pushed away the plate that was placed in front of him by a maid, rejecting her offer to fill the teacup as well.

He was here to socialise enough that no one could disparage him for being antisocial. Harry had already heard rumours that something was up, and he didn't wish to fan them further.

"I'm glad to could join us, Brother," Theo spoke up, meeting his eyes. "How has your morning been?"

Folding his hands, Harry settled himself back as much as he dared. "It has been well. His Majesty visited this morning to spend time with our daughter. Have you been well?"

He could see the Attendants freeze in his peripheral vision at the mention of the Emperor, but kept his attention on the only Attendant he moderately liked.

Theo, noticing his bluntness, smirked. "I have, thank you for your concern. Although, I can't help but feel jealous at your mention of the Emperor. His Majesty visits you often?"

Harry hummed. "Occasionally, although not without prior notice as today. I was quite shocked."

Lukas made a noise in the back of his throat, drawing Harry's attention. "I must admit, you have been rather lax with your duties since becoming a Consort, Brother."

"What duties have I been neglecting?" There was genuine confusion in his voice. "His Majesty and I have enjoyed a flourishing relationship since the birth of our daughter. My duty is being fulfilled, I assure you."

He scoffed. "Don't be coy. Your duty to us, the other concubines. You are supposed to support us and ensure that we fulfil our purpose here as well. To produce royal children."

Harry smiled, a condescending thing. "Do you want me to hold your hand and lead you into His Majesty's bed, Brother? I had no idea that was my 'duty'. I never got such support?" He laughed at their scandalised expressions. "I doubt the Emperor would be all too pleased to see me dragging one of you in. Perhaps you can interest His Majesty using your own merit?"

The looks they gave him made Harry laugh further, standing. "Whilst this has been amusing, despite the short time I have spent here, I really must leave. I believe I have offended some of you with my truthfulness. Good day."

Harry smiled down at them, uncaring if they were offended. They were in a public enough setting that if anything untoward occurred, it would be traced right back to those at the table. They were a bunch of Slytherins, mostly. Even they wouldn't do something so blatant and idiotic. So, they were left to seethe.

" *You think you're too good for me now ?*" Dahlia hissed into his ear as he passed, reaching up to clasp his robe in her hand. She looked flustered, possibly due to his quick departure from the situation, an insult to her invitation. Not that it truly mattered, he was high enough in the ranks that her invitations were easily rejected.

It didn't take much thinking at all to find the answer. "Yes, I do."

Had his words been rash? Yes. Could he have continued the conversation smoothly without slighting them? Also yes. But if Slytherin's hated and took action for anything more than an insult, it was a show of weakness. Taking those insults and insinuations from concubines so far down the totem pole would have been suicide for his authority.

And shutting down their perceived self-importance felt good.

18th March 2000- Saturday

Mirroring the scene of over two and a half years ago, once more, the Harem was called upon to pray for the health of Noble Emma, as she had turned for the worst.

However, this time around, there were far more people within the Hall of Worship in contrast to previously, as if many could tell that this time, there was far less chance of the Noble pulling through. Her illness had taken a turn for the worst, and the situation was severe.

Princess Sylvania was absent, by her mother's side as she perhaps drew her last breaths, although Harry was unsure how the situation was progressing. No updates had come in over an hour now, and no one had spoken a word since.

The door to the great hall opened then, and in trudged in an Eunuch, dressed in solid black. The implications of the colour revealed the news before he announced it solemnly.

"It is with a heavy heart that His Majesty announces the tragic passing of The Noble Emma Vanity, Mother to Second Princess Sylvania Slytherin, loyal concubine to His Imperial Majesty. His Majesty commands that there are to be three weeks of official mourning in respect of the Late Noble, and requests his concubines to return to their Palace once they have concluded their prayers in respect for the grieving Princess and family."

No one spoke, although there were plenty of sounds of choked gasps and half-smothered, grief-stricken cries. Harry made a noise of hurt, thoughts whirling as he thought of the woman they had just lost.

Emma, who'd been a concubine since the very beginning of the Harem. Emma, who was a lovely, thoughtful woman, a kind figure amongst the vultures she shared the Court with for so many years. Who was now dead, after many long years of suffering.

Who left behind a daughter, the Second Princess, who would surely blame herself for this.

25th March 2000- Saturday

"I declare that, in honour of her faithful, steadfast service, twenty-three years that she spent within my Harem, Emma Vanity is to assume the post-humorous title of Concubine. At the wish of our daughter, Emma is to be buried within the royal cemetery, and a tree is to be planted within her palace garden to commemorate her life as my Noble."

There were sniffles from the front rows- the only time anyone was placed in a position higher than all the royal concubines- and a woman was sobbing as the Emperor spoke clearly to the gathered, dressed in pure black.

It was a sombre affair, set in the Hall of Worship- a place Emma had decided her funeral was to be held when she had first fallen ill after birthing her daughter.

"Emma was a lovely woman, who stood by my side for countless years, she will be remembered fondly. And her daughter, her pride, will carry on her mother's legacy for many years to come."

The Emperor placed a hand upon her coffin, a beautiful oak covered with patterns of her family crest and the Slytherin insignia. It was closed, upon the request of Emma herself, who hadn't wished for her family to gaze upon her worn body.

The man appeared to hesitate for a moment, making an aborted movement to lean down, before straightening and turning to face the bereaved. "It is time."

Emma's family stood, a small, huddled group who made their way up hesitantly to stand before the Emperor, who stepped to the side so that they could say their last goodbyes before she was interred into the royal cemetery.

1st April 2000- Saturday

Usually, on the first of the month, there would be some sort of delight in the concubines, eager to discover if they had, perhaps, caught the eye of His Majesty, and risen in the ranks. Or perhaps, if they were unlucky, angered and annoyed him enough that he demoted you, to the glee of the rest.

However, the meeting was a sombre one as the hole in the ranks that Emma Vanity had left, after over twenty years of service, was forcefully closed. No longer was the position of Third Noble void, but replaced by Cedric, whose promotion was earned simply by the death of their Sister. Luna took Cedric's previous rank of Fourth Noble with a blank expression.

They didn't smile and thank the Emperor for promoting them but simply nodded instead, accepting that the Harem would move on as always, the mourning period coming to a quick end.

No one spoke as they exited the Hall and went their separate ways, still prohibited from gathering outside of the morning meeting. The Court was quiet, even as the marriage of the First Princess, the Tournament and the Selection dawned ever closer.

9th April 2000- Sunday

As the marriage of his first daughter drew ever closer, Thomas was flooded with paperwork and increased appointments that needed his personal presence. There were many things to plan, last-minute decisions to agree on, and a considerable number of people to speak to. The Royal Family of Italy were exceedingly willing to listen to all of his daughter's requests, this marriage being perhaps one of the largest occasions the country would see for decades. It would elevate their status beyond that of other royals, and set a precedent for his future children's marriages. No doubt, there would be an influx of contracts and requests for courtship from further royal families around the world for his older daughters in the coming years. He had already received one presumptuous letter from the German Royals, considering his second daughter, who had just lost her mother, since she was turning seventeen later in the month. Their suit had been immediately rejected, and a scathing response sent.

The quickly approaching date of the World Tournament was also on Thomas' mind, and whilst most of the participants had already been chosen by their countries, he now needed to make the choice of which thirty-two would make it to the stage.

The ones who did needed to be the best, of course, but they also needed to be interesting. The public didn't want any ordinary, powerful witch or wizard, they wanted drama, and most of all, they needed an underdog to root for.

It would be best for him to ensure they enjoyed the tournament to the fullest, so that he could set into motion plans for further tournaments every five or so years.

However, before that, there was the matter of his next Selection, which would be occurring in the midst of the Tournament.

Thomas had been debating its continuation for months now, seeing little reason to add to his Harem when he only truly spent time with one of his concubines, and met with several others only on the askance of his Council.

However, his advisors had made a solid debate for the continuation of the Selection. He had lost two concubines since the last in 1997, and his upper ranks were filling out, leaving the bottom ones sparse. His longest-held members were also ageing now, with Bellatrix the oldest at forty-eight. And Thomas lacked any true interest in any concubine he'd recently added, barring Harry.

His increased and focused interest in the man had made his advisors wary, and they had been mentioning Harry's rise and the attention he lavished him in more often as of late. They had urged him to 'spend time with' another of his concubines, most favouring his other Consorts, most specifically Penny and Regulus. Bellatrix seemed to have lost her value in their minds, especially after the birth of their daughter. She had fulfilled her purpose, granted not to their desired degree, and they had stated that she was growing older and there were concerns about her carrying further children.

Some seemed to believe it was the Black family ties Thomas was so interested in, regarding Harry, having seen the results of such a union within Delphina and Alsephina. The re-emergence of metamorphosis talents and Parseltongue had sent his advisors into a flurry, and many were congratulating and incredibly inquisitive about his Secondary Consorts' quick pregnancy, despite their hesitance.

However, truly, Thomas was aware of his intense interest in the man. He wasn't oblivious, he could see that he was treating Harry, viewing him differently from the others. He was simply biding his time, watching for the right moment. Time would tell if the man was truly the one Thomas would keep by his side for eternity.

The faint noise of footsteps drew his attention, and he glanced up to see one of his Knights patiently standing at the door, bowing.

"You have news?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. The new Muggle President of the United States has finally been selected, and she has sent her deepest apologies for the wrongdoings of her predecessor."

Thomas hummed, tapping his quill into the ink pot. "Invite her to the Court next week, I wish to meet her for myself, to make sure she doesn't repeat her predecessor's mistakes."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

16th April 2000- Sunday

Harry watched on as Prince Alexis crawled around on the ground after his sister, chuckling to himself as his daughter stuck her tongue out at her brother.

The boy, true to his word, had asked the Emperor to spend time with Harry and his daughter, and this was the siblings' sixth 'play date'.

Harry was content to allow the boy to visit as many times as he wished, and it was lovely to watch the Prince interact so fondly and gently with his baby sister.

However, his visits had attracted the attention of the other harem members, to the point where it was beginning to be brought up within the morning meetings. Penny had urged him to 'take caution' in case he was accused of 'influencing' the Prince.

Looking his way, the boy grinned. "And soon, we'll get to play with another new sibling!" He spoke happily to Alsephina, whose eyebrows scrunched as she tried to understand his words. She was only eight months old, barely crawling and only just beginning to connect words to items in her mind. Still, the boy seemed content that the only response he was going to receive was an uninterested babble. "I hope it's a brother, I don't have many of those." He chirped. "And only Si will play with me, Eli just cries when we talk to him, and Aunt Penny says Ras is too young. I haven't seen my newest brother yet either, I heard it was Aunt Jasmine that gave birth to him. Uncle!" The boy turned to him once more, and Harry had to stifle his chuckle.

"Yes, Prince?"

"Can you have a boy, pretty please? I have too many sisters!"

He couldn't stop his laugh this time. "I'm afraid I don't have a choice in that regard, Your Highness."

The boy pouted, and leant down to whisper conspiratorily in his sister's ear, although Harry could hear every word. " *I still hope it's a brother !*"

24th April 2000- Monday

Harry heard a floorboard creak once more under the pressure of someone's feet, and he inched closer to the door, footsteps muffled with a spell. His cloak, brought with him into the Harem but kept tightly locked up in a compartment in his suitcase was wrapped tightly around him, hiding him from view. Long gone were the days he'd use the cloak for any little thing, such as sneaking around the hallways at night with his friends in Hogwarts. His Father had let him in on the importance the cloak held to the family, and he was unwilling to let any of the Harem members use the fact he could use it to slink around against him.

The door handle to his room twisted, and he readied himself, instincts on alert with the fact that his baby was sleeping behind the door at his back.

As it opened, Harry lifted his wand quicker than the other could react. " *Flipendo ! Incarcerous !*" He cast rapidly, and with a yelp, the intruder went down. It took a few seconds for him to recognise just who was sitting on his bedroom floor, entangled by layers of ropes and staring up at him with bleary, wide eyes. The spell hadn't knocked the man out, but he was clearly bewildered. "Nott?!" He whispered harshly, closing the door quickly before any of his maids were alerted to the noise.

The man on the floor struggled a little, huffing. Looking sheepish, he stared up at him. "Brother, I have a very good reason for this, I assure you."

"What the bloody hell are you doing in my Palace at-" Flicking his wand again, he conjured a clock face. "Three in the fucking morning!? What sort of explanation- No. Shut up. Let me think for a minute." Harry ground out as the man made to speak.

A growl from the other side of his bedroom had both of their heads turning in that direction, and Harry swore once more as he remembered that Sasha had been placed on guard duty outside of his daughter's room, connected to his own.

"Sash," Harry gently cooed, trying to break the Cats' attention away from where she was fixated on the squirming, tied-up figure of Theodore Nott, who was most certainly not supposed to be in his Palace, which the intelligent creature undoubtedly knew. "Easy now."

The cat let out a chuff, still glaring at the concubine.

The man wriggled in his bonds, staring at the now massive form of his Wampus cat. "I'm not here to harm you!" He assured, turning to Harry. "Really! There's- There's something I must tell you."

"Explain." Harry snapped, snagging a hold of Sasha's collar just in case she decided to turn the man into a snack. He flicked his wand, untying him.

Theo glared up at him for a moment, getting to his feet. "Did you have to tie me up like that?"

"Did you have to break in? Could this not wait until the morning?"

The man cracked his neck, still scowling. "No. It's about one of your maids- Jane?"

"June." Harry corrected, sending Sasha back to his daughter's door so he could focus his full attention on Theo. "I believe we should sit, although I apologise that I can't serve you tea." He snarked with a pointed look, noting how dark the sky was.

They sat on the sofa, and Theo watched Sasha warily for a few more moments before settling back.

"That cat is way too big to be a housepet." He muttered, but Harry ignored it.

"What about June is so important it couldn't wait?"

Theo met his eyes. "One of my maids spotted her recently exiting Consort Penny's Palace, with a small bag. She was unsure what was inside it, but she believes it was payment for information. Your maid seemed gleeful. Or it could have been some sort of poison, who knows?"

Sitting back, Harry frowned, folding his arms.

He knew June wasn't wholly loyal to him, however, she was also useful. Lola had yet to set up an information system and rapport with the other maids as effective as June's, so he had been keeping her close to him for a little longer. Harry knew she had been selling information to the other concubines, but hearing it spoken so blatantly made him hesitate. He was unsure what she was sharing, or what she knew.

What if she knew about the twins?

"Thank you for informing me-"

"That isn't all." Theo interrupted. "Consort Bellatrix has also been visiting Consort Penny's Palace far more frequently these days. Don't you think that's suspicious? Their interactions with each other outside of the morning meetings have been increasing since your promotion."

He had. It was hard not to notice how the pair seemed to have grown closer in the nearly three months since Harry had become Secondary Consort. They had never been antagonistic, not truly, but they hadn't been close. Now, they were visiting each other every few days, and were uniting against him in the daily meetings.

Their alliance, more than anything, could spell trouble for him.

Penny's emergence as another faction within the Harem had been a blessing when she had been promoted to Consort, as it weakened the existing factions, but now, it was detrimental to Harry. Especially as his own faction had been forming ever since he had proved himself a contender for the Emperor's favour.

However, not all was as dire as it seemed. Isla seemed to hold a favourable view of Harry, and Regulus and Bellatrix's relationship still seemed frosty despite Penny's affirmation that they should repair their relationship. She had been increasingly vocal about the Consorts presenting a united front in their weekly meetings, even attempting to grow closer to Harry.

The Consorts were a divided group, and that was the best situation Harry could hope for in such tumultuous times, especially since he had an inkling that with the birth of his twins, he'd be promoted once again.

26th April 2000- Wednesday.

Thomas, freed finally from the waves of paperwork and constant meetings he'd been subjected to- a downside he hadn't truly envisioned when he'd taken on the role in a moment of distrust- had made his way to the one Palace where there would be little politicking to handle.

The man hadn't expected his husband to be in a deep slumber, protectively guarded by his Wampus Cat and Head maid.

Thomas had settled instead, with a nod to the maid, on the sofa, scooping his daughter up into his arms from her place on the floor.

Alsephina had shrieked in joy at his appearance, wrapping her tiny arms around his neck as she babbled incoherently. Thomas had smiled down at her indulgently, as, unlike Harry, he couldn't yet decipher her baby gibberish.

His daughter gurgled happily in his arms, and he pressed a kiss upon her hair, smirking slightly as she grinned. Cradling her tighter to his chest using one arm, he freed the other, bringing it up so that she could see it.

" *Avis* ," He whispered, and two birds appeared in a whisp of golden magic, shooting up into the air to circle one another, swooping back down to twirl around their bodies.

Alsephina was positively delighted at his display of magic, and Thomas had to shush her gently once her shrieks of joy became too loud, watching fondly as she swiped at the birds fluttering just above their heads.

Harry mumbled in his sleep, catching Thomas' attention. His eyelashes were fluttering, the man on the verge of wakefulness, his swift intervention evidently too late as the man was waking.

He raised his hand, shooting a wandless spell at his shifting form in a gentle wave of magic, and Harry slumped back into a doze, a small smile twitching at his lips.

Thomas rocked Alsephina from side to side, observing his husband now that there was no fear of breaking his much-needed rest.

The man looked peaceful in his sleep, lips pursed slightly and eyelashes brushing at his cheeks. He had evidently fallen asleep unmeaningly, as he was dressed in fine robes.

Thomas was glad Harry was finally resting. Their twins were taking a lot out of him as they grew at a faster rate now, growing close to viability. The man needed all the respite he could get, and Thomas wasn't against using underhanded but harmless measures to ensure he was getting it.

Chapter End Notes

A little more magic, as requested, although we are getting to the Tournament now so you'll see more than enough :) And from then on there will be problems, and more magic

The twins are born in ch.45, although it could change to ch.44 quite easily if there isn't much to write before then ^-^

I submitted my final 2 essays at the end of January, and I've received the marks back for the first 3: 65, 75, 75 :) Which is good! Although first-year work doesn't go towards my final :/ I'm starting my second Semester in a couple of days, which sounds a whole lot more interesting: Mediterranean Europe, Witchcraft in Europe, The Black Death and Torture to Terror

Thanks for reading! :) Next update will be on the 25th of February ^-^

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