

Blood and Thorns

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Blood and Thorns

by [GhostIsReading](#)

Summary

Its the Summer before Harry's Third Year. He is left unsupervised in Diagon Alley for five weeks. What else is he going to do but explore?
But things aren't always what they seem.

This is the rewrite, the original is still up if you want to read it

Notes

Here is the rewritten version of Blood and Thorns! I hope you like it.

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

Chapter 1

Harry looked around his room in the Leaky Cauldron. It wasn't exactly clean, but it was certainly better than being stuck at the Dursleys'. He was free for the next five weeks until he had to go back to Hogwarts and so he was going to make the most of it. Sure, the Minister of Magic had told him not to go out too much, but Harry wasn't about to let himself be stuck in another cage after escaping his usual summer one. And honestly? So long as no one knew that The 'Harry Potter' was wandering the Alleys then he would probably be fine.

He moved into the bathroom that was thoughtfully attached to his room and looked at his reflection. A scrawny twelve, almost thirteen-year-old stared back at him. His bird nest hair was getting rather long, and his glasses were probably on their last legs. Now, how to change his appearance enough to not be noticed? He pursed his lips and his eyes refocused on his hair... he suddenly remembered that time where his hair kept growing back when his Aunt cut it! Could he do it again? But maybe instead of growing it he could change the colour? But what colour?

"Maybe not red." He muttered as he looked at himself critically. "I would look too much like a Weasley." Maybe a lighter brown? No, what about blond? Blond should be different enough.

He shut his eyes and tried to wish his hair a different colour, focusing first on it being blond. But what kind of blond? Blond like Malfoy where his hair is almost white or the dull blond like his relatives? He didn't want to stick out so dull blond it was. He focused hard.

He opened his eyes a moment later and unfortunately his hair was still a dark brown. He frowned.

"What if..." He mumbled aloud. "What if I focus as if I'm trying to do a spell?" So, with that idea he shut his eyes again and took a deep breath. He thought back to the tingle he felt through his arm when he first cast *lumos* and pushed that tingle up to his head thinking of the blond hair Dudley had. The tingle covered his whole head and this time when he opened his eyes, he was blond.

Harry grinned. "Yes!" His hair was neater too! No more bird nest, in fact it looked like he had stolen Dudley's, feather soft according to his aunt, hair. It was blond and wispy and made Harry look completely different. His eyebrows had turned blond which he hadn't thought about so that was good. "But can I change back?" He wondered. It would suck if he was stuck like this.

He shut his eyes and focused on going back to how his hair was before. The tingle spread more quickly than last time and when he opened his eyes again, his hair was back to its normal dark brown messy state. It worked! He grinned and practiced for a little while longer, he wanted to be able to change back and forth easily. He now had a disguise! Once he was confident enough with the change, he wondered whether he should he go straight out and explore or-

His thoughts were interrupted by the loud rumble of his stomach. Well that solved the issue of what he should do next. He sighed and decided to have lunch as Harry Potter. He would have to come up with a different name for his blond counterpart later but first lunch!

Harry went down the stairs, after checking that his hair was brown, and into the main bar area of the Leaky Cauldron. Tom the barman was behind the counter cleaning a cup.

"Afternoon, lad." He smiled at him. "Come down for some lunch?"

"Yes please." Harry nodded and was glad that Tom wasn't bringing any attention to his presence unlike the first time he had appeared in the Wizarding World, and he was mobbed by 'well-wishers'.

"How about a cheese sandwich and the soup of the day?" The barman suggested to the boy.

"Could I also have some pumpkin juice?" Harry asked quietly.

"Of course, lad. You go find yourself a table and I'll bring your food and drink over as soon as I can."

"Thanks." Harry then slid over some Galleons. "I'm not sure how much my stay here costs so is this enough for lunch?"

"Don't be silly lad, you're already paying for your stay." Tom admonished him. "Dumbledore sent over a bank draft that you signed to pay for it and all your meals."

"He did?" Harry was shocked. Why would Dumbledore have any access to his money?

"You must be starving if you're getting this forgetful lad." Tom gave him a look full of concern. "Go take a seat, and I'll get you your food stat."

Harry let himself be ushered off to a table near the bar. He sat down and frowned. He would need to visit Gringotts to find out what was going on with his account and to find out why Dumbledore was able to give out checks that drew money from Harry's account. This was the first time that he was unaccompanied while in the Alley so maybe he should ask the Goblins about how much money he has as well. He would need to make sure that he had enough to last him through school and hopefully until he was able to get a job.

If there was anything that Uncle Vernon had been good for, it was informing Dudley and consequently Harry who had been listening in his cupboard, that you should always keep an eye on your money. Investments, in goings and out goings, your general balance etc. Come to think about it, didn't Dudley start getting monthly statements earlier this year for the small spending account that Uncle Vernon set up for him? If Gringotts worked the same, then shouldn't Harry be getting statements? He really needed to investigate it.

"Here you go lad." Tom placed a steaming bowl of soup, a plate with a cheese sandwich and a tall glass of pumpkin juice down in front of him. Startling Harry out of his thoughts.

"Enjoy." He turned to leave before stopping and saying, "You should see if you can get yourself some new glasses from Owleye's. Those look like to be on their last legs, lad." He

made an abortive movement as if to ruffle Harry's hair, but all Harry saw was a hand reaching towards him suddenly. He flinched.

"Owleye's?" Harry repeated and missed the look of concern that he was given.

"Yeah, just past Gringotts, closer to Olivander's than here." Tom smiled at him again before leaving him to his meal.

As Harry dug into his food, he made a mental note to check out 'Owleye's' after he had gone to Gringotts to find out about his finances. New glasses would be nice, he thought wistfully. He had been wearing the same pair since his Aunt pulled them out of a charity bin when he was seven. He was pretty sure that it pure will and magic holding them together.

Once he was finished with his food, he thanked Tom and quickly went upstairs to his room to grab a robe. He only had his school robes but if he wore them inside out to hide his Gryffindor insignia then he shouldn't stand out too much. He would also need to get himself some new robes too. He made sure his money pouch and vault key were secure in his pocket. He tucked his wand into his now inner robe pocket and left. He ducked through the entrance to the Diagon Alley without anyone paying attention to him. He kept his hair in front of his face but gripped his robe to stop himself from flattening it which he realised was a quirk of his.

He gazed in wonder at the magnificent Gringotts building that stuck out like a diamond among boring brown rocks. As he approached the doors, he noticed for the first time that the Goblin guards that stood beside the doors bowed at incoming customers. So, Harry bowed back, that was the polite thing to do right? He moved into the bank unaware of the surprised Goblins he had left behind.

Inside it was as busy as it was the first time, he walked in two years ago. There were lines of people queuing up to see the Goblin tellers on either side of the large hall-like area that was the main floor of the bank. Harry made his way across the bank floor to one of the tellers further in and because Wizards were lazy it also meant that this teller had the shortest queue. There were only two people in front of him.

As Harry waited, he craned his neck to look around the bank a bit more. He hadn't had a chance to have a good look around the first and only time he had been in the bank, Hagrid had hurried him through too quickly. The ceiling was really high and reminded him of a cathedral that his school once went to on a school trip. There were massive crystal chandeliers and he briefly wondered how they dusted them before he realised that magic was probably the answer. Huge windows of coloured glass filled the bank floor with rainbow colours where the light hit the marble floor. This bank was truly a work of art.

"Next!" Barked the Goblin of his line and Harry quickly realised that it was his turn, the previous wizard had stormed off in a huff obviously not getting what he wanted.

"Ah good afternoon." Harry said as he hurried to stand in front of the counter that stretched high above his head. "I was wondering if I could see someone regarding my account?"

"Name?" The Goblin asked in a bored voice.

“Uh,” Harry looked around himself and went on his tiptoes to be as close to the Goblin as he could be before saying in a low voice. “Harry Potter.”

“Oh?” The Goblin leaned over to look down at him. “Now that is interesting.” The goblin’s eyes scanned Harry’s face, most notably stopping on where his scar was hidden. “Follow me.” He turned his notice from ‘Open’ to ‘Closed’ and climbed down from where he was sitting, before gesturing for Harry to follow him. Harry did as he was told and tried not to feel nervous. The reaction was a little odd, and he was worried that he was somehow in trouble, but he hadn’t done anything wrong, right?

The Goblin led him through a brightly lit corridor, it was the same cream colour as the walls on the bank floor and the ceiling was just as high. He was brought to a door that read ‘Manager Gornuk’. The Goblin that Harry was with knocked on the door twice before pushing it open and escorting Harry inside.

It was a very spartan room. There was a single desk which another Goblin, presumably Manager Gornuk, was sitting behind and a plain wooden chair in front of it. There were filing cabinets behind the Goblin but other than that the room was bare.

“Manager Gornuk, this boy claims to be Mr Harry Potter.” The Goblin that had escorted Harry there announced.

“Oh?” Gornuk looked up from his desk with a sinister smile. “We’ll just have to make sure he is who he claims to be.”

Harry was unsure why that statement was so menacing but despite knowing that he was Harry Potter he was still rather afraid that they would find out that he wasn’t...Were Goblins always this unnerving?

“Leave us.” Gornuk ordered. “I’ll deal with the little Wizard.”

“Very well.” The other Goblin bowed to Gornuk before leaving the office.

Harry stood awkwardly in the centre of the room for a moment before moving to sit on the free chair.

“We will do a simple blood test to make sure that you are who you say you are.” Manager Gornuk informed Harry as he pulled out a bowl, a potion bottle, some parchment, and a dagger. He pushed the bowl and dagger over to Harry. “Three drops of your blood in the bowl.”

Harry nervously picked up the scary looking dagger and after a moment of thought he cut the back of his arm as it was less sensitive than his hand. It was a bit awkward to get exactly three drops, but the Goblin didn’t complain so it must have been okay. He wiped the bloodied dagger on his robes before pushing both the dagger and bowl back to the goblin. He rolled his sleeve back down and ignored his gently bleeding arm. It was irrelevant and he’d had worse.

The Goblin added the potion to the bowl with his blood and muttered a few words in whatever the Goblin language was called. After the bowl glowed a very gentle gold, he

poured the mixture onto the parchment. A moment later words started to form.

“Well, it looks as if you are Harry Potter.” Gornuk sighed and pushed the parchment over to him.

Inheritance Test Results:

Name: Harry James Potter-Black

Birthday: 31st July 1980

Status: Minor

Father (deceased): James Charlus Potter

Father: (blood adopted): Sirius Orion Black

Mother(deceased): Lillian Marie Evans

Magical Guardian(s):

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore

Heirs to:

Potter (by blood)

Peverell (by blood)

Black (by blood)

Vaults:

Potter Trust Vault

Potter Family Vault

Peverell Vault

Black Trust Vault

Black Family Vault

Total Wealth: £2.4 Billion

Artifacts: Unknown (for a detail list request audit)

“Who is Sirius Black?” Harry blurted out unintentionally as he read over his inheritance test. “And what is a Magical Guardian?” Oh Merlin! He had a lot more money than he thought he did!

“Sirius Black is the man that allegedly betrayed your parents to the Dark Lord. He is currently in Azkaban Prison.” Gornuk informed him. “And a Magical Guardian is the Guardian allocated to a minor.”

“Would having the status as my Magical Guardian give Dumbledore the ability to pay people from my vaults?” Harry asked the question that was really bothering him.

“I’m afraid so, he also has the ability to limit how much money you withdraw from your Potter Trust Vault.”

“Only my Potter Trust Vault?” Harry was quick to grasp what the Goblin was hinting.

“Indeed. Mr Dumbledore only has access to your Potter Trust Vault.”

“And he wouldn’t know if I was to withdraw money from any of the other vaults?”

“As a minor the only vaults you have access to until you are of age are the Trust vaults.”

“But would he know if I withdrew money from the Black Trust Vault?” Harry persisted.

“No, he would not.” Gornuk smirked. “However, the Lord of the Black Family would be made aware.”

“And who is the Lord?”

“Sirius Black.”

“And as he’s in prison I doubt he will be checking his mail anytime soon?”

“Indeed.”

“Okay.” Harry bit his lip and thought for a moment. For some reason Dumbledore was his Magical Guardian but hadn’t deigned to tell him. He was able to withdraw and limit Harry’s own money. “Oh, um, is there a bank statement I could have?”

“We send you a bank statement every quarter Mr Potter.” Gornuk said.

“I’ve never received any mail from Gringotts.” Harry frowned. So Gringotts was like a muggle bank in that they sent them, but why didn’t he ever receive one?

“That is most unusual.” Gornuk scowled. “I will investigate but for now.” He stood up and went to the filing cabinet behind him and pulled out a scroll. “Here is the last three months’ statement.” He handed it to the little wizard.

Harry took the scroll. “Thank you.” He opened the scroll.

Incoming Monies:

N/A

Outgoing Monies:

April:

£3,000 to the Dursley family account at Barclays.

£5,000 to Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore's Vault 127.

May:

£3,000 to the Dursley family account at Barclays.

£5,000 to Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore's Vault 127.

June:

£3,000 to the Dursley family account at Barclays.

£5,000 to Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore's Vault 127.

£50 to the Leaky Cauldron account.

Harry stared aghast at the statement. His Aunt and Uncle always took so much glee in telling him that he was a burden. They had claimed that he should be grateful to them for taking him out of the goodness of their hearts. Hah! They were being paid. They were being paid and all they gave him was a tiny cupboard to sleep in until he was eleven years old and Dudley's cast offs! Those-those pigs! And Dumbledore! Why the hell was he getting money? He wasn't exactly doing anything as far as Harry was aware and even if he was, why was he getting more money than the Dursleys who actually hosted Harry in their home? And as his Magical Guardian did that mean that he had a say in where Harry lived? He was obviously the one that had set up the payments to the Dursleys. There was something not right about this.

And there was the transaction of the payment for the Leaky Cauldron too, so much for the Ministry footing the bill.

"There is no way for me to stop these transactions, are there?" Harry asked despite having suspicions that the answer was no. The Goblin had made it clear that his Magical Guardian was in charge of his money and Harry was a minor.

"Not until you are seventeen."

"I thought so." He sighed and rolled the scroll back up. So where did that leave him? "What is the limit on the amount I can withdraw from my Potter Trust Vault?"

"£100 a month." Gornuk said after flipping through some papers.

"Does that include the money taken from the account to pay for the Leaky Cauldron stay?" He asked.

"Yes." He grunted.

“That’s certainly interesting because the Minister, who insisted that I stay there, said that the bill was going to be covered.” Harry snorted humourlessly. “I just didn’t realise that it was going to be covered by my own money.”

“I’m afraid that unless you have that in writing, we can’t move to recover the funds.” Gornuk looked disgruntled at the paperwork.

All right, so Harry had £50 to last him the month if he took the money from his Potter Trust fund. It was more than he thought he would have access to, but it wasn’t a lot and Dumbledore would be aware of him spending it. “And the Black Trust Fund?”

“Unlimited.” Gornuk smirked. “It holds £100,000 and refills every month if money is withdrawn.”

Okay so that was helpful. The Black Trust Vault was currently overseen by a man in prison who also betrayed his parents. Great. However, using the money of his parents’ betrayer would be a great way to get back at him, especially if it refills from the main Vault...he could always drain it dry so if the man does get out of prison, he wouldn’t have any money to his name. He felt a vindictive thrill run through him at the thought.

“How much would it cost me to open a new vault under an assumed name?” Harry questioned tapping the scroll again with his other hand as he thought aloud. “Would I be able to set up a transfer of £99,999 a month into it from the Black Trust Vault?” A small smirk curled at the edge of his lips

“That is indeed doable.” The Goblin had a rather pleased look on his face.

Hmm, that was great but what name to use... Whatever name he chose he could use it as the name for his blond self as well. Wasn’t his Mum’s maiden name Evans? The inheritance test said so. He also vaguely remembered Aunt Petunia signing his and Dudley’s school trip slips as Petunia Dursley nee Evans. But would it be too obvious a name to take? Unless he used it as his first name? But then what surname would he use?

“Do you have a surname you can suggest I use?” Harry gave up and asked the Goblin that had been rather helpful so far. “I’m thinking of using Evan as a first name.”

“Ah, your mother’s maiden name.” Gornuk nodded. “I would recommend using your great-great grandmother’s maiden name of Fleamont.” He shuffled some papers. “They were a small pureblood family that married into the Potters. They merged all assets but if anyone was to investigate it, I’m sure they had a squib or two somewhere down the line. It isn’t completely unheard of for magic to reinsert itself into a squibbed line.”

“Evan Fleamont.” Harry tested the name. “Yeah, okay I like it.”

“Fleamont was also your Grandfather’s first name. Your great grandfather promised his mother to name his son, your grandfather with her maiden name so that the name wouldn’t fade out.”

“Really?” Harry lent forward in his chair. He had learned more about his family in the past half an hour than he had his entire life! “And as the line both married into my family or squibbed out, I won’t get into trouble for using it?”

“Indeed and no, you would face no repercussions.”

Harry took a deep breath. “Okay, Manager Gornuk I would like to open a vault under the name of Evan Fleamont and set up a monthly transfer of £99,999 from the Black Trust Vault into the new vault.”

“It will be done.” Gornuk grinned. “May I suggest that while I set up your new vault that you visit your trust vault and withdraw some money?”

“Thank you.” Harry nodded. Yeah, that was a good idea, surely Dumbledore would expect him to withdraw some money during his stay in the Alley this summer. “I agree.”

“Excellent! I shall summon a cart driver to take you to your Trust Vault.”

After a fantastic roller coaster cart ride to and from his Trust Vault Harry was taken back to Gornuk’s office.

“Here is the key to your new vault.” Gornuk handed over a new tiny gold key. “And I have taken the liberty of getting you this linked money bag. Merely think of the amount of money you wish from the Fleamont Vault and it will appear.”

“Thank you.” Harry accepted the items. “Oh!” He suddenly thought that maybe he should mention his hair change. “I plan on using the name Evan Fleamont around the Alleys during the summer.” He closed his eyes and wished his hair blond. He felt the tell tale tingle on his scalp and opened his eyes.

“You have the Black’s Metamorphmagus powers, very good.” Gornuk nodded approvingly at him. “I would also recommend getting different eyewear for this persona as well.”

“I plan to go to Owleye’s next.”

“Very well.” The Goblin then turned back to his paperwork. It was clearly a dismissal so Harry quickly wished his hair back to brown before leaving the office.

Once he left Gringotts, he went straight to Owleye’s which was easy to spot now that he was looking for it. The shop was where Tom the Barkeep said it would be and the sign for the shop was that of an owl with giant eyes. It was cute in a weird cartoonish way.

The door jingled as Harry entered and before he even had a chance to look around a man with bottle like glasses was in his face.

“Oh no no.” He tutted. “Those certainly won’t do.” He physically moved Harry until he was sat on a slightly reclining chair. “Those glasses are just awful, and-” he paused before gasping in disgust. “And they are only held together by magic and barely at that! No, no this will not do.”

“Um-”

“Hush, now.” The man chided him gently. “I’ll get you sorted out in no time.” He waved his wand over Harry’s face and a roll of parchment was spat out of it. “Oh dear, oh dear.” The shop owner? Harry honestly didn’t know who this man was but he was weirder than Olivander and that was saying something! The man seemed rather upset by the results either way.

“What’s wrong?” Harry asked anxiously.

“Your glasses don’t even fit your prescription at all! Why I bet you can hardly see anything.”

“That’s why I came in. I need new glasses.” He could see well enough, his frames were just falling apart but he wasn’t going to argue with the obviously upset man who had his wand too close to Harry’s face for his comfort.

“Why yes, lad.” The man nodded. “You do indeed need new glasses.” He waved his wand over Harry’s face again. It spat out more parchment. “Right I have your prescription, now you just need to choose your frames!” The man then snatched Harry’s glasses off his face and snapped them in half.

“Hey!” Harry was pulled out of the chair and pushed over to a tall wall that was covered from floor to ceiling with different glasses frames. He was overwhelmed by the sheer amount he had to choose from. It didn’t help that his sight was even worse without his glasses that the man had mercilessly broken. “Uh.” Harry turned back to the man. “What would you recommend? I need two very different pairs.”

“Hmm.” The man got up rather close to Harry’s face. His eyes enlarged by his bottle glasses were even bigger up close, they were wide and grey. “I think you would do well with a pair similar in style to your current pair and perhaps one with invisible frames.”

“That sounds great.” Harry quickly agreed and took a step back so he could have some space. The pair with the invisible frames would be perfect for his Evan persona. “How do the invisible frames work? Would I be able to find them when I take them off?”

“Ah, they have Demiguise fur woven into the metal frames. I’m rather pleased with them too, it was a bugger to get them to work but worth it.” He explained as he plucked off a couple of pairs of glasses from the wall. “They only become invisible once they are on your face, otherwise they look like any other pair of glasses just with some silver detailing on the frame.” He pushed a pair into Harry’s hands, “Go on, try them.”

Harry examined the pair of the glasses that he had been given and saw that they were exactly as described, the frames were black but when he tilted them in the light he could see silvery lines twisted around and through the frames. He placed them on his face. He was amazed to see them vanish on his face and the whole world came into focus.”

“Wow.” Harry blinked in shock. He could see! Did everyone else always see this clearly? Maybe he would be able to see the blackboard in the classroom now. “This is amazing.

“I imagine so.” The shopkeeper said bemused. “After all, your last pair was so out of date I am surprised that you didn’t hurt yourself just by walking around!”

“Thank you so much.” Harry beamed at the man, seeing him properly for the first time. He looked rather a lot like Olivander. He had the same white hair and gangly stature. “Are you related to Mr Olivander?” He asked before he realised that he was speaking.

The man laughed. “I am indeed, lad. I am Geraint Olivander and my brother is Garrick. While he followed our father's footsteps in his love of wandlore. Meanwhile I am fascinated by eyesight.”

“Nice to meet you sir and thank you so much.”

“Think nothing of it lad, I’m just doing my job. Now let's get you that second pair. You wanted a set that looked like your old ones, correct?” He turned and plucked another pair of glasses from the wall, this time Harry could clearly see that they were an almost perfect replica of his previous pair of glasses. He didn’t stop to let Harry reply and tapped the lenses and muttered his breath before placing the glasses into a small leather case. “Here you go, would you like a case for your other pair also?”

“Yes please.”

“Oh and all of my glasses are spelled unbreakable and water repellent so the rain won’t mess with your vision.”

“That’s brilliant!”

“Thank you kindly.” Mr Olivander smiled warmly at him. “I’ve included a cleaning cloth in both cases for you as well.”

Harry swapped out the Demiguise glasses for the ones that looked like his old pair. They were just as comfortable to wear. He carefully placed the Demiguise glasses into their case before pulling out his money bag to pay.

Harry walked out of Owleye’s with two new pairs of glasses. They had cost him a hefty £50, which would have been the rest of the money left over from his Potter Trust vault allowed this month but they were so worth it! And he paid from his Evan Fleamont vault seeing as he hadn’t withdrawn the full £50 anyway. The next thing Harry really needed were some decent plain robes. He decided to get three relatively cheap black robes from Madam Malkin’s as Harry Potter. He would go and look at the higher end shop Twilfitt and Tattings’ as Evan Fleamont tomorrow.

Harry didn’t stay long in Madam Malkin’s, especially after she had told him that he hadn’t grown at all since his first year. That was humiliating to hear that he was still the size of a small eleven year old!

Harry decided to have a little look in Obscurus Books to cheer himself up. It was a second hand bookstore in Diagon Alley, a few shops down from Flourish and Blotts. He hoped that it would be less busy than the main book shop because it was second hand. Ron would

probably give him a confused look for even wanting to spend some of his spare time in a place where there are books but the thing was that Harry loved magic but never really had a moment of peace to read about it. Hermione was constantly on his back about school work and Ron always hounded him to play chess. Add in Quidditch practice, classes, detention and whatever danger was lurking...was it really a surprise that he didn't get to just simply enjoy magic? Don't get him wrong, he loved his friends but they just didn't give him any space. He was looking forward to just having the chance to actually read about the wizarding world and magic as a whole outside of the classroom.

Obscurus Books reminded him of Hogwarts library. As soon as he stepped through the door, a soft bell rang to signal that there was a customer before a sudden veil of silence hit him. There were bookcases from the floor to the ceiling packed with books as well as piles of books littering the floor and well any flat surface really. Harry was careful to not knock over any of the piles of books as he walked further into the shop.

A quick glance at the nearest bookshelf showed that the books weren't categorised in any particular order. There was Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them next to Unfogging the Future and a copy of the comic Adventures of Martin Miggs, the Mad Muggle . There was no sense or reason to the shelves. Harry loved it. Feeling adventurous, Harry walked further into the shop and randomly grabbed five books that were next to each other without looking at their titles.

He paid for them before leaving and going back to his room in the Leaky Cauldron. He wanted to be seen as following what the Minister wanted of him, for him not to spend too much time out in the alley. He waved at Tom who was polishing a glass behind the bar as he headed up to his room. This way he would likely remember that Harry was doing what he was told and was staying in the pub.

It was only once he was back in his room that he took a look at the books:

Protection Charm Your Mind: A Practical Guide to Counter Legilimensy by Franciscus Fieldwake.

Olde and Forgotten Bewitchments and Charmes by E. Limus

Abracadabra: An A-Z of Spooky Spells

Ancient Runes Made Easy by Laurenzoo

Practical Household Magic is a book by Zamira Gulch

Harry picked up the A-Z of spooky spells and had a quick flip through. It had loads of spells! Well, they were hexes and were probably not exactly moral to use but they would likely be handy to know if Voldemort was truly still around. Although he wouldn't mind hitting Malfoy with the instant scalping hex, it shaves the hair from the target's head. The Knockback Jinx would also be useful and so would the Protego Diabolica, although that would probably take a lot of power to cast:

“ ...When cast, Protego Diabolica creates a massive ring of fire around the caster. Any of their enemies that come in contact with it will be incinerated, but their allies can pass through the flames unharmed...” It's a really harsh spell but it would work against Voldemort so maybe he should think about learning it.

He closed the book and turned to the others that he had bought and read the introduction of Protection Charm Your Mind: A Practical Guide to Counter Legilimensy by Franciscus Fieldwake.

“ ...Legilimensy is the act of magically navigating through the many layers of a person's mind and correctly interpreting one's findings. A person who practises this art is known as a Legilimens. Muggles might call this "mind-reading," but practitioners...” Harry dropped the book in shock. There are people who can read your mind?! He mentally screamed. He flipped ahead and thankfully found that the book contained a way to protect against it. *“ ...Occlumency is the act of magically closing one's mind against Legilimensy...”* He read on and found that the first step to mastering Occlumency was to ‘clear your mind’. Which was rather ambiguous if you ask Harry. Thankfully it went on to explain different methods one could use to do so. Meditation was the main one.

Harry decided to give it a go straight away. The book also warned that it would take time and practice but if there was one thing that Harry was good at it was thinking of nothing. He often had to force himself not to think during the long stretches in his Cupboard and honestly he could do with some time thinking about nothing after what he had discovered at the bank this morning. It was hard to believe that Dumbledore was paying himself and the Dursleys using Harry's money! At least he now had access to money under a different name and with his disguise as Evan he could buy what ever he wanted without Dumbledore being the wiser. Maybe he should see a healer too? He hated the fact that he was still the same height as he was at eleven, surely there was something wrong with that fact? He would look for a healer as Evan tomorrow, but first he needed to concentrate! He was going to try and meditate so that no one could read his mind.

Harry moved to make himself comfortable on his bed. Placing the rest of his newly bought books on the bedside table. Then as he was reclining against his pillows he shut his eyes and imagined that he was back in his Cupboard. The Cupboard was dark and small and strangely warm even in the coldest of winters. His little cot bed was firm beneath him and the thin blanket cocooned him like a hug. He was safe. Uncle Vernon was too big to fit in his Cupboard and Aunt Petunia wouldn't lower herself to try. Dudley was often told to ignore it and was once even punished for trying to get in! So yes, Harry's cupboard was a safe place.

Now that he was in his Cupboard he could just let go.

The next thing Harry knew Hedwig was grooming his hair as if he was a chick that needed his feathers cleaning. He blinked awake and realised that he had fallen asleep while meditating. She was perched on his pillow next to his head, she was gazing down at him with her large yellow eyes, her head tilting to the side as she cooed at him.

“Hi Hedwig.” Harry smiled softly at his owl and first ever friend. “I'm glad you're here.” He stroked her feathers. “Feel free to go out and hunt as much as you want while we're staying here.”

Hedwig barked and continued to groom his hair for a moment more before flying over to rest on the back of the chair that was in the room. He smiled at her before looking at the bedside clock and saw that it was eight in the morning. He had slept through the entire night without nightmares! He didn't have a single dream about the Chamber of Secrets or Quirrelmort. He was definitely going to meditate every night before bed regardless of learning Occlumency! That was honestly the best night of sleep he had had in a long while.

As it was still rather early in the morning Harry decided that it would be the perfect time to try out his Evan Fleamont persona. So he showered, changed into one of the new simple black robes and turned his hair blond again. He put on his new Demiguise glasses and then looked in the mirror.

It was as if a stranger was staring back at him. Perfect. He would have to be careful not to move his hair from in front of his scar...wait! He changed back into his muggle clothes but kept himself as 'Evan'. He would go into the muggle world and buy some foundation. His aunt swore by the stuff and seeing as Harry had watched her cover up huge spots on her face like magic, but not magic because she would never lower herself to have anything to do with it, surely it could cover up his scar?

He walked as confidently as he could down stairs and out into London. As it was now nine o'clock the shops were starting to open and Evan made his way to the nearest cosmetic shop which just happened to be Boots™. Its automatic doors opened to let him in, a wave of perfume filled his nose as he stepped into the brightly lit interior. He blinked a few times to get used to the blinding white walls and shiny white floors before looking around for the makeup area. He found the display quickly but was overwhelmed by all the different brands, shades of colour and well all of it really.

"Can I help you young man?" A woman in a white lab coat and name tag stating that she was a beauty technician appeared next to him. She looked rather stern and Evan quickly realised that she probably thought that he was there to cause trouble.

"Um, what can you recommend for hiding scars?" He asked nervously. "Especially ones that are on the face?" He reached up to his forehead.

Her face softened. "We can try a few things and see which works best?" She offered.

"Yes please."

Evan walked out of the shop half an hour later with a foundation that matched his skin perfectly, a moisturiser, make-up removal wipes and skin coloured plasters. They had discovered that if Evan wore a plaster and then covered it with the foundation as well you couldn't see the scar at all. If he just used the foundation you could still see a faint outline of his scar but only just and up close. He would probably ration the plasters as he didn't really see himself getting up close and personal with anyone for them to be able to see through the foundation

Feeling more confident now, Evan went back into the Leaky Cauldron and changed into his black robe. He was completely ignored by everyone, no one screamed that he was Harry Potter and so he went back out into Diagon Alley and headed to Twilfitt and Tattings' to get a

more substantial wardrobe. He left the tailors with ten robes, ten fitted shirts, ten under shirts, ten pairs of trousers all in various shades of black, green and blue and red. He also got two really nice black cloaks, both with hoods. He still needed new underwear but he would probably sneak back into the muggle side of things to pick some up. The clothes would be delivered to his room by owl when they were done so no one else would know that he was buying clothes. It was sad at how happy he was to buy clothes that would fit him, clothes other than his school uniform.

Next Evan decided to get some breakfast. He wanted to eat somewhere other than the Leaky Cauldron so he walked through the Alley trying to find a café or even a restaurant. He found a nice little bakery called 'Sweets and Such'. Five minutes later he was sitting at a tiny blue table munching on a savoury breakfast pasty and sipping a warm cup of tea. It was really nice and he would definitely be coming back here.

As he looked out the window that he was sitting by and saw the entrance to Knockturn Alley. He was suddenly gripped with the urge to explore it. Surely he would be okay? It wasn't obvious that he was Harry Potter and if Hagrid could go down there and buy Slug repellent then surely it wasn't all bad?

Evan was going to explore Knockturn Alley and there was no one to stop him. Well, he was going to do it once he had finished his breakfast. Going to a healer could wait one more day.

Chapter 2

The entrance to Knockturn Alley was as unwelcoming as it was the first time Harry had ended up there. But Evan persevered. He walked deeper into the twisting street and past Borgin and Burkes, he did not feel an urge to revisit that particular shop. He continued on and soon the street opened up a little more and although it was still dark and a little dirty, it seemed more welcoming.

Evan hummed quietly to himself as he gazed around at all the interesting looking shops wondering which to enter first. There weren't that many people out and about this early in the day, in fact the Alley was almost deserted. In the end what helped him make his choice was the sound of metal hitting metal coming from a shop with the sign 'Fyrig Forge'. He was drawn to the sound in the otherwise silent Alley.

The door to the shop was already open which was odd as this was the first shop that Harry/Evan had ever visited that kept its door open. Although as soon as he stepped over the threshold he realised why. He was hit with a wall of heat. It was uncomfortably hot but instead of being put off, Evan was even more curious. It wasn't dark inside like Evan had expected from its gloomy exterior, there were globes of light dotted around the rather large space and at the far end was a cinderblock box with a tunnel through it that glowed orange with fire. It was at that point that he realised he had stumbled into a blacksmith which meant that the cinderblock full of fire was a forge? Maybe? Evan knew nothing about Blacksmithing.

At the centre of the room stood a man. He was hunched over an anvil, in a vest showing off his numerous tattoos which covered the entirety of both his arms from what Evan could see. His muscles bulged as he hammered at the metal and Evan was loathed to interrupt so he stayed quiet and just watched. The man had dark blond hair although he could be wrong about the colour as there was a lot of soot around. The hair was long enough to be pulled back into a bun? It was sort of like the hair buns he had seen on ballerina's in his Aunt's magazines (she didn't know that he liked to read them when she was finished with them, they often had helpful cleaning tips), but messier with stray curls.

"Wow." Evan said breathlessly without him even realising that he had spoken as he was so transfixed by the man and what he was doing.

The man hit the piece of metal a few more times before shoving it quickly into what looked to be a bucket of water. Steam and the sound of water instantly boiling filled the air. The man then turned to face Harry with a scowl on his face. He had a nose ring and a closely cropped beard.

"What do you want?" He grunted.

"Er, I." Evan stuttered, unable to form any words. He didn't know what was making him so speechless but he found himself unable to even string two words together.

“Well?” The man glared. “Are you going to say anything or are you going to keep standing there like a ffil?”

“A what?”

“A fool.”

“Oh, um right.” Evan blinked dumbly before shaking his head forced his tongue and brain to work. “What are you making?” He managed to ask and felt the urge to pat himself on the back for not stuttering. Oh man, he was totally gay wasn’t he? Although to be fair who wouldn’t be attracted to a man in a close fitting vest, tattoos and was incredibly fit? His relatives could never find out about his revelation, they would kick him out faster than he could say Quidditch! Actually he wouldn’t mind being kicked out, his uncle would likely kill him would be a more likely reaction. They could never know.

“What’s your name, lilleгут?” The man asked and once again Evan found himself not knowing what the man was calling him.

“I’m gay, I er mean, my name is Evan!” He also did not have very good control over his mouth. The blush on his face was no longer just from the heat but from utter humiliation. “Oh Merlin why did I say that?” He whined quietly and hid his face in his hands. He wanted to die right there.

A low chuckle brought his attention back to the man in front of him. Evan peaked through his fingers and caught the man trying to hide his laughter behind a sooty hand. Merlin, even his laugh was attractive! This was so unfair!

“W-what’s your name?” Evan asked with all the Gryffindor bravado he had in his boots. He removed his hands from his face and the man’s expression became stoic again.

“Finn.” Was the terse response.

“So um, what was it you were making?” He tried asking again. He knew that he should probably leave now but he wanted to know more about this beautiful stranger although as a nearly thirteen year old he had absolutely no chance of anything with this man.

Finn let out a sigh. “I’m making horseshoes.”

“Horseshoes?”

“Do you enjoy being a papegøye?” He snarked back.

“I don’t know what that is.” Evan pointed out before continuing. “But I’m surprised that you’re making horseshoes, aren’t they well, rather muggle?” He finished awkwardly.

“They’re for hippogriffs.”

“Hippogriffs?”

The only response he got that time was a deep sigh. Evan pouted when it looked like he really wasn't going to get an answer. For some reason he felt rather free around Finn even after he had embarrassed himself too. Maybe it was because he wasn't 'Harry Potter' at the moment? Whatever the reason was it made him want to spend more time around this attractive blacksmith. Said blacksmith went back to work, pulling the now cooled horseshoe from the bucket of water.

"So why do Hippogriffs need horseshoes?" He asked after a few moments.

"Oh, you're still here?" Finn didn't even turn to look at him.

"Yes, I'm still here." Evan sighed when it was clear that he was definitely not going to get an answer to his question so he asked a different one. "What else do you make?"

Finn let out an exasperated sigh and answered without looking at him. "I make statues out of recycled metal work. Usually on commission. I also create weapons for those who don't want to or can't afford to buy from the Goblins."

An idea struck Evan then. "So I could commission a statue from you?"

Finn paused and turned to look at him.

"Um." He scrambled to find the right words of what he wanted to be made. "I would like an Owl made."

This time Finn turned fully to look at him with narrow eyes.

"Yes, an owl about this big?" Evan held his hands about 30cm apart. He mentally ran through all the types of owls that he knew which was more than the average person. He had looked them up in the library after he had gotten Hedwig. "A Great Horned Owl at around 30cm." He nodded firmly. Yes that would do. "And I need it made before September 1st."

Finn sighed and put down his hammer again. He then walked away from the forge over to a desk that Evan hadn't noticed before. He threw himself down into the armchair behind it and pulled out some parchment and a quill.

"Sit." He ordered gesturing to the wooden stool in front of the desk.

Evan was bemused by the difference in the chairs but did indeed sit. Finn seemed even bigger up close, he could probably crush Evan's head in one hand...Should he be concerned that he liked the sound of that?

"A great horned owl, you said?" Finn asked as he dipped his quill into a pot of ink.

"Yes." Evan nodded and wondered briefly how Hedwig would feel if he bought himself a great horned owl for his Evan persona...She would most likely bite him, it was bad enough that he was getting a statue of one and not of a snowy like her.

Finn started to sketch out an owl on the parchment and Evan realised that this was going to be his statue's design. He felt giddy, it was weird. He was really excited about this, but wasn't

sure why. Then it occurred to him that this was his first major purchase that wasn't for school. It was purely for him! It was definitely a strange thought. He let the man work in silence but couldn't tear his eyes away from him as his hand moved across the paper sketching the design.

"It will be made out of recycled metal such as spoons and forks etc." Finn murmured.

Evan wasn't sure how much time had passed before Finn looked up from his drawing. The man blinked slowly in surprise, as if he couldn't quite believe that he was still sitting there quietly.

"What do you think?" He slid the drawing over for his purview.

Evan pulled it closer to himself and was amazed. "It's adorable." He blurted as he looked at the artwork. Forks were going to be used for the legs and the chest feathers made the body look like a large pinecone. He wasn't sure how he was going to make it out of metal but Evan couldn't wait to see it. "I love it."

"You'll pay half now, half on completion."

"Of course." He agreed easily. "How much?" He reached for his money purse.

"£1,500."

Evan held back his wince at the price but he mentally conceded that it would be worth it. He opened his money pouch and thought of £750. Only instead of coins a check book jumped into his hand, which now that he thought about it was probably a better idea and than handing over hundreds of gold coins. He had seen his uncle fill out cheques before so it wasn't too difficult to write one for this.

"Here, the first half."

Finn took the cheque, read it to make sure it was correct before pocketing it. "With my other work, it should take around two weeks for me to make it."

"Can I pop in from time to time and watch you?" Evan asked before clarifying as it sounded rather creepy. "I've never seen a blacksmith at work before." And he wanted to spend more time with Finn, partly because he was so attractive and partly because he just felt so free around the man.

He only got a deep sigh. At least it wasn't a no, right?

After leaving the Fyrig Forge, Evan decided that it was probably time for 'Harry' to make his reappearance. He could always come back to check out the rest of Knockturn Alley later. So he put his hood back up and made his way back into Diagon Alley and back to his room in the Leaky Cauldron.

After a shower, turning hair black, and switching glasses, Harry dressed in one of the new black his robes that he got from Madam Malkin yesterday, before going down to the pub for lunch.

“You alright lad? Enjoyed your lie in, didja?” Tom asked as Harry approached him.

“Yeah thanks,” It was easier to let him think what he wanted, it worked out better in Harry’s favour that way. “What do you recommend for lunch?”

“We do a full English or if you want something lighter, how about some good old porridge?”

“Do you have any fresh fruit as well?” Harry asked. He wasn’t used to heavy food after almost a month back at the Dursleys.

““Course we do.”

“Then could I have some porridge and a bowl of fresh fruit please.”

“Not a problem lad, go on and take a seat and I’ll bring it over in a jiffy.” Tom shooed him away.

Harry sat at a table with a discarded newspaper, he should probably get himself a subscription just so that he knew what was going on in the wizarding world. He flipped the newspaper over to the front page and read it while he waited for his lunch.

Escaped from Azkaban

Sirius Orion Black convicted Death Eater, has escaped from Azkaban. His cell was empty late last night during the routine check.

Harry thanked Tom absentmindedly as he read on about how Black had been his parents' secret keeper and his godfather and had betrayed them. He already knew some of that from his visit to the bank but he hadn’t really thought about it before. He wasn’t sure how he felt. He hated the man for betraying his parents but he had also read that Azkaban was like hell on earth so he had been suffering for it. Now that he had escaped though...It was also puzzling that no one had even mentioned to him that this madman had escaped. You would have thought that they would have, especially as he was staying in the Alley. He also wanted to know if he should be worried about Black doing anything about his Trust vault. He shook his head and folded the paper and put it to one side. It wasn’t worth thinking about at the moment.

After he had finished his breakfast Harry decided to go out into the muggle world again. He wanted to find a dictionary for the language that Finn had used. Although he didn’t have much to go on seeing as he didn’t even know what the language was! And he needed some underwear.

Harry headed to the first bookshop he saw and went straight to the language section. There were a lot of books.

“That's a lot of languages...” He mumbled. He felt slightly intimidated by the amount and wasn’t sure where to start.

“Can I help you?” A shop assistant appeared next to him.

“Um, yeah.” Harry nodded. “I want a dictionary to find out what my friend has been calling me but he won’t tell me what language he was speaking in.”

“Well, that makes things more difficult.” The assistant laughed in a good natured manner. “Can you remember any of the words?”

“Um He called me ‘lilleгутt’ and um, oh! He said that ‘fiл’ meant fool.”

“Well then we’ll just have to look up all the words meaning fool.” The assistant reached for the German to English dictionary on the shelf.

It took them ages and Harry had learnt a lot of new ways of calling someone a fool, but they finally found that Finn was speaking Norwegian and he had called him ‘a little boy’ and a ‘parrot.’

“Thank you.” Harry hugged the dictionary to his chest. “I probably wouldn’t have been able to find it without your help.”

“No problem, kid.” The assistant chuckled.

Harry left the bookshop with the dictionary in a bag with the shops logo and wondered what he should do next. He obviously couldn’t back to see Finn as that would make him look too eager. He did need new underwear, what if he bought some other clothes as well? So that's what he did. He wandered around muggle London and bought new muggle clothes to replace the elephant skin hand me downs from Dudley. He bought the new underwear as planned but found that he blushed the entire time he was browsing. why was buying underwear so embarrassing?

By the time he returned to the Leaky Cauldron for lunch he had amassed almost an entire wardrobe of muggle clothes: jeans, nice black trousers, jogging bottoms, t-shirts, long sleeved shirts, jumpers, vests, underwear, socks, trainers, and nice black shoes. He had gone a little nuts but the very idea of owning his own clothes that hadn’t been worn by anyone before was too much to resist. He didn’t really want it known that he had gone on a shopping spree less it get back to Dumbledore who, so he snuck back into the Leaky Cauldron behind a family of four and hurried up to his room to put his clothes away.

“Ah shit.” He swore as he realised that his trunk wasn’t going to be big enough to hold all his new clothes, muggle or wizarding! And he should probably get some different clothes for his Evan’s persona. “I’m going to need a bigger trunk.” He sighed and pushed all of his shopping bags under the bed so that they would be out of sight in case anyone looked into his room.

After a quick late lunch of a ham and cheese sandwich, he escaped back upstairs and changed into one of the robes from Madam Malkins as his nicer robes hadn’t arrived yet. He changed his glasses, his hair and smeared the foundation on his forehead like the nice beauty technician showed him, before heading out into Diagon Alley as Evan Fleamont. While he was getting a trunk he should probably look into getting a new school bag too. He wondered if it was possible to have it charmed to be lightweight and hold more than a normal bag. That would be really helpful! As for the trunk, he vaguely remembered trying to buy one with multiple compartments when he was shopping with Hagrid, but the giant hadn’t let him get it.

He wished he had, for one it was probably a good investment and for second it would have kept his belongings more organised. But Hagrid wasn't there to stop him from getting it now. A smile grew on Evan's face as he walked towards the trunk shop.

Trump's Trunks was squeezed between Scribbulus Writing Instruments and Wiseacre's Wizarding Equipment. It was rather quiet when Evan walked in, so he was pounced upon by the shopkeeper before the bell at the door stopped tinkling.

"Good day, Lad!" The man was rather boisterous, with thick blond hair slicked back. He looked familiar to Evan, but he couldn't put his finger on who he reminded him of. "The Name er is Jeffery Trump." He had a slight American accent. "And don't worry I'm er um not anything like my er um lump of Muggle cousin in the Americas."

"Uh sure." Evan was taken aback by the onslaught of personal information the shopkeeper decided to share. "I'm here for a trunk."

"Well, you've er uh come to the right place!" Jeffery Trump gushed. "I sell er the best trunks in um er Wizarding Britain."

"Can I just look around and call you over if I find one that I like?" Please say yes, Evan thought desperately, he didn't really want to have to talk to this man more than he had to. He was a little too energetic for his liking.

"Of course, Lad!"

Evan tried not to cringe at the loudness of his voice as he turned away to examine the trunks that littered the shop floor, the walls and basically all of the space in the shop. He couldn't see any shoulder bags so he would have to look elsewhere for one. He sighed quietly and started to dig through the trunks, pausing to read the little cards attached to them that detailed their specifications and any charms that had been applied.

There were dragonhide trunks from various dragons that Harry hadn't ever heard of before. He had heard of the Norwegian Ridgeback due to Hagrid and his escapade of trying to raise one, but the rest were complete unknowns to him. Welsh Green, Ukrainian Ironbelly and so on. And the Charms! He had no idea some of the charms existed like this one trunk had a cooling compartment which was supposed to keep food cool, so it was kind of like a mini fridge! That would certainly come in handy during his summers...

In the end he decided on a Norwegian Ridgeback dragonhide trunk, he felt slightly bad as it reminded him of Norbert, but he just hoped that the dragon that it had belonged to had lived a long and fulfilled life.

It had six compartments, one more than he currently needed but he might have used it in the future. It had a library compartment that could hold up to a thousand books and organise them for him; a wardrobe that could hold more clothes than he could ever possibly own, but it allowed him to hang up all the robes he would be buying, and fold away all the muggle clothes he bought. It would even allow him to split it into two sections, one for his 'Harry' wardrobe and one for his 'Evan'. It had a compartment for potions including a safe cupboard to keep all his ingredients without worry of them breaking; and an empty compartment with

no shelves and was much like the inside of his current trunk with no dividers or anything. He would use that one for his things that did not fit into the other ones and finally it also came with his cooling compartment which also had a preserving charm on it so the food would last even longer! The whole thing was also fitted with a lightweight charm and each compartment had an extension charm on them to hold an impossible amount of stuff.

"I er um see that you er found a trunk to your er liking." Mr Trump slunk over to Evan as he lingered over his desired trunk.

"Yes, sir."

"Oh now." He whistled. "You've chosen er a good one, it's going to be er a tad expensive though."

"It's an investment." Evan shrugged. He was a little nervous at how much it was going to cost but it wasn't as if he was hurting for money either. He was rather wealthy.

"Alright then, if you've er um made your choice, grab your trunk and uh come up to the till. I'll get you wrung up and show you how to lock it to your signature so that only you can uh open it."

"Really?" Evan was pleased with the idea. Ginny had ransacked his trunk last year to go to Riddle's diary, she wouldn't have been able to do that if it had those charms. Ron also had gotten into his trunk a few times over the past two years to pinch his sweets and although that wasn't really a big deal he would much prefer it if no one apart from himself had access to his belongings. He wasn't used to having his own things due to the Dursleys and what he did have was always taken away from him. So, the fact that no one could steal from his trunk was a welcome fact.

"Indeed!"

Evan left Trump's Trunk wincing internally at the cost of his new trunk. It had been rather steep and the most he had spent since entering the wizarding world but like he had told Mr Trump, it was an investment. He was going to get himself some clothes for his Evan's persona when he remembered that he had already visited Twilfit and Tattings as Evan earlier and those were the clothes he was still waiting on. It would be too weird for him to return and order a bunch more clothes. He sighed and decided that he didn't really need a second wardrobe for 'Evan' anyway. 'Harry Potter' wouldn't usually be seen dressed up probably in more than a black robe over some muggle clothes. With that decided he snuck back into the Leaky Cauldron with his new trunk.

He turned back into 'Harry' and put away all his new muggle clothes neatly into his new trunk. Next, he had fun moving all his stuff from his old trunk into the new one. He grimaced at the state of his potion's equipment and even the ingredients, they would all need to be replaced. Didn't he see a potions shop in Knocturn Alley? If he took a nap now, he could go back out after dinner as Evan to explore the alley some more. He hadn't exactly looked around a lot after discovering the Fyrig Forge and Finn who was so gorgeous that Harry now knew that he definitely liked men. Anyway, he vaguely remembered hearing that most of the

shops in Knockturn Alley opened once it got dark, that could be why it was so quiet that morning when he had first gone. He would soon find out whether that was true or not.

Harry woke from his nap feeling refreshed and after a late dinner he became Evan again and donned on his black robe with a hood and ducked into Knockturn Alley.

It was dark and just as confusing as when he had entered the first time but the further, he walked the brighter it got. The shop windows were lit up enticing people in. There was Borgin and Burkes, but Evan ignored that shop. Next to Burkes was Noggin and Bonce. Curious, Evan went in.

He immediately walked straight back out. Nope. Noggin and Bonce it seems sold shrunken heads and only shrunken heads. He wondered if that's where the one on the Knightbus came from, but he didn't care enough to find out and made a mental note to avoid that shop. He did not need any heads, shrunken or otherwise.

The next shop he entered was Wizarding Supplies which sounded like a shop that should be in the main alley rather than the seedier one. To be honest it was a lot like the shoe shop that his Aunt took him to once. One that didn't only sell shoes but bags and other things too. He didn't linger despite its strangely light and welcoming interior. He picked up a dark blue satchel with the expansion and feather weight charms applied to it and a wand holster. He didn't know that they were a thing and it felt so much safer than sticking his wand in his back pocket. On a whim he picked up a second one, as a back up in case anything went wrong with the first one. It was cheap and he was in and out quickly.

The more Evan wandered around the less afraid of the alley he was. No one was paying any attention to him or made any weird advances towards him, so he felt confident enough to enter a pub called The White Wyvern. He was a little thirsty.

You know that stereotype scene in movies where the whole bar etc goes quiet when a newcomer enters it? Evan had seen that scene once as he was dusting the living room for his Aunt. But that Stereotype? Yeah, that didn't happen. No one stopped what they were doing to stare at him like they had when he was Harry Potter and entering the wizarding world for the first time. Here he was just another patron. He liked that.

The pub was warmly lit with candles and floating Lumos orbs. There were circular tables cluttered with people and wait was that a Goblin? Evan was a little surprised because if he had learnt anything from Binn's lectures (which he had to admit wasn't a lot) it was that Goblins did not like wizards, so it was a little weird to see some here. He shrugged it off though because it wasn't any of his business.

He approached the bar and took a seat on an empty stool. He wasn't the only one sat there though, further along was a huge man slumped over his drink. Evan didn't pay him any attention as the bartender came towards him.

"Aren't you a little young to be here, kid?" The bartender's voice was raspy. He was pale and his skin kind of looked papery and his teeth were rather sharp as he smiled at Evan.

“I was just thirsty.” He suddenly felt nervous. This was his first time in a pub other than the Leaky Cauldron. “Do you have any pumpkin juice?”

The man that was sitting further along the bar snorted. “Get him a butterbeer.” He ordered.

“Is that alcoholic?” Evan frowned.

“Very slightly but! It's a popular drink for tweenies like yourself. Tastes like butterscotch.”

“But it is alcoholic...”

“They serve it at Hogsmeade to students.” The barkeep reassured him. “You would have to drink like fifty of them to get even slightly buzzed.”

“Oh, alright then.” He nodded and reached for his coin purse.

“It's fine, I got it.” The man slid a few knuts across the bar. “My husband would have my neck if I let a kid pay for his drink when he's barely tall enough to look over the bar.”

The bartender gently placed a hot foaming tankard of amber liquid in front of Evan. “Careful, don't burn yourself.”

“Thanks.” Evan said to the barkeep and then repeated his thanks to the man that paid for his drink. He decided to ignore the remark about his height as he was pretty sure that was the first time that anyone had ever bought him something that wasn't essential. “I'm Evan.” He pulled his drink closer to himself but didn't sip it yet as it was too hot.

“Fenrir.” The man grunted.

Evan just nodded; he didn't know what else to say. He was terrible at making conversation just take his attempt with Finn earlier.

Trent Greyback wandered into his pub to meet his husband when he noticed that his handsome silver fox was talking to a tiny kid at the bar. What on earth was a child doing in Knockturn, unaccompanied this late in the day? It was practically night-time! Curious, he approached the bar and plastered a welcoming expression on his face. His husband didn't usually talk to other patrons, but he had a soft spot for strays.

“Fen, are you scaring this kid?” He joked leaning on the bar next to his husband and turned to get a closer look at the kid. He was pale with wide green eyes and ash blond hair. He didn't look much older than ten, eleven max. “Is this grumpy werewolf being a bother?”

He watched as the child's eyes widened and realised that Fen hadn't mentioned his status. Blast it, he was going to have to make it up to him for outing him like that, especially if the kid takes it badly.

“Are werewolves able to change outside of the full moon?” Huh, the kid seemed excited about it.

"I like you!" Fenrir barked a laugh and Trent relaxed.

"Thanks." The kid smiled bemused at the compliment before continuing. "But seriously..." What a curious little pup!

"Most werewolves can only turn with the full moon, but my Fen here is special." Trent explained, he always looked forward to boasting about his husband's skills. "He can turn at will."

"Cool."

"Hell yeah, it is." Fenrir grinned showing off his teeth in the way that usually made Trent want to jump his bones, but now wasn't the appropriate time so he focused on the kid who had just taken a sip of what looked like Butterbeer. He hummed in happily at the taste and he had a feeling that he hadn't ever had the drink before.

"Anyway, what's a kid like you doing in a place like this?" He asked. He needed to know why the pup wandered into his pub so late.

"Manners, Trent." Fenrir tutted. "You haven't even introduced yourself yet, this is Evan."

"Ah, my apologies." He rubbed the back of his sheepishly. Usually, he was the one having to scold Fen for his lack of manners, not the other way around. He also noticed the emphasis that Fen had put on the name and the lack of a surname. A fake name maybe? A possible runaway? "Trent Greyback, this loaf's husband."

"That's okay here?" Evan exclaimed before he winced. "Sorry it's just that in the muggle world it isn't and uh."

"You a mudblood?" Fen asked with a frown and Trent wanted to bury his head in his hands. Ah yes, Fen, let's scare off the kid before we can find out where he's from.

Evan scowled at the word. "No."

"Hey, it's alright." Trent held up his hands to calm him and shot his husband a warning look. "But yes, it's okay here."

"I'm not a mudblood but I was raised as one." Evan scowled down at the bar and took another sip of his drink. He's looking more and more like a runaway. He could also be older than he looks, if he is a runaway, lack of food can stunt your growth after all. Depends on when and why he ran.

"Oh, well it's our duty to help you acclimatise then." Trent smiled reassuringly. "Isn't that right, Fen?" He gave him a pointed look which his husband ignored.

"You want to be a werewolf?"

"Fenrir! You can't just ask him that!" He exclaimed exasperated with his husband's antics.

"Why not?"

“You just don’t.” And you know why! He rolled his eyes.

“Um, No thank you.” Evan interrupted the argument. “But thank you for the offer?” Aw he was so polite.

“You’re welcome kid. I think you would make a good wolf but whatever, it's your choice.” He shrugged and took a long draw of his drink. If the kid didn’t have anywhere to go, then he knew that Fen would want to take him in. They hadn’t discussed having kids, sure Fen had bitten some young'uns before, but they were dying and were always passed over to other members of the pack that wanted children. This was the first time that he had seen his husband connect to a child and mentally started making space in his life for the boy.

“Thanks.” Evan beamed as if Fen had given him the best compliment ever, which if he knew the man as well as Trent did, it was the best compliment that he could or ever would give.

“Anyway, do you have any questions that you’ve always wondered but never asked?” Trent asked.

Evan sipped his drink and thought for a moment. What should he ask? Well, he knew boys could be with boys which was a relief after his revelation that he was gay. So, what else did he want to know? To be honest he knew so little about the wizarding world that he didn’t even know what questions to ask...except one.

“Can men get pregnant?”

Fenrir did a spit take before bursting into laughter. It was loud and rough and echoed through the pub. Trent chuckled quietly and Evan swore that the bartender coughed to hide his amusement. People sitting at the nearby tables were also laughing. He wanted to die.

“No, kid.” Trent shook his head. “Men can’t get pregnant but if they want a baby, they can hire a surrogate.” He noticed the blank look on Evan’s face so he continued. “How old are you? Have you had ‘The Talk’ yet?”

“Oh Merlin, no.” Evan heard Fenrir mutter under his breath.

“What’s the talk?” Evan had never heard of it, especially as it seemed to be capitalised when spoken. Immediately the noise around them picked up and when Evan turned to see what they were talking about, maybe someone new entered the pub? They all avoided making eye contact with him. Odd.

Half an hour and several napkins covered in crude yet informative drawings later, Evan was sitting at the bar with a new butterbeer and a bright red face. He regretted everything.

“And *that* was the talk.” Trent finished with a flourish.

“Trent, darlin’ I think you traumatised the poor kid.” Fenrir chuckled, wrapping a large arm around his husband’s waist and pulling him backwards so that he was leant against him. He rested against his husband happily, amused at the shellshocked expression on the pup’s face.

Maybe he hadn't needed to go into as much detail as he had but clearly the kid was completely clueless!

"No, no." Evan shook his head, his face still red but he wanted to come to his new friend? - Yeah, surely after *that talk* they were friends- friend's defence. "It was really informative. I just wasn't expecting it."

"Well now you know." Trent smiled sheepishly. "I think I covered all the bases." Maybe he hadn't needed to go into as much detail as he had but clearly the kid was completely clueless!

Trent had been rather thorough, he covered straight sex, gay sex, lesbian sex, and everything in between. Evan felt that he was probably the most well-informed twelve-almost-thirteen-year-old there ever was. He wondered if Ron had been given The Talk and if so by who? His dad seemed a little too absentminded to do it so maybe one of his older brothers?

"You were very thorough darlin'" Fenrir drawled, his chest rumbling pleasantly against Trent's back as he spoke.

"Anyway, you are far too skinny." Trent changed the subject. The pup looked like he needed a good meal or ten. "Ken, what's the kitchen serving?"

"Shepherd's pie and Cullen Skink." Ken, the now named barkeep replied.

"Oh! You must have the Cullen Skink, it's this delicious Scottish soup. It's a mixture of smoked haddock, potatoes, onions, milk and cream."

"Um sure?" Evan would never turn down food, his time with the Dursley's taught him that. Food was a privilege for him, not a right.

"Excellent! And don't even think of reaching for your coins, this is on me." Trent gave him a stern look.

"It's fine, I can pay." Evan protested. Fenrir had already bought him two butterbeers after all. He bought the second one while Evan had been dying from embarrassment during the rather detailed and filled with personal advice talk about gay sex.

"Don't be silly, I'm not going to make you pay for your meal." Trent waved his money away and when Evan looked at Ken, the barkeep shook his head and took the werewolf's husband's money instead. Damn it.

"Give it up, kid." Fenrir advised. "My Trent can be a mother hen when he's decided that you're one of his pups."

What? What does that even mean? Evan blinked confused at the werewolf.

Ken came back after putting the order into the kitchen, he must have caught what Fenrir had said because he added: "Yeah, sorry Evan but Trent has all but adopted you."

What?

“And don’t think I didn’t notice that you never answered my question on what you were doing in a place like this.” Trent raised an eyebrow sternly and even had his hands on his hips. Oh no. He had found a male Mrs Weasley.

“Uh...”

“You’re doomed, kid.” Fenrir barked out a laugh.

Damn it.

Then like an angel sent to rescue him from the weirdly protective man he had just met that evening the door to the pub opened and his crush sauntered in.

“Yo, Finn!” was shouted by several customers.

The man merely grunted and nodded in response as he headed towards the bar, towards Evan. Evan who still had the graphic diagrams drawn on napkins next to him. He quickly scratched them up and stuffed them into the pocket of his robe as Finn reached them. He was much cleaner than he was that morning when Evan had met him whilst he was metalworking. His hair bun was neater too but Evan’s attention was drawn to the man’s eyes. His piercing, ice cold blue eyes. Eyes that were staring at him.

“Isn’t it past your bedtime, lillegutt?”

Meet Finn:



Chapter 3

Evan frowned and resisted the urge to cross his arms as he recognised the words. He had looked them up earlier that day in his new dictionary while he was waiting for his dinner at the Leaky Cauldron. Finn was calling him 'Little Boy'. So if he reacted to them it would only prove to Finn that he was a little boy. He was saved from reacting by Trent.

"Finn, what brings you by?" Trent asked, suddenly popping up between Finn and Evan. He did not like how familiar he was with his new pup. How did they meet anyway?

"Food." The Blacksmith grunted. As if summoned, a bowl of the Cullen Skink that Evan had ordered was placed in front of him.

"Thank you." Evan thanked Ken and picked up his spoon. He took a sip of the soup and hummed happily at the taste. "This is delicious. You definitely have to get this." He dug in, ignoring that it was hot enough to burn his tongue.

"I'll have the same." Finn ordered slumping forward and resting his chin on his hand. "A firewhiskey." Evan couldn't help but feel ridiculously pleased that Finn was getting the same meal that he was eating. It was stupid but he felt warm inside.

"Of course." Ken nodded before frowning at Evan. "Slow down, kid. It's hot."

Evan just smiled sheepishly at him. He was just so used to having to eat quickly that he'd learnt to ignore the temperature of the food.

"So, Finn," Trent brought the attention back to himself as he stood between his new pup and Finn. "How do you know Evan?"

"Oh no." Fenrir groaned as his husband went into protective overdrive. He needed another drink.

"He's a customer."

"Uh huh," Evan nodded with the spoon in his mouth before taking it out to elaborate. "He's making me an owl."

"Oh?" Evan couldn't see what Trent's expression was, but he sounded weird. "How...nice." Why did he pause like that? Evan looked to Fenrir to see if he would give him a clue, but the werewolf was deliberately looking away. He wanted no part in this.

Finn just grunted and sipped his firewhiskey.

"Anyway," Trent turned back to Evan as he was slurping his soup. "You were going to tell us what you're doing in a place like this."

"Uh." Evan froze with his spoon halfway to his mouth. Quick think of something smart rather than the real answer which was that you currently have no adult supervision and were

too curious for your own good.

“Leave him alone.” Finn sighed. “Just don’t let him wander by himself.”

Evan flushed and ducked his head. Phew he was saved! Maybe he would forgive Finn for calling him a little boy.

“Fine.” Trent sighed scowling at Finn but softened his expression when he looked at Evan. “You have any other questions you want answering tonight?” He wanted the kid to know that he could ask them anything. He was annoyed at Finn though, he had hoped that Evan would disclose whether he was a runaway or at least give him some clues to his origins.

“Yes, actually.” He nodded and finished off his soup. “Why is there a shop that only sells shrunken heads?”

He was pretty sure that Finn snorted. Fenrir laughed and Trent looked like he wanted to cry. “Why did you go in there?” This, this is why he wanted to know what the kid was doing out here so late! Who on earth let their ten year old wander around by themselves?! Then again, he didn’t know for sure his exact age.

“It didn’t exactly say on the outside that it only sold shrunken heads.” Evan shrugged and pushed his empty bowl away from himself. “I left straight away when I saw them.” He wrinkled his nose. “Why do they sell them anyway?”

“How old are you?” Trent asked suddenly, ignoring his question about the shrunken heads for the moment.

“Uh..” Evan blinked in surprise, “Almost thirteen, why?”

Trent was immediately concerned. No thirteen year old should be that small. He noticed that Ken and Finn froze in shock at the age reveal and felt Fen growl sub vocally in anger. There was definitely something wrong with this kid’s home life.

“Yeah, I don’t feel comfortable letting you wander around Knockturn by yourself.” Trent said before the silence after the age reveal could go on too long. He knew that it was the wrong thing to say as soon as it left his mouth.

“I’m fine.” Evan scowled, immediately annoyed. Who was Trent to tell him what and where to go?

“Oh dear.” Fenrir sighed and nudged Trent out of the way so he could look at the pup in the eye. “Look, Evan.” He tapped the bar. “Trent isn’t trying to baby you. He just knows that this place isn’t exactly safe.”

“I’ve been fine though.” The pup jutted his chin out stubbornly. Shit, if they weren’t careful they were going to scare the pup off because they had come on too strong.

“So far, yes.” He sighed. “But you can’t use magic to defend yourself outside of school as I bet you don’t have a second wand.” He pointed out logically before smirking and added. “And you are far too skinny to be able to do any decent damage with a punch.” He was tiny.

Evan bit his lip and thought. He didn't want to worry his new friends, and they did have a point- wait a second wand? "If I get another wand, I can do magic during the holidays?" He asked shrewdly.

"Of course, you would focus on that." Finn muttered and took a fortifying drink of his whiskey.

"Yes." Fenrir ignored the blacksmith and answered Evan.

"Will you show me where I can get one tomorrow?" Being able to use magic whenever he wanted would be so amazing! Evan kind of wanted to get a wand right now! But he was also feeling pretty tired despite the nap he had earlier.

"Sure, thing kid."

"Fenrir!" Trent protested. Were they really going to get the pup a second wand? Wasn't it a little dangerous to have him able to cast magic without supervision?!

"Darlin, wouldn't you prefer that I go with him than allow him to go by himself?" Fenrir tried to reason with his husband.

"*He* is right here" Evan was definitely not pouting. He was not. "And *he* is not a baby that needs a babysitter. I asked Fenrir because it would be quicker." And he would know where he could get one from. If Fenrir said no then he would still try and find a wand shop anyway, it would just take him a little longer.

"You're right," Trent sighed and smiled sadly. He had forgotten that he was dealing with a thirteen year old and not a ten year old that he had originally that he was. "I'm sorry."

"No, I-" Evan bit his lip. "I'm sorry." He felt guilty. Trent had been nothing but kind and had even taken the time to answer his questions no matter how embarrassing and he had repaid that by basically throwing a tantrum about getting a second wand. Merlin, was he becoming a Dudley? He shivered in revulsion at the very thought. No, he wasn't like his pig of a cousin, he needed a second wand to be able to cast magic outside of school, to be safe. He wasn't getting one just because he wanted one. He wasn't like Dudley.

"Ugh." Finn grumbled, breaking Evan from his thoughts. "Just take him to the blasted wand shop tomorrow and be done with this conversation."

"Three in the afternoon?" Fenrir suggested.

"I'll meet you outside of here?" Evan agreed easily. He didn't want Fenrir to change his mind by being difficult. He would have preferred going earlier in the morning but then again, if 'Harry' slept in too often then Tom might get concerned and check on him. That was the last thing he wanted to happen. So maybe the afternoon was a better time to go.

"Sure." It was easier to meet outside the pub than anywhere else.

"Great." Evan beamed. "I'll see you there then." He then yawned. "I should head to bed now though." The warm food and drink filled his stomach pleasantly and made him feel sleepy.

“Like I said, it's past your bedtime lillegutt.” Finn chimed in.

Evan childishly stuck his tongue out at him before he turned back to Trent and Fenrir. He hoped that his face wasn't as red as it felt. “I'll see you tomorrow.” He waved at them and slid off the stool.

Trent almost went after him. He didn't want Evan to walk back to wherever he was staying alone but Fenrir grabbed him before he could.

“Don't.” He shook his head. “He won't appreciate you following him.”

“But, for all we know he could be homeless!” He protested. He didn't know where these protective urges were coming from. Fen had been the one to get attached to the pup first but Trent found that he wanted to wrap him up in a soft blanket and keep him where he could see him.

“He smells too clean to be homeless.” Fen reassured him. “I'll be seeing him tomorrow, I'll try to get more information outta him then.”

“You don't want to push too hard, too soon.” Ken chimed in as he collected Evan's dirty dishes. “You saw how his hackles raised when you tried to make choices for him.”

“He comes from money.”

The sudden information made the three of them pause before they turned to Finn who had shared it.

“How do you know that?” Trent demanded to know.

“I said he was a customer didn't I?” He raised a pierced eyebrow at him. “Barnet pulled a Gringotts check out to pay for it.” He pushed his empty glass away and signalled for Ken to get him another.

“What else do you know?” It was only Fen's arm around his waist that stopped him from shaking Finn for answers. Getting information from the damn pureblood was like taking a galleon from a Niffler: impossible.

“That's about it.” He downed his second drink before throwing his money on to the bar top. “G'night.” And with that he lumbered out of the pub.

Trent scowled after him.

“We've got to be patient, darlin.” Fen placed a kiss to the side of his head. “We'll get to the bottom of it.”

“We better.” He didn't even pretend that he wasn't pouting. “Is it weird that we barely know the pup but-”

“But already feel like we would kill for him?” Fen finished. “Nah, I feel the same.”

Evan was surprised that for someone so worried about him wandering around Knockturn by himself didn't seem to care about him making it back home. Then again, he supposed that the man didn't know where he was staying. He wondered what Trent would think about him staying at the Leaky Cauldron. He had a nice time though. Knockturn wasn't as scary as everyone made it out to be. Trent and Fenrir were really nice, and Fenrir was a werewolf! How cool was that?! He made a mental note to ask Fenrir more about werewolves or maybe he should get a book on them first? He wasn't sure.

It was really easy to sneak back into the Leaky Cauldron. The only person on the ground floor of the pub was the night barkeep, a woman that Harry/Evan had yet to meet. She was asleep at the bar, her head pillowed by her arms. He made it back to his room without being spotted. He undressed, wiped his makeup off his forehead and changed his hair back to black. He didn't want to sleep as 'Evan' just in case he was taken by surprise in the morning. The last thing he wanted to do was to answer the door to Harry's room as Evan. He carefully put his demiguise glasses away, not wanting to grab them in the morning instead of the 'Harry' pair.

Harry couldn't wait to get a spare wand! He couldn't wait to be able to do magic outside of school, there are so many spells that he liked the look of but hadn't had the chance to try in his school books alone let alone the ones in *Abracadabra: An A-Z of Spooky Spells or Olde and Forgotten Bewitchments and Charmes* by E. Limus and *Practical Household Magic* is a book by Zamira Gulch that he bought the other day.

He had planned to try to sleep straight away but as he lay down in bed, he caught sight of the book about mind magic and sighed. He really didn't like the idea of someone being able to read his thoughts. So, he wiggled around until he got comfortable and started to go through the exercise that he did last night.

Harry thought about the safety of his cupboard and once he could even smell the cleaning products that his aunt kept in there with him, he allowed himself to let go. He was safe in his cupboard and no longer had to think. Any stray thoughts he just let go, they didn't matter, nothing mattered.

A slam of a door startled Harry awake. He had fallen asleep when meditating again. Maybe he should try practising when he wasn't about to go to sleep? Maybe in the morning? That was an idea. He sat up and after putting on his glasses, he pulled the mind magic book into his lap and reread the paragraph about meditation more carefully.

"... Find a quiet space. Make sure there is nothing to disturb you before you start meditation.

Sit in a comfortable position. You can sit on top of a cushion or blanket, on the floor or in a chair. Sit upright, but don't tense up — your body should feel relaxed.

Breathe gently. Focus your attention on each inhale and exhale. Alternatively, you can begin with a body scan: focus on each part of the body, down from your toes and up to your head, pausing to notice the sensations.

Let distractions come and go. If your mind wanders, acknowledge the thought that has distracted you, but do not dwell on it. Then, gently bring your attention back to your breathing. Getting distracted when meditating is inevitable and one of the biggest worries for beginners — but learning how to manage distraction is a vital part of the process...”

Ah, okay so he hadn't really been doing it right. No wonder he had been falling asleep! Harry sighed and stretched. Well, there was no time like the present. He climbed out of bed and grabbed his pillow to sit on. He placed it on the floor at the foot of the bed so he could lean against it if he needed to. He wiggled to get comfortable and placed the book down next to him. Okay so he was in a quiet place, and he was comfortable, next he needed to breathe gently? How do you breathe gently? He inhaled and exhaled. Maybe he should count his breaths?

One inhale, one exhale. Two inhale, two exhale. Three inhale, three exhale...He closed his eyes and focused on how his breath filled his lungs and was he breathing properly? Wait no, he was getting distracted! But didn't the book say that it is okay? Right okay back to counting his breaths.

After what felt like an hour but was probably only a minute, Harry gave up for now. The book did say that it would be hard to start off and he didn't have a way to signal when five minutes were up. But when he gets his new wand, he'll be able to set an alarm!

To waste time until he met up with Fenrir, he decided to be Harry for a while. He ate breakfast and wandered Diagon Alley for a while. He browsed the Obscurus Books again and found a few interesting titles including an interesting looking history book. He had been interested in History before Hogwarts where Binns kind of ruined it for him. But this book looked good and as the wizarding world was now his world, he should know more about it right?

Harry settled into a café with a nice tall glass of pumpkin juice and a corned beef sandwich and opened his book. It was 'The Wizarding World Encyclopaedia of History.'

“...The International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy commonly shortened to International Statute of Secrecy was a law in the Wizarding world that was first signed in 1689 then established officially in 1692. The law was laid down by the International Confederation of Wizards to safeguard the wizarding community from Muggles and hide its presence from the world at large...”

He frowned at how little he understood in that first paragraph alone. What was the International Confederation of Wizards? What did they do? Were they still around? And he had heard of the Statute of Secrecy but other than being told not to do magic around Muggles but that was it.

He continued to read and was horrified that children were usually the victims as they had the least amount of control of their magic, especially those that were born into muggle families. That some who attended Hogwarts were careless and even led the 'Witch' Hunters to other witches and wizards due to their loose lips.

Merlin, no wonder Slytherin was against muggleborns! Harry could understand it now that he thought about it in context. Muggleborns were getting other wizards and witches killed, getting themselves killed. He still didn't agree with killing them all though.

He read until it started getting too busy to read comfortably in the café and returned to the Leaky Cauldron until it was time to meet Fenrir.

Evan met up with Fenrir outside the White Wyvern pub. The werewolf looked even bigger standing up than he did sat at the bar, and he tried not to feel intimidated. He had been really nice to him last night, and seemed more like Hagrid than his Uncle Vernon, Evan had no reason to be afraid. He was also helping him get a wand so he would be able to defend himself, that doesn't seem like the action of someone who wanted to hurt him, right?

Evan took a deep breath and approached the werewolf. "Hey," Nice, that sounded cool.

"Pup." Fenrir greeted him gruffly, he noticed that the pup seemed nervous and wondered if he had read up on werewolves since last night and was now regretting meeting with him.

"Thanks again for doing this." Evan fidgeted, twisting his fingers together. He resisted the urge to bounce on his toes with excitement. Yes, he was still nervous, but his excitement was quickly overriding it. He couldn't wait to be able to use magic! Not using magic was the second thing he hated most about the summers, after being sent back to the Dursleys.

"Couldn't let you wander around defenceless. Might get eaten." Fenrir grinned wolfishly. Trent would have had his head if he was there, but he wanted to test the kid, see if he was nervous because he's a werewolf.

"I'm just excited to do magic outside of school." Evan admitted. "So where do we get my wand from?" The lack of fear proved that it wasn't him that the pup was nervous about, or rather not him specifically.

"Not from Olivander's that's for sure." He put a heavy hand on Evan's shoulder to steer him through the winding street and noticed that the pup flinched. He acted as if he hadn't seen it though and instead filed away that tidbit to tell Trent later. "Come on, we're burning daylight."

Fenrir led him to a narrow and shabby building where in peeling silver letters the shop's name was displayed: Jimmy Kiddell's Wonderful Wands. It sounded rather friendly, and like everywhere else he had been in the alley, minus the shrunken head shop or Borkin and Burkes, He couldn't see a reason to why it couldn't be in the main alley. The windows were either frosted glass or needed a good clean but so were the windows of Olivander's. The door had no bell as Fenrir opened and led the way in. Unlike Olivander's which had been tiny and

incredibly dusty, this wand shop was surprisingly spacious and dust free. The only similarity was that it too had Thousands of narrow boxes containing wand boxes piled right up to the ceiling behind the counter.

“Hello, gentlemen.” A stunning black woman greeted them. She looked up from a book that she was reading as she sat behind the counter. She had incredibly long cornrows that she draped over her shoulder.

“This lad needs another wand.” Evan was shoved forward by the rough hand that had been guiding him. He stumbled slightly, his arms flailed as he caught himself and flushed with embarrassment. This woman was just as gorgeous as Finn, and he had almost fallen on his face in front of her. Sure, he didn’t like her, like he liked Finn but that still didn’t mean that he wanted to look like an idiot in front of her!

“One without the trace, I suppose?” She smirked her long, elegant fingers closed her book.

“Of course.” Fenrir grinned back.

“Then you have come to the right place.” She then turned her attention onto Evan. “I am Adele Kiddell, great granddaughter of the original Jimmy Kiddell.”

“Nice to meet you.” Evan waved lamely. Merlin, he hated how awkward he was, at least this was going better than introducing himself as ‘I’m Gay.’ like he had to Finn.

“Can I have your name, kid?”

“I-” He paused suddenly, remembering reading books about the fae when he was little. One of the biggest rules was not to give them your name or agree to anything. He wasn’t sure why that had come to mind, but he went with it. “You can call me Evan.”

Evan didn’t see the proud look Fenrir sent in his direction. He had no idea that he had just impressed the werewolf or how close the werewolf had come to attacking the fae woman for attempting to steal the pup’s name. He would have gladly ripped her throat out had the pup fallen for her trap.

“Smart Kid.” She grinned and it was either the lighting or Miss Kiddell had sharper than normal teeth... “Anyway, let’s get started. You know the drill. I hand you a wand, you give it a wave and we keep going until one likes you.”

And that's exactly what happened.

Evan went through dozens of wands all of which caused some kind of calamity to occur in the shop. Lights smashed, windows broke, even a plant exploded at one point. Some wands didn’t even give a reaction and were snatched from his hand before he could wave them. It was eerily reminiscent of his trip to Olivander’s. Then finally he had his wand.

As soon as his hand wrapped around the light brown, smooth wand, he knew it was his. He waved it and the tip lit up like the brightest of Lumos spells.

“And you have found your wand.” Miss Kiddell smiled. “It's Elm with a Snallygaster heartstring, ten and a quarter in length and rather swishy.”

“I've never heard of a Snallygaster.” Evan commented, unable to take his eyes off his new wand. It somehow felt a better fit than his Pheonix feather one.

“It's a creature from America, a half bird, half reptile creature. They are known for being incredibly curious with impenetrable skin. You don't get many wands with that core, due to the rarity of the creature. That heartstring was harvested from a Snallygaster that passed due to old age,” She told him. “In case you were worried about how it was sourced.” Evan had never wondered how the ingredients for wands were sourced but it was good to know that no creature died needlessly for his wand.

“Well done, kid. Not bad.” Fenrir grinned at him from where he had been sat on a chair to the side out of the way. He had moved there after the plant had exploded; he was pretty sure that he would find soil in his hair later. “If I remember correctly, elm wands prefer owners with presence, magical dexterity and a certain native dignity.”

“Also of all wand woods, elm produces the fewest accidents, the least foolish errors, and the most elegant charms and spells;” Miss Kiddell further explained. “They are sophisticated wands, capable of highly advanced magic in the right hands and judging by how much that wand likes you, I think it's in the right hands.”

“Thanks.” Evan held tightly onto his wand, grateful that he had thought to bring a wand holder with him and that he had bought two in the first place. He would have hated to put his new wand away or accidentally break it or something. “How much do I owe you?”

“Well, wands are usually 7 galleons but due to the rare components, yours is going to be a tad more expensive at 12 galleons.”

That was fair. Evan nodded and paid. “Thank you.”

“Try not to get caught with it.” She cautioned. “The ministry frowns on people having a second unregistered wand.”

“I will.” He promised and put the wand into his wrist holster.

They left the shop and Evan couldn't keep the grin off his face. “Thank you again for this Fenrir.” He had a wand that he could use during the summer! He could cast magic whenever he wanted! Well, so long as he was careful not to get caught with it.

“No problem kid, now what do you want to do next? I could teach you some spells that they don't have on the Hogwarts curriculum.” He never attended Hogwarts but that didn't mean he was stupid. Fenrir probably knew more spells than most of Hogwarts' seven years!

“That would be amazing!” Evan nodded eagerly. “But first, can we go show Finn my new wand?” He wanted to show it off, Finn did help get Trent off his back so he could get his wand today.

“You want to show Finn?” Fenrir asked slowly. “Why?”

“Well, why not?” He could feel his face heat up.

“Oh!” Fenrir’s eyes went wide, and his grin grew as the little pup blushed bright red. “Aw that’s adorable. Just wait until Trent hears about your little crush!”

“W-what? No! I-I don’t have a crush!” He denied shaking his head. He was pretty sure his face was as red as a strawberry.

“You do!” Fenrir teased him. “You like him.”

“S-shut up.” Evan thought he was going to combust from how hot his face felt.

“Wow, so eloquent.”

“Anyway,” He tried to change the subject. “Why did you and Trent seem so surprised when he told you I was a customer?”

“Oh, that was because the bloke is so picky when it comes to commissions. So, we were a little surprised that he agreed to make you an owl.” Fenrir suddenly pounced on him, and Evan found himself in a stranglehold with Fenrir’s large hand messing up his hair.

“Hey!” He protested.

“That means he must like you a little bit back!” But if the man touched him, then Fenrir would kill him.

“W-what?” He stuttered as he fought the older man off. “G-get off.” Then he remembered his wand and when the werewolf continued to ruffle his hair and not let go, he summoned his wand from his holster and hit the wolf with a stinging hex.

Fenrir yelped and let him go.

“Anyway,” Evan huffed and straightened his clothes and tried to neaten his hair. “I doubt he likes me, I’m not even thirteen.” He rolled his eyes. “He probably accepted because I humiliated myself in front of him when I first walked into his Forge.” Which hurt his pride a little but seriously, Finn was what? At least twenty, twenty-five? He would not be interested in a runty almost thirteen-year-old and if he was then he was a creep.

“Alright, I’ll let up, but I would like to hear that story.” Fenrir promised as he rubbed his hip where the stinging hex had hit. “Anyway, first crushes are cute, so I’m not going to stop you from showing him your new wand.” It wouldn’t hurt to encourage this; Finn was a decent bloke who wasn’t interested in children. Evan would be safe to have his first crush without fear of rejection because it was obvious that it was not going to happen and he was safe from it being returned, at least until he was of age.

“Thanks.” Evan’s face still felt hot, so he took a few deep breaths to calm down.

“I’ll meet you back at the White Wyvern after you’ve finished showing off.” Fenrir patted his shoulder. “It’ll give me a chance to think of some spells to start you off with.” And gossip with Trent.

“I’ll pay for your drink.” Evan decided it was the least he could do to thank the werewolf.

“Hah, I’d like to see you try.” And with that and a negligent wave, Fenrir walked off.

Evan walked into the Fyrig Forge and was once again hit by a wall of heat. He made a mental note to learn a cooling charm asap. He didn’t want to look like a sweaty mess every time he came to watch Finn work. Yes, he knew that his crush would never go anywhere but he had his pride!

He followed the sound of metal hitting metal and was treated with the sight of Finn hard at work. His muscles bulged as he raised a heavy hammer and then struck at the metal on the anvil. Was he working on more horseshoes or maybe he’s started on Evan’s owl? Evan wondered as his eyes were drawn to Finn’s hair which was in the same messy bun that he potential always wore. Evan would need to see him more often to see if he changed his hairstyle. And maybe when they were better friends, he could ask about his tattoos.

He felt a little creepy just watching Finn work, but he couldn’t bring himself to disturb him. Maybe he should just leave? He could always come back later. Yeah, he should come back later, Finn was clearly busy and surely, he wouldn’t endear himself to Finn by interrupting his work. However, the decision was taken away from him.

“Lillegutt.” Finn’s voice brought Evan out of his thoughts. “What do you want?”

“Oh, um.” Damn it, Evan felt like the little boy that Finn called him. What was he thinking wanting to show off his new wand? What was he seven and trying to get the Aunt Petunia’s approval?

“It’s past three, did you get your new wand?” He asked as he continued to hammer whatever he was working on. Oh Merlin, the man remembered! Okay be cool, Evan. Be cool.

“Yeah, want to see?” Evan summoned it from his holster. “It’s ten and a quarter inch, Elm and Snallygaster heartstring.”

“Nice.”

“Yep! And Fenrir said he was going to teach me some spells that aren’t on the curriculum at Hogwarts.” He put his wand away when it became clear that Finn wasn’t actually going to look at it. He was just going to continue to work as they talked which was fine. Totally fine.

“You’ll have to be careful about what he teaches you.”

“What do you mean?” Did he mean? Didn’t Evan just have to be careful not to get caught using his new wand as it didn’t have the trace.

The hammering paused. “Don’t worry about it.”

Well, now Evan was going to worry about it. “No, come on. What did you mean?”

Finn sighed and put his hammer down. “Listen, lilleгутt. If you’re going to hang around Knockturn then you need to realise that not everything is going to be strictly light or legal.” He turned to face Evan and crossed his muscular arms across his chest. “Fenrir may end up teaching spells that your teachers would not approve of. So be careful.”

Yeah okay, that made sense. “Alright, I will.” He promised, and he would be careful. He didn’t know exactly how he felt about potentially learning illegal and or dark spells, but he would just wait and see what Fenrir decides to teach him. He could always say no to learning anything that he didn’t like.

“Good, now gå vekk.”

“Gå vekk?” Evan repeated and mentally added it to the list of words that he wanted to look up.

“Yeah, it means go away.” Finn huffed. “Don’t keep Fenrir waiting.”

“Noted.” He would still check his dictionary to make sure he wasn’t lying. “See you later.”

“Sure.” Finn grunted and resumed blacksmithing. That was an improvement on just a grunt! So Evan left the blacksmith with a little pep in his step.

Evan walked into the White Wyvern and spotted Fenrir sitting at a round table just left of the bar. Deciding to buy the werewolf a drink as promised he went straight to the bar first. The man behind the bar wasn’t Ken but a rather tan bloke with several facial scars and a buzzcut.

“Can I order a firewhiskey for that guy?” He pointed to Fenrir.

“Naw, sorry kid. Can’t sell you firewhiskey even if you’re going to give it to someone else.” He drawled.

“Ah, that makes sense.” Evan frowned but won’t argue with the man. “In that case can I have two butterbeers?”

“Sure, can do.”

“Thanks.” He reached for his money bag only for the barkeep to shake his head.

“Nope, your money is no good here.”

“But-”

“Nope, I’ve been told that all your orders will be put on the Greybacks’ tab.”

“Can I pay that tab?” He tried. He really didn’t want Fenrir and Trent to pay for everything that he bought from this pub.

“Nope.” The barkeeper popped the ‘p’. “Go on and sit your arse down and I’ll bring the drinks over.”

“Thanks.” Evan said because it was the polite thing to do but he knew that he was pouting. He had been well and truly out manoeuvred. That damn wily werewolf and his husband were too damn nice.

He sulked over to the table and sat down with a sigh. “You win.”

“I told you kid, you’re not gonna be able to pay for anything here.” Fenrir looked smug. The barkeeper came over with the two butterbeers. “Thanks Steve.”

“Thanks.” Evan nodded at the barkeeper now known as Steve before turning back to Fenrir. “Fine.” He sighed and then shook off the annoyance. “Anyway, you promised me magic so...” He took a sip of his butterbeer.

“Alright.” He chuckled and pushed over a book. “This here, is a book on magic theory. I’m not sure why they don’t teach this stuff at Hogwarts.” He shrugged. “Read it on your own time, it’s yours now.”

“Thank you.” Evan planned to start reading as soon as he got back to his room.

“Now let’s get started on some spells.” Fenrir grinned wolfishly. “You heard of *crescercauda*?”

“No, what does it do?”

“It makes the target grow a tail.”

“Cool.” He couldn’t wait to try that one out! But first... “Is there a counter spell?”

“Oh good, you have a brain.” Fenrir looked pleased. “*Finite Incantatem*.”

“Oh, I’ve heard that one!” Evan remembered Snape using it during the farce of Duelling Club to restore order.

“That’s good. It’s a general counter spell that will put an end to or undo the effects of most common spells.”

“Including the tail growing one?” Evan asked suspiciously, remembering Finn’s warning.

“Yes, including that one.”

“Okay great. I guess I should learn the counter spell first.”

“Then let’s get started.”

Fenrir walked him through the wand movement and the pronunciation of the spell, once he felt that Evan had it down, he cast a colour charm on a bar mat and had Evan cast it until he could do it with ease. Fenrir was impressed with how quickly the pup picked up the spell,

counter charms are notoriously difficult to master, with only a few years of magical education under your belt.

“You are a really good teacher.” Evan commented as they paused to sip their butterbeers.

“Why don’t you teach at Hogwarts?” Fenrir would be an improvement on Lockhart from last year.

“That’s sweet pup, but I’m a werewolf.”

“What does that have to do with anything?” Evan was confused. What does being a werewolf have to do with being a teacher?

“Werewolves aren’t exactly liked, kid. We’re deemed too dangerous to be around and too dangerous to be hired.” It was terrible how naïve and clueless the pup was about the magical world.

“But why? Don’t you just turn into a wolf once a month?”

“Yeah, but without an expensive potion that basically poisons the wolf, most werewolves don’t have any control when they are transformed and tend to ravage anything they come across. People fear what they can’t control. And there are so many laws in place that make it incredibly hard to even get a job in the wizarding world or even get educated.”

“You said most.” Evan pointed out while his mind spun from the information. There was a lot to unpack in that. Werewolves didn’t have control when they transformed? Unless they had a potion that poisoned them? That was terrible! And from the sound of it they were basically second-class citizens.

“If you embrace the wolf, and not fight it, then you’ll be able to control it when you are transformed.” Fenrir explained. “And anyway, I should probably tell you that I have a bad reputation. You’ll hear that I am a child eater.” It was better that the pup heard it from him rather than someone else later. This way he would get the truth. He had never touched a child inappropriately, and he only ever turned children that were severely ill. It wasn’t his fault that the Ministry used him as the poster boy for evil creatures.

“Uh.” Evan did not know what to say to that.

“I’m not, by the way. I do bite children but only sick ones, ones that have no chance of survival without the bite.”

“Uh, okay.” Evan nodded and took a sip of his drink. “I believe you.” After all he knows about the damage gossip can do to someone’s reputation. He was after all called the Heir of Slytherin and shunned for the majority of the last year. Fenrir had offered to bite him, offered it. He did not force anything onto him, and he backed off when Evan had said no. So, until he proved otherwise, he would trust that the werewolf was telling the truth.

“Thanks, Kid.” Fenrir ruffled Evan’s hair roughly. He huffed and pushed the older man away. Fenrir just chuckled and then got focused back on their lesson “Anyway, let’s get back to the

fun stuff. Chadwick owes me a favour, I'm sure he won't mind being your toad for the experiment."

When Evan made his way back to the Leaky Cauldron the sun was setting, and he had successfully given Chadwick and Fenrir a tail and cancelled the spell. He had caught Fenrir by surprise and Trent, who had been nearby, managed to catch a picture of it. Which was when the lesson devolved into the werewolf chasing his husband trying to get rid of the film. There were bets on whether Fenrir would catch Trent and whether he would manage to destroy the camera. It was hilarious and Evan couldn't remember the last time he laughed so much.

As he changed back into Harry, he realised that tomorrow was his birthday. He would need to give his Evan persona a different birthday but first he would enjoy Harry's. Merlin, if he wasn't careful, he would become as bad as Dudley or worse as even Dudley didn't get to have two birthdays!

He had dinner as Harry before relaxing in bed to read the book on magical theory that Fenrir had given him, until midnight as was his tradition. He always stayed up until midnight to see his birthday in and this year was no different.

The book was fascinating. It stated that magic was energy and therefore could not be destroyed, only changed. But it is also a force as it interacts and even changes the so-called laws of nature. And on it went explaining different types of magic: empty magic and emotive magic.

Empty magic is usually used to describe spells like Wingardium Leviosa or Lumos, they are spells or feats of magic in which the caster only needs to tell the magic what to do, only needs to focus on the outcome and it will happen.

Emotive magic is where the magic and or spell is fuelled by an emotion. For example, the Patronus spell involves the caster using a positive emotion to fuel it. It is a taxing piece of magic as it drains the caster of that emotion, straining them for the duration of the spell. It is a spell that requires a great amount of positive emotion and therefore most people struggle to cast the spell. The problem is that most people live a generally happy life and therefore their positive emotions are muted as they have no 'shadow' to highlight it.

Curious about the patronus spell now, Harry dug out his *Abracadabra: An A-Z of Spooky Spells* to see if the spell was in the book. He wanted to know what it did. The spell wasn't in that book, so on a whim he checked *Olde and Forgotten Bewitchments and Charmes* by E. Limus found the spell under the 'P' section: "... *The Patronus Charm (Expecto Patronum) is one of the most powerful defensive charms known to Wixenkind. It is an immensely complicated and an extremely difficult spell. The charm evokes a partially tangible positive energy force known as a Patronus (pl. Patronuses) or spirit guardian. It was the primary protection against Dementors and Lethifolds, against which there were no other defences...* " Harry was quickly lost in the history of the spell. There was a legend that one of the most powerful patronuses was that of a small mouse that belonged to Illyius who used it to defend his village from the evil wizard Raczidian and his Dementors.

Harry was fascinated by it, but his reading was disturbed by the arrival of several owls at midnight.

Chapter 4

Harry grinned at the sight of the owls and scrambled off his bed to let them into his room. He opened the window just in time as Errol crashed into the room and landed in an exhausted heap on Harry's bed.

"Tsk." He shook his head at the poor owl. "Maybe I should get the Weasley's a new owl for Christmas? If I say it's a present for all of them, will they accept it? It was just cruel to keep using Errol." He ignored the Weasley's owl for now and instead approached the owl that had politely knocked on his window. It was a pretty barn owl.

"And who are you from?" He asked, as he accepted the letter and parcel. "If you wait a moment, I can get you an owl treat." He glanced down at the writing on the front of the letter and recognised Hermione's writing. "Huh, did Hermione finally get an owl?" He fed the bird an owl treat.

Hedwig just huffed from her perch. "Oh, Hedwig." He smiled fondly. "I planned to give you one too." He fed her a treat and gently stroked her plumage. She cooed and groomed his hair for a moment until he managed to extract himself from her.

He went over to Errol to see if he was still alive when he suddenly had a thought. What if he told the Weasley's that Errol died while he set the bird free? Hmm actually Errol probably wouldn't be able to survive in the wild. Maybe he should find someone that would take care of him and not send him on long arduous journeys? He gently stroked the elderly owl's feathers and was relieved to see that he was still breathing but he looked absolutely exhausted, more than usual. Odd. He carefully extracted the letter and gift from his grasp.

He opened the letter first and found a newspaper article declaring that Arthur Weasley had won the Daily Prophet prize draw of seven hundred galleons which they apparently spent on a trip to Egypt judging by the photo that accompanied the article. Harry scanned the moving photograph, and a grin spread across his face as he saw all nine of the Weasleys waving furiously at him...Right in the middle of the picture was Ron, tall and gangling, with his pet rat, Scabbers, on his shoulder. He was really happy for Ron but couldn't help but wonder if his parents could have spent the money more wisely...like on a new owl. He put the article to the side and read Ron's letter.

Harry mate,

Dad won the Daily Prophet prize draw so we're visiting Bill in Egypt. It's been great! But even better news, I got a new wand!

Percy's been made Headboy and is acting like a pompous git. Fred and George got in trouble when they tried to shut him in a tomb, I can still hear mum yelling at them. Ginny is quiet but can you blame her after what happened last year? It's been great seeing Bill and Charlie though, even if Bill is still technically working during the holiday as mum didn't tell him we were coming.

Happy birthday! I hope you like the present, it's a Sneakscope, it's supposed to light up, make noises and spin when there is someone untrustworthy around. I bought it at the market here.

We'll be back in England and at Diagon the last week of August. Don't send Errol with a reply, I think the trip back to Egypt would kill him.

Ron.

Well, at least he got a new wand. Harry huffed and put the letter to the side. He was happy that his mate was having a good time in Egypt, but it was a shame that he wasn't coming back until the last week before school. No wonder Errol was exhausted if he had flown all the way from Egypt! He paused in opening his mail to get carefully turn a spare quill into a simple dish and then filled it with water from his attached bathroom. He placed the water on the bedside table and moved the lamp to the floor. He then rolled up some of Dudley's castoffs to make a kind of nest on the bedside table and gently placed Errol in the little nest next to the water bowl. He was probably really dehydrated after such a long flight.

That done, Harry opened the gift from Ron and saw as described the Sneakoscope inside, it looked like a gyroscope. It was pretty cool, and he was sure it would come in handy after all, he had been attacked by two out of two defence professors. He made a mental note to have it in his school bag when he goes to that particular class. It was perfect.

Harry reached for Hermione's next, but before he could open it another owl flew in through the window and dumped a heavy looking package on the bed before flying straight back out. Weird. He shrugged and decided to check out that present first, sorry Hermione.

He hefted the parcel into his lap and guessed from its size and weight that it was a large book. He wondered who sent it. He carefully undid the string that was holding the parcel paper together and found a leather-bound book which immediately came to life as soon as it was free.

It tried to eat Harry's face, snarling and spitting. Merlin! He dropped the book to the floor and scrambled further onto his bed, keeping his feet off the floor. Hedwig and the barn owl, screeched and fled from the room, not that he could blame them. The book gnashed its teeth- it's a book why does it have teeth?!- before it scuttled under his bed and out of sight.

"Who in Merlin's name sent me a weaponised book?" He exclaimed and flinched as the beastly book growled from under the bed. He looked through the packaging to see if there was a letter and was relieved to find that there was.

Harry,

Thought I would get you the Care of Magical Creature's course book before the book list goes out.

Sincerely,

The new Care of Magical Creatures Professor;

Hagrid.

P.s Just stroke the spine and the book will be as content as kneazle kitten.

Of course, it was Hagrid that sent him a monstrous book. Harry sighed fondly; he should have known. At least he included how to calm the book down, although judging from the growling underneath his bed, he should probably wait until the book fell asleep...do books sleep? The wizarding world was so weird that anything was possible really.

While he waited, and with only the angry book and a comatose Errol to keep him company, Harry opened the envelope from Hermione.

Salut Harry,

That's hello in French, or it could also be used as goodbye depending on the context. I am writing to you from Nice, France! I've been having a wonderful time exploring both the muggle and magical parts of France. I know my parents are muggles but I found a book about the magical alleys in France last summer while in Diagon. Anyway, the owl I sent was from the French Post Owl Office, he's a rental and his name is Jean. Just give him a few owl treats and allow him to rest before sending him on his way. You won't be able to send a letter with him unless you pay him but you have Hedwig so I'm sure that won't matter.

More importantly: Bon Anniversaire, Harry! (That's Happy Birthday, Harry) I hope you like your gift.

Salut,

Hermione.

All of that was crammed onto the back of a postcard. It depicted a scene of the French version of Diagon Alley by the look of it. Place Cachée was written in elegant script at the bottom right-hand corner of the card. It looked really cool, and he wondered what the magical alleys were like in other countries too. He would look for a book later about them.

He opened the gift from Hermione and was amazed by what he unwrapped. It was a high-quality broom care kit. It included a large jar of Fleetwood's High-Finish Handle Polish, a pair of gleaming silver Tall-Twig Clippers, a tiny brass compass to clip on your broom for long journeys, and a Handbook of Do-It-Yourself Broomcare. He was genuinely impressed by the gift. It must have been expensive! She knew how much he loved his broom, so the gift was perfect. He would definitely have to give her an amazing birthday gift this year.

Harry placed the Broomcare kit to the side when he realised that he couldn't hear the monster book growling anymore, instead there was a soft snuffling sound. Was it really sleeping? Snoring even? He carefully got down from his bed and knelt to look under the bed. The book was pressed up against the wall at the head of the bed, its spine facing outwards. This was the perfect chance. Harry wiggled under the bed and reached out as far as he could with his right arm. He could just about reach it. He gently stroked the spine with his index finger. The book shuddered under his touch before it started purring? Feeling more confident, He wiggled further under the bed and stroked the book more firmly before dragging it towards himself. It

was vibrating with the strength of its purrs, kind of like one of Mrs Figg's cats. It was kind of cute, ish?

As the book was relaxed now, he took the opportunity to clean out Hedwig's cage, he was sure she wouldn't mind letting the book have it. He could always buy her a nicer one anyway if she did get upset. Once the cage was clean, he placed the monster book inside and shut the door. Did the book need to eat? He would have to send a letter to Hagrid when Hedwig decided to return.

He put his presents from his friends away in his new trunk, in the miscellaneous section of it, and gently moved Errol, in the nest of the old shirt, to the random chair that was in the corner of the room. He placed the water bowl within reach of the owl as well as some food in a second bowl that he had transfigured out of the used wrapping paper. And levitated the lamp back on the bedside table. He felt giddy at the fact that he could use magic. He was tempted to attempt some new spells, but it was late and well, if things went wrong like they did for Seamus in their first year he would be caught with what was technically an illegal untraceable wand. He should probably wait until he was at the White Wyvern with Fenrir to try out anything new, lest he accidentally set his bedding on fire.

He turned off the light and crawled back into bed. He was officially thirteen now, he smiled and snuggled down to sleep. He still needed to decide on when Evan's birthday would be and what to do about poor Errol.

Harry woke to Hedwig grooming his hair again. He smiled at her. "Good morning, Hedwig."

She barked in response before hopping to stand on his bedside table. A chirp from the other side of the room caught his attention. Another owl had arrived at some point, bringing the number of owls in his room up to three: Hedwig, Errol, and the new owl. Jean, the owl that Hermione had used hadn't returned after the scare with the monster book. Harry climbed out of bed and accepted the letter. It was from Professor McGonagall. He scanned the letter, focusing on the most important details.

... third years are allowed to visit the village of Hogsmeade and that their guardian needs to sign the permission form in order for them to do so...also please be aware that students are allowed to change their electives until the second week of school.

Sincerely,

Professor Minerva McGonagall.

Well, it looked like he would not be going to Hogsmeade this year. Harry frowned that was annoying but even if he was still at the Dursleys' he probably wouldn't have gotten it signed. And that wasn't to mention the fact that Sirius Black, a mass murderer, and betrayer of his parents was currently on the run, he doubted that even if he had permission that he would have been allowed to go. Oh well, he shrugged off the disappointment. If he gave money to Ron, he was sure that his best mate wouldn't mind picking up some sweets for him especially if he said that he would pay for some for Ron too. He would just have to spend the time doing something else, he did have a lot of new books to read, and he did plan to buy more.

Speaking of reading, he decided to spend his birthday reading, with the exception of leaving his room for meals. Maybe he would go to the White Wyvern as Evan later too.

The line in McGonagall's letter about changing electives stayed with him as he chose what to read. He picked up his Runes for beginners' book that he had gotten from Obscurus Books and was quickly engrossed. He had set an alarm on his wand for lunch time so he wouldn't miss it, not that he was looking forward to being out in public on his birthday, but he knew questions would be raised if he didn't make an appearance.

So, when his wand alarm went off, he reluctantly put his book down and made the decision to add Ancient Runes to his electives but ultimately decided to speak to Fenrir and Trent before he sent the letter off. Errol was still comfortable on the chair in the corner of the room and Hedwig was sat with him, so Harry decided that he would be fine without Harry there to check on him.

Harry went downstairs to the main floor of the Leaky Cauldron for lunch, he brought his Norwegian dictionary down with him. He wanted to flip through it while he ate. Thankfully, no one was paying him any attention as he approached Tom at the bar.

"Happy Birthday, Lad!" The man said loudly, immediately Harry felt dozens of eyes on his person. Damn it.

"Thanks, Tom." He forced a polite smile onto his face. "I'd like to have lunch please."

"Course." He nodded. "We got lots of different sandwiches and the soup of the day is tomato."

"I'll have a ham and cheese sandwich and the soup please."

"Sure, go take a seat and I'll bring out to you."

"Thanks." Harry fled to an empty table and hoped that no one decided to approach him. Much like any thirteen-year-old, Harry flicked through the dictionary to find the swear words. Ron would find it hilarious if they could get away with swearing in school because they were doing it in a different language. Not that they swore a lot and the very least they would have something to laugh about together.

Ron's favourite expletive was bloody hell, so Harry flipped through until he found the Norwegian for bloody and hell. Bloody was: *blodige* and hell: *helvete*. So, when put together it would be: *blodige helvete* ? Maybe? He would have to check with Finn to be sure, but he didn't really want to do that. There was something juvenile about looking up swear words, it was something you did with your best mate, not your older crush.

He was able to eat his lunch in peace, flicking through the dictionary and making a mental note of some words that he found interesting but as soon as he put his spoon down suddenly Tom was at his side with a small chocolate cupcake. Harry reluctantly shut his book.

"This is on the house, birthday boy." He placed the cupcake in front of him and lit the blue candle with a mumbled spell. But before Harry could say thank you, he started singing and

everyone else joined in. It was awful. He wanted it to be over with immediately.

“Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday Harry Potter, happy birthday to you!” It was sung to different melodies and a lot of the voices really couldn’t carry a tune. It was almost as bad as the school song being sung at the beginning of his first year. He hated every moment of it.

“Ah, thank you all so much.” Harry laughed nervously, wanting everyone to stop staring at him.

“Well, what are you waiting for? Blow out your candle.” Someone from a nearby table shouted.

“Oh right.” Harry leant forward and gently blew out the little flame. He had forgotten that was what you were supposed to do. It dawned on him then that this was the first time anyone had sang happy birthday to him, and it was done by complete strangers. He didn’t know how to feel about that.

“Three cheers for the boy who lived!” Tom yelled suddenly, making him jump. “Hip-hip?”

“Hooray!” Please stop, Harry wanted them all to go away.

“Hip-hip?” No more, please.

“Hooray!”

“Hip-hip?” God this was so embarrassing!

“HOORAY!”

“Ah, thank you.” He wanted to hide under the table but that wasn’t a socially acceptable reaction, so he resisted.

“Alright, I think we’ve embarrassed the boy enough now. Everyone go back to what you were doing.” Tom ordered as if he hadn’t caused the whole situation in the first place. Thankfully people listened and with a final pat on his shoulder, Tom left him alone as well.

At least the cupcake was delicious.

He decided to head out into the alley as Harry for a bit to look for a book on the magical districts in other countries and maybe another book on runes. He hated the stares and missed the anonymity of being Evan. Unfortunately, he couldn’t live out the rest of his days as Evan Fleamont and people would be expecting to see him today on his birthday especially as he was staying in the alley. He wandered over to Obscurus Books. He strolled through the aisles of chaotically shelved books, picking up books that seemed interesting. He left with another book on Runes, a book on the Magical History of the World and one on the Magical Districts of the World.

Next, Harry decided to treat himself to some ice cream while he wasted some time, it was still too early to head to the White Wyvern Pub, and it was probably too early for Harry to

disappear for the day. He could read his new books while he ate ice cream at least. He went into Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour and was immediately escorted to a free table and ordered to wait there. Mr Fortescue came back with an ice cream sundae. He looked at him confused; he hadn't ordered yet.

"Happy birthday, Mr Potter." The man placed the tall sundae down in front of him. "On the house." He grinned.

"Thank you, but seriously I can pay for it."

"Oh, I imagine that you can, but that doesn't mean that I'm going to let you." And with that Mr Fortescue walked away. What was it with people and not letting him pay for anything? He pouted as he ate his peanut butter and kiwi sundae. He didn't know how the man knew what he was going to order without being told. Peanut butter and kiwi weren't exactly a normal combination after all. The ice cream was stupidly delicious, and he would definitely come back but next time he was paying for his ice cream. He spent the afternoon in the ice cream shop, his sundae lasted him hours due to the cooling charms to stop it from melting so he could take his time. He had a lovely time eating the ice cream and reading about other magical districts in the world. Maybe once he had graduated from Hogwarts and was of age, he could visit them.

Finally, at three in the afternoon, Harry felt that he had been seen enough and returned to the Leaky Cauldron. He waved at Tom as he passed him, and the man grinned at him. Once in his room he found that the clothes that he had ordered from Twilfit and Tattings' had arrived. It was like another birthday present. He carefully hung all his new robes and shirts in his trunk's wardrobe section and folded his trousers.

He dressed in one of his new robes and swapped his glasses for the invisible pair, put on his foundation to hide his scar and concentrated on changing his hair colour to blond. He was Evan again.

Evan walked into the White Wyvern and spotted Fenrir immediately at the same table as they used the day before. Trent was a few tables over chatting to some people that Evan didn't recognise but he waved when their eyes met. Evan waved back before sitting at the table, a butterbeer was waiting for him.

"Thanks!" He beamed at the werewolf before taking a sip of the drink. It was at the perfect temperature too! Not too hot and not too cold. He was still a little annoyed that no one would let him pay for anything in the pub but he also knew that there was no use arguing about it.

"You're welcome, pup." Fenrir smiled at Evan. He had told Trent everything that had happened yesterday, minus the little crush as he didn't want his mate to go full mother wolf on Finn. The conclusions they had drawn though, weren't pretty. Someone had hurt their pup, and was possibly still hurting them. Unfortunately there wasn't anything that they could do to help the pup until he confided in them. "We're going to work on casting left handed." Until then, Fenrir would just teach the pup how to protect himself the best he could. "You should know how to cast with both hands just in case something happens to your dominant hand,

and you still need to get yourself out of a mess.” He explained. “Have you ever used the colour changing charm before?”

“Its incantation is Colovaria, right?” The twins taught it to him so that he could get back at the people who were calling him the Heir of Slytherin. It was a harmless way to do it, which was why Harry had allowed them to teach him it. He hadn’t wanted to hurt anyone, if he had then he would be the one to get into trouble. However, a harmless colour changing charm? The Professors didn’t care if their students were purple with yellow spots.

“Yes.” Fenrir nodded and plucked a napkin from the centre of the table. “Focus on changing this from white to purple.”

“Okay.” Evan took his wand out. He could do this. He swapped his wand into his left hand and pointed it at the napkin. “*Colovaria.*”

There was a thunderous rumble followed by a bright flash of purple lightning and the smell of ozone. That was not supposed to happen!

The whole pub was silent.

“Well, in a pinch you can always cast with your left and escape during the chaos you wreak...” Fenrir broke the silence as he took in damage that Evan had wrought. He had never seen a spell go so wrong; he was just glad that the purple lightning that the pup had managed to summon had been contained to the poor napkin.

“I just want to know how he managed to create lightning with a colour changing charm.” Trent said while staring at the sooty burn mark where a napkin had sat before it had been incinerated by lightning.

“I am so sorry.” Evan felt so embarrassed. “I’ll pay for all the damages.”

In the end Evan didn’t have to pay for the table he had burnt but he and Fenrir were also banned from practising magic inside the pub. They were effectively kicked out into a tiny little courtyard behind the pub.

“Okay, so let’s try that again.” Fenrir huffed, amused. “Not sure how you managed to conjure lightning but... I’m curious if it’ll happen a second or even third time.” He held up a napkin and placed it on the ground. Hopefully the pup would be able to continue keeping the damage localised to the napkin. “You’re pronouncing the spell correctly and are even doing the correct wand movements.” So how in Circe’s name was he able to conjure lightning? It was one thing to set a feather on fire when casting ‘Wingardum Leviosa’ but making lightning when casting a colour changing charm? He had never heard of it happening before!

“I don’t know what I’m doing wrong but you might want to stand back, just in case.” Evan told him nervously. His wand felt slick in his left hand, but he took a deep breath and once

Fenrir was as far away from the napkin he could be in the small courtyard, he took another deep breath and cast the spell. He focused on changing the colour of the white napkin to purple. “Colovaria.”

“What in Odin’s name happened to you two?” Finn exclaimed as Evan and Fenrir fell giggling into the pub. Their hair was sticking up on end as if they had been hit numerous times by the Baubillious charm!

“We have discovered that Evan is lethal with a colour charm.” Fenrir grinned wildly. They had spent two hours trying to get Evan to cast the colour changing charm properly with his left hand and every single attempt led to lightning of various colours. They had tried his casting normally just to make sure it wasn’t just an issue with him, but he could cast the charm perfectly right-handed.

“Kahboom.” Evan made the noise and hand motion of an explosion. They were both a little wired from all the close calls with death in that tiny courtyard.

“I’m guessing you two weren’t successful then?” Trent asked as he spotted them. “Come on, go sit down. I’ll get you two a drink and Evan something to eat after all that magic.” He shook his head at the state of the two of them.

“Yous are lucky no aurors were called due to all the sound you weres causing.” A patron at the next table snorted.

“Damn straight we are.” Fenrir agreed. “Then again if they did descend on us, then all Evan needed to do was try to change the colour of their robes!”

Everyone burst out laughing.

“I don’t know what I’m doing wrong.” Evan complained as he stared at his left hand, allowing Fenrir to guide him to their table, and it was now officially their table after he had left the scorch mark on it. “It just doesn’t make any sense. It’s not like I was thinking of lightning or anything when casting.” In fact he had been making sure that he was focusing only on changing the colour of the napkin. He would never again laugh at Seamus for blowing up things when practising his spells.

“Maybe we should just start calling you Sparky.” Trent joked as he placed a butterbeer down in front of him.

Evan groaned at the nickname. Just what he needed, another name to go by, not!

“I repeat, what happened?” Finn demanded throwing himself into the seat next to Evan. He felt aggravated that no one was making any sense. Lightning? Colour charms? Just what had the varulv and lillegutt been doing?

Evan tried not to blush at the fact that Finn decided to sit next to him. He tried to ignore that the man was like a furnace, radiating heat like the forge he worked at. God, the man even

smelt good. He swayed slightly in his seat before he shook his head and straightened up. Bad, Evan. Do not smell the attractive blacksmith sitting next to you.

“Fenrir, wanted to teach me how to cast with my left hand.” He explained to take his mind off the man asking the question. “But for some reason, every time I tried to cast the colour changing charm, I managed to summon lightning instead.”

“Mjöllnir.” Evan thought he heard Finn mutter and knew that he had a new word that he would need to look up in his Norwegian to English dictionary. He should probably start carrying the book around with him.

“Either way, no more magic today, okay?” Trent told him in concern. The pup was starting to look rather grey from using so much magic. “I’m pretty sure summoning lightning isn’t actually as easy as you made it look or sound.”

A plate loaded with hot food was placed in front of Evan and his stomach rumbled, making its opinion of the food known. He was starving. He fell onto the plate with the same enthusiasm as the hungry werewolf across the table from him. He was tired and a little weirded out by his magic but hey, the next time someone tries to attack him he will get a face full of purple lightning. That would certainly shock them. He snickered to himself at the pun but thankfully none of the men around the table asked him what was so funny or why he was laughing to himself. They were either eating or nursing drinks.

As Evan ate, he suddenly remembered that he wanted to ask about his electives. “Oh, I wanted to ask what you thought of the electives.”

“You need to start at the beginning of that conversation sweetie.” Trent chimed as everyone else gave him blank looks. “The electives of what?”

“Oops.” He smiled sheepishly at Trent and took a sip of the butterbeer that had appeared at his elbow. “The third year electives at school. We had to choose at least two. Only when I chose I didn’t really have anyone to go to for advice. I still have time to change them and I know that I want to at least add Runes.”

“Well neither Fen nor I went to Hogwarts. Fen because he’s a werewolf and me, because I was home-schooled.” Trent told him. “Finn went though, so he’s your best bet for advice.” Everyone turned to look at Finn.

“What did you choose?” Finn sighed. He hated thinking about his time at Hogwarts, about what happened after he had graduated. But this lillegutt was clearly in need of some guidance that his professors weren’t giving him.

“Care of magical creatures and Divination.”

“Divination is crap.” He grunted, he had heard about the lush of a professor that had taken up the position since he graduated. “Only worth taking if you have the sight. COMC is alright if you like creatures, I guess. But for the best jobs you’re going to want to take Arithmancy and Runes.”

“Divination is not crap!” Trent protested and glared at Finn for even suggesting that it was. “It’s actually a huge part of people’s day to day lives even if they don’t realise it. Technically the weather forecast is a form of divination. Any tea drinker worth their salt would read their tea leaves after they have finished their cup.” He explained. “You can use runic arrays in divination and Numerology is a branch of arithmancy that you will study, and the astrology which you no doubt study in astronomy is also divination.” He continued to rant. “Divination isn’t just telling the future, it’s about understanding the world and yourself and your place in it.”

Evan was taken aback by how strongly Trent felt about this. “Okay.” He nodded. “Do you have any books that you recommend that I read on the subject?”

“I’ll write you a list.” Trent promised. “I’ll add a few on arithmancy and maybe one on how runes are used in divination.”

“Thanks!” He would have to write to McGonagall to request that she add Runes and Arithmancy to his schedule. He would keep Divination and give it a proper good go. From the sounds of it, he should give it the same amount of attention as he would transfiguration.

“Whatever.” Finn grunted and sipped his firewhiskey. Why did Trent even ask him, if he was just going to sing the praises of the electives anyway? “Now, finish eating.” He pushed lillegutt’s plate closer to him. He was too thin.

“Yessir.” Evan playfully saluted and picked up his fork again.

Trent slipped him the list of books before Evan left that evening. He decided to pick them up before he went back to the leaky cauldron for dinner. Although he preferred Obscurus Books, it would be faster and easier to get the books from Flourish and Blotts this time.

He entered the shop to find a rather flustered shop keeper fighting with a mob of Monster book of Monsters. They were snarling and gnashing at the poor man as he tried to shove them into a cage and shut the door. He clearly hadn’t been told how to ‘calm’ them. So, for Evan’s good deed of the day, he decided to enlighten the man.

“If you stroke their spines, they calm down.” He piped up from beside the shopkeeper. The shop keeper hadn’t even noticed him as he was so focused on getting the books into their cage. He jumped, startled, and one of the books escaped aiming for Evan. Evan caught the book and swiftly stroked the spine. Immediately the book started to purr and settled down in his arms.

“You are Merlin sent, boy.” The shopkeeper sighed, drooping with relief. “These books have been an absolute nightmare ever since they arrived.”

“I got mine as a gift and it almost bit my nose when I unwrapped it.” Evan laughed.

“Thankfully, the note came with a postscript explaining how to calm them.”

“So, all we have to do is stroke the spine?”

“Yep!”

“Thank you, seriously kid. Thank you.” The man took the now purring book from Evan and gently stroked the spine causing the book to purr even louder. “Huh, they’re kind of cute when they’re not trying to eat you.”

“Yeah.” Evan agreed. Then a thought occurred to him. “The books act as if they are alive, does that mean that they need to be fed?” What would you even feed a book? More paper? Ink? He had a sudden flash back to Voldemort’s diary and shuddered.

“Hmm?” The shopkeeper looked up from the Monster book that he was petting. “Oh, no. They are just enchanted to seem alive. If you want, I can find you a book about enchanted books?”

Sure, what was one more book? “Yes please. I’m also looking for these books.” He held out his list, figuring that it would just be quicker if the shopkeeper helped him gather them.

“I’ll get those for you, too.” He took the list from Evan. “Ah here, hold this.” He placed the Monster book back into Evan’s arms. “I’ll stick it back with the others after I’ve gathered your books.” He paused, seeming to hesitate before adding, “If you would soothe some of the others that would be incredibly helpful.”

“Sure.” Evan agreed easily. It wasn’t exactly hard. If they were enchanted, he hoped that meant that they couldn’t smell or get jealous, the last thing he needed was for his book to go nuts because it smelt the other Monster Books of Monsters on him. Merlin knows that Hedwig could get nasty if he gave other owls, not including Errol, any attention.

“You are a star.”

And then Evan was left alone. He stroked the spine of the book in his hands one last time before carefully putting it to the side and started on the others. By the time the shop keeper came back, Evan had calmed down twelve of the books, not including the first one.

“You truly are Merlin sent.” He grinned at Evan. “Come on, I’ll ring you up. You can place that one back in with others now.”

Evan did as asked, and then followed the shopkeeper to the till where the man rang up the books and placed them in a bag for him.

“That’ll be five galleons, please.”

“That can’t be right.” Evan exclaimed. “That’s far too cheap!” That was like half the cost for the stack of books that he had just scanned.

“Kid, you did me a massive favour when you showed me how to deal with those monster books. My colleague and I have been chased around the store by them and I have papercuts where there should never be papercuts. You have just saved us a lot of time in distributing the books when they are requested as well.” He explained. “So, take the discount and get home before it starts to get dark.”

He couldn't really argue with that, could he? "Alright, thank you." He handed over five galleons and accepted the bag of books which must have been charmed to be featherlight. "Have a good evening."

"You too kid, and thanks again."

Evan snuck back into the Leaky Cauldron and once he was in his room he changed back into 'Harry'. He grabbed one of his new books, the one on enchanted books, before heading back downstairs to have dinner. It was a slim volume so it shouldn't actually take him long to read it, hopefully.

He settled down at his usual table with a plate of Shepherd's pie, mashed potatoes, and steamed veg. He opened the book and started to read:

"...So, you've come across a book which acts as if it is alive, but you cannot see its brain. Worried that it has been cursed with dark magic or just genuinely concerned that you now have an extra mouth feed? Don't worry, this book will answer all your questions and allay your fears."

Contents:

Chapter One: Charming Chapter Books

Chapter Two: Enchanting Encyclopaedias.

Chapter Three: Do Not Feed or Water

Chapter Four: It Is Not Alive

Chapter Five: How To Disenchant Your Literature..."

The chapters were short but engaging and at times pretty funny. It would seem that the author had a good sense of humour and used it liberally when writing the book. But it basically boiled down to books that could be enchanted and or charmed to act a certain way.

"Chapter One: Charming Chapter Books

...If charmed then there will not be any outward signs unless you use 'Specialis revelio' which is a spell that will 'diagnose' what spells were on the book. Usually a strong 'finite' would be enough to cancel out the charms...Creating your own charmed book is rather easy if you know the right spells such as..."

"Chapter Two: Enchanting Encyclopaedias.

...If enchanted then there are usually teeny tiny runes inscribed on the books cover, both back and front..."

"Chapter Three: Do Not Feed or Water

...Despite how life like the books act, they are not pets and therefore do not need to be fed or water. You will damage the book if you attempt to do so. They do not feel pain no matter how much they pretend to do so if you dogear a page. Then again anyone who dogears a page deserves to be made to feel bad about it. Just use a bookmark, you savage."

"Chapter Four: It Is Not Alive

*...Here is a list of well known 'living books' which despite the name, are not actually alive (see previous chapters)... **The Monster Book of Monsters** by Edwardus Lima, This book acts monstrous snarling and ripping into other books and even people. It can however be calmed with a stroke down its spine allowing it to be read... **Sleeping Beauty** , by Author unknown, this book snores cutely when not read... **Christian Sermons** by Author unknown, is an ironically enchanted book that shrieks when opened by a witch or wizard. No one knows why this book was written and or enchanted or who did it. But it is terribly ironic as 'Thou shall not Suffer a witch to live' is a well-known sermon of Christianity. It was perhaps enchanted to scare unaware muggles that came across it..."*

"Chapter Five: How To Disenchant Your Literature.

...If you wanted to disenchant the book then that required a deeper knowledge of runes and well a strong enough stomach to cut back the velvet or whatever material covered the book's casing to get to the runes. You needed a strong stomach because if the book was enchanted to act like a living creature, then it would act like a creature that was being cut into and hurt..."

Well, that made Harry feel better about the Monster Book of Monsters. It wasn't alive but it did seem that if he didn't pet it fairly often then it would attack his other books. So, he would either need to keep it separate or find a way to keep it shut so it couldn't bite anything or anyone.

He finished his dinner and headed back upstairs. He put his new book on his bedside table and noticed that Hedwig was perched on the back of the chair in the corner of the room, the same chair that Errol was still lying on. Harry went over to check on him. Errol seemed all right, just tired. He had at least eaten the food that Harry had left out for him. He knew that Hedwig wouldn't have touched it as she preferred to go out and catch her own meals as much as possible.

"How has he been, girl?" He asked and stroked her breast feathers. "He really should have been retired years ago."

Hedwig cooed and gently nipped his finger.

"Do you think I should fake his death?" Hedwig bit him hard enough to draw blood. "Ouch!" He snatched his hand back and grimaced at the cut. "I take that as a 'no' then." He sucked on his finger and thought of a different solution. "What if I bought them a new owl anyway and explain why? Tell them that Errol looked like he was on death's door when he arrived and well didn't, he deserve to be retired?"

Hedwig cooed her approval.

“Alright, I’ll do that then.” It certainly was a lot less complicated for sure. He fed her an owl treat as a thanks for her advice. He felt a little better knowing that he wouldn’t have to lie to his best mate and his family.

Deciding to do some more reading instead of heading back out as Evan, he dug through the bag of his new books and pulled out the ‘Unfogging the Future by Cassandra Vablatsky’ book to read. He soon found himself drawn into the intricates of tessomancy which was the art of reading tea leaves and there was even a chapter on using runes! His fingers itched to give either one a go, but he didn’t have the tools.

Well, actually... He put the book down and went back downstairs to ask Tom for a cup of loose-leaf tea.

“Sure thing, lad.” Tom smiled and soon Harry was back in his room with the cup. There was a desk in the room underneath the window so that was where he sat. He had the book opened on the right page.

“... While the water cools, take a few moments to reflect on your question or your intention. By focusing on your question, this transfers your magical energy into the absorbent tea leaves. You must be very specific to get a clear and concise answer. A general question will get a general answer...”

...When the water is cool enough you should begin sipping the tea why continuing to contemplate the question that you want answered. When there about a tablespoon of liquid remaining in the cup, hold it in your left hand and swirl it three times to from left to right and then upturn the cup. Let it sit for a minute before turning the cup right side up positioning the handle due south. Tea leaves should be stuck to the cup in a variety of shapes and clusters, embedded with insight and answers...”

Okay, that seemed easy enough. But what did Harry want to know the answer to? He then remembered the weirdness that was his lesson with Fenrir and how his magic messed up when he tried casting with his left hand. But how should he phrase that question? He needed to be as specific as possible. Unless he started out fairly general and then depending on the answer, he could then formulate a more specific question? And if this didn’t work right or if he had trouble then he could always ask Trent for help.

He reached for the cup and thought hard. Why is my magic weird? He focused hard on that question and when the tea cooled enough, he carefully sipped at it while repeating the question in his mind. He envisioned the event in his mind, the casting of the spell and its rather spectacularly odd results and his desire to know why it happened like that.

He followed the steps in the book and once he turned the cup back the right way, with the handle pointed where he thought due south was, he quickly checked with a quick point me spell, he looked inside the cup.

It just looked like soggy tea leaves to him. He sighed and pulled the book closer to him again and flipped to the page with the examples and how to interpret the reading.

Okay so, at the top of the cup was a blob that could be a cat? He guessed and looked to see what that meant: "...*CAT, difficulties caused by treachery...*" Well that wasn't a good sign. There was also a clover? At the bottom of the cup which seemed to mean good fortune and or luck but because it was at the bottom of the cup it meant that it was going to be slow to come.

"What does that mean then?" He wondered out loud. "I'm having difficulties in casting with my left hand because of something someone I trusted did? And that I do have good luck and fortune coming my way, but it won't be quick." He sighed and ran a hand through his hair. "So, someone has betrayed me and that means that I can't cast with my left hand?" He groaned. "Surely that can't be right?" He couldn't think of anyone that he trusted that would have done anything to limit his magic, he didn't even know that you could limit someone's magic!

He would have to ask Trent and Fenrir about this tomorrow. He dug out some parchment, quill and ink to write down what he had seen and how he had interpreted it. He also made a rough sketch of the tea leaves in the cup. He tidied up the sheets of parchment and made a mental note to buy a few journals to keep his notes more organised and in one place. Then he got ready for bed.

Chapter 5

He did his occlumency practice when he first woke in the morning. He sat on a pillow on the floor and set a five-minute timer on his wand before meditating. It was difficult like the book said but he kept trying until the five minutes were up.

He spent most of the day as Harry, he even bought some journals in various coloured leather covers. He returned to the Leaky Cauldron for lunch and afterwards he went up to his room and carefully rewrote his tea reading down in the purple leathered journal. He took his time, carefully drawing the shapes that he saw and focused on making his handwriting as neat as he could. He was going to show it to Trent after all, and he didn't want the man trying to read his chicken scratch.

At three o'clock he headed into Knockturn as Evan.

"Trent!" Evan called the man as soon as he spotted him, he was sitting at their usual table in the White Wyvern.

"Evan?" Trent frowned, what had the pup so worked up? "What's the matter?"

"I did a tea leaf reading yesterday while focusing on why my magic was acting up yesterday and the result was weird. I wrote down what I observed and even drew what I saw." He took a breath and pulled the purple journal out of his shoulder bag and shoved it towards him and dumped his bag on the chair next to him.

"Let's have a look then." Trent took the journal and flipped it open.

He was silent as he read and Evan had to try really hard not to squirm in his seat as he waited for the man's verdict. He hoped that he had just read the tea leaves wrong, he hated the idea that he was betrayed by someone close to him. Who could it be? And why would they?

Trent closed the journal with a thoughtful hum. "Give me a minute." Then he was up on his feet and heading to the bar. Evan pulled the journal closer to him again and traced the pattern on the cover. It was supposed to look like dragon scales despite being made from cowhide rather than dragonhide. It was rather pretty and had an iridescent sheen to it if you tilted the book just right. He let himself be distracted by the book until Trent came back. He put his journal back into his bag.

A tea set was placed on the table in front of Evan and Trent sat beside him again. Wordlessly he poured himself and Evan a cup of tea.

"Okay, so here is what we are going to do. You are going to focus on the same question as before, try and feel how you felt when you first asked the question, what you thought etcetera." Trent pushed the cup and saucer towards Evan. "I want you to do exactly what you did before, from drinking it, to the reading." He was happy that Evan had come to him about this, it showed that the pup was starting to trust him. He was also pleased that he was taking an interest in his favourite subject.

“Okay.” He accepted the cup and picked it up. He focused on the question that he had asked before. Why is my magic weird? He focused hard on that question and when the tea cooled enough, he carefully sipped at it while repeating the question in his mind. He envisioned the event in his mind, the casting of the spell and its rather spectacularly odd results and his desire to know *why* it happened like that.

When there was about a tablespoon of liquid remaining in the cup he moved it to his left hand and swirled it three times from left to right and then upturned the cup and placed it upside down on the saucer. He then let it sit for what felt like the longest minute in his life before he turned the cup right side up positioning the handle due south. Again he used his wand to keep track of the time and to find due south. Then he looked in the cup.

Maybe it was just because some part of him expected the same results but the wet dregs still looked like a cat at the top and a clover near the bottom.

“It’s the same.” Evan pushed the cup towards Trent so that he could see himself. Trent took the cup and examined it.

“Huh.” The man hummed and then pushed the untouched cup of tea towards Harry. “Do it again.”

Five cups of tea and an overly hydrated Evan later, the two of them sat staring at the cups. Each and every one of them had the same pattern left at the bottom of the cups. The Cat and the Clover.

“Well that is rather conclusive.” Trent laughed a little incredulously. “I’ve never seen such a consistent reading before.” His Grandmama and Mama taught him everything he knew about divination including tessomancy. He used it frequently himself, every morning in fact just so he would have some idea on how the day would go and when he had difficulty making decisions such as if Fenrir would like his birthday present. The tea leaves would reassure him or point him in a different direction like two years ago, he was thinking of buying his husband a necklace only the tea leaves told him that it would only bring pain. Turns out that the necklace he was interested in was made with silver, it would have given his love blisters.

“So what does it mean?” Evan asked, feeling slightly ill from all the tea he had had to drink.

“I think it means that we should get you checked out at Gringotts. They can run a scan and see if there is an issue with your magic. They can do an in depth test that will show any and all ailments whether they be magically induced or otherwise.” His Grandmama and his Mama always told him to trust in the tea leaves, and well these were all but screaming at him.

“There could be something wrong with my magic?!” Evan hadn’t even considered that! He had thought about who the tea leaves could be eluding to have betrayed him rather than the actual act of betrayal.

“Hopefully not.” Trent said carefully. He was clearly trying not to get Evan worried but it was too late. The idea was already lodged in the young man’s head. There could be something wrong with his magic, something that someone he trusted was responsible for.

“Where’s the bathroom?” Evan covered his mouth with hand. He was going to be sick.

“Down there.” Trent barely had time to gesture to the toilets before the pup was up out of his chair and running in that direction.

Evan made it to the toilets just in time to throw up all the tea he had ingested. It was disgusting and his throat burned as he retched. Oh merlin, someone could have messed with his magic, his MAGIC! He wretched again.

“It’s alright, Ildflue. It is all going to be okay.” A large hand rubbed soothing circles on his back.

It was official. Evan wanted to die. Finn was here, while he was puking. Merlin, his day just keeps getting worse and worse.

When he had finished throwing up, Finn helped him up from the floor and even wiped his face with a cool, damp towel. Evan was torn between feeling embarrassed at being seen while throwing up and falling more in love with the man.

“Thanks.” Evan mumbled, his face felt hot from embarrassment. Merlin, his breath must stink, he quickly looked away from Finn so he wasn’t breathing in his direction.

“Are you feeling better, Ildflue?”

“Yeah, sorry.” He ran a hand through his now slight sweaty hair to try and neaten it up a little.

“It’s fine.” Finn grunted. “Best go back out to Trent. He looked worried.”

Evan nodded and left the toilets, sneakily casting a breath freshening spell and tried to ignore the fact that Finn was following him out.

“Are you okay, Evan?” Trent asked, concern written clearly on his face. He was stood up from where he was sitting when Evan reappeared.

“Yeah.” He tried to smile but he was pretty sure that it came out as more of a grimace. “Let’s just go to Gringotts and get this over and done with.”

“I’ll leave you two, to it.” Finn patted him on the shoulder. “You’ll be fine, Ildflue.” And with that Finn walked out of the pub he was going back to his forge to hammer out his frustrations at seeing Evan in such a state on a horseshoe.

“Come on, let’s go.” Trent, steered Evan outside. “I’ll be with you every step of the way. Whatever turns up, we’ll deal with it, okay?” He passed Evan his bag.

“Thanks, Trent.” Evan clutched his bag to his chest and wondered how he managed to make such a great friend.

It was as they reached the steps of Gringotts that Evan realised that he had forgotten something rather crucial. He wasn’t just Evan Fleamont, he was Harry Freakin’ Potter and if

the tests were as in depth as Trent implied then...shit. He was terrible at this double identity thing. How was he going to keep his identity a secret from Trent? Sure, Trent had been nothing but nice but he still had only known him for a few days really. He didn't want any of his new friends down in Knockturn Alley to know who he really was.

And so it was a rather worried Evan that approached a Goblin that didn't have a line.

"Good day, I'm Evan Fleamont. I would like to see my Account Manager if he is available, please." Trent stood at his shoulder.

"Wait here." The goblin ordered before disappearing.

"Take a deep breath, Evan." Trent put a reassuring hand on his shoulder. He could see that Evan was on the verge of a panic attack. "It'll be okay." He hoped that he wasn't making an empty promise.

They weren't waiting for long and before Evan knew it they were being taken to Gornuk's office.

"Ah Mr Fleamont." Gornuk greeted him as he entered the room. "I wasn't expecting to see you again so soon and you brought a guest."

"Hi, Master Gornuk." Evan waved at the goblin sheepishly and immediately regretted it. Who waves when saying hi? Merlin that was lame. "This is Trent."

"And what can I do to help you and Mr Trent, this fine day?"

"Uh." He didn't know where to begin.

"Evan would like an in depth scan to see if there is an issue with his magic." Trent explained for him. He gave the pup a reassuring smile but got a shaky one in reply.

"Oh my." Gornuk lent forward. "We at Gringotts do of course have the ability to perform such a test and will do it for a fee, but may I ask what has given you the idea to have one?"

"I had an issue with my magic yesterday." Evan explained simply. He didn't want to rehash the whole thing about the tea leaves or explain the whole purple lightning thing.

"Well, let's get this sorted then." Gornuk pulled out a sheet of parchment and a bowl from inside his desk. "This will need seven drops of blood to be added to this potion." He pulled out a vial from his desk as well.

"Seven drops right?" Evan checked as he reopened the cut on his finger that he got from Hedwig.

"Yes."

Seven drops of blood landed in the potion and Gornuk quickly put a stopper in the vial and shook it before upending it onto the parchment. He then chanted something Goblin and the parchment glowed gold for a moment.

Trent gently took Evan's hand and healed the small cut. Evan opened his mouth to thank the man when Gornuk suddenly snarled a word that was probably a swear word. The Goblin then pressed a button on his desk and barked something in the same language.

Gornuk cleared his throat. "My apologies."

"Something is wrong, isn't it." Evan felt his heart sink. That was not a reaction Gornuk would have if everything was fine. The tea leaves had been right, someone had betrayed him and messed with his magic.

"I'm afraid so, Mr Fleamont." Gornuk sighed. "It would seem that your parents put a perfectly normal childhood block on your magic when you were a baby."

"My parents?" Evan exclaimed.

"It's totally normal," Trent quickly reassured him. "It's a small block that parents put on babies that show a lot of accidental magic, too much to be safe. You probably accio'd a pot of hot water or something."

"Precisely." Gornuk nodded. "The issue is that it was never removed and an additional block was added when you were five years old."

"Is it easy to fix?" Evan asked hopefully before he registered the second part. "Wait someone put another block on me?"

"I'm afraid so," Gornuk then looked over at Trent and then back at Evan. "I'm afraid but from this point on, I am going to have to speak to you in Private, Mr Fleamont."

"Of course." Trent easily agreed. "I'll wait for you outside okay?"

"Okay," Part of Evan wanted Trent to stay, he was an adult and he had been good to him and well he hadn't led him wrong yet. But the larger, more logical side of him knew that it would be best if Trent left the office. He after all did not know Evan's true identity and they would be able to speak more freely without him.

"Take your time, pup." Trent gently ruffled Evan's hair, pleased when the pup didn't flinch away from him. That was progress.

Once Trent left the office, Gornuk got Evan's attention by clearing his throat. "That wasn't all we found."

"What else is there?" Evan bit his lip nervously. Gornuk had already told him that his magic was being strangled by two blocks, what else was wrong with him?

"Here." Gornuk handed over the parchment.

Evan nervously looked at it. His face paled as he read the results.

Core: 45% accessible due to blocks.

-10% Parental block applied at five months old.

-40% Block added at five years old.

-5% Parasitic soul shard drain

“Can we fix all of this?” Evan asked, his hands shaking as he passed the parchment back to the Goblin. Over half of his magic was blocked! He felt faint. He tried not to think about what or rather whose soul shard could be inside him, it could only be one person after all: Voldemort. He felt sick again.

“We can.” Gornuk reassured him. “You’ll have to go through a couple of rituals, they won’t be comfortable, but I promise that by the time you leave here today you will be in near perfect shape.”

Talking about near perfect shape, that reminded Evan. “Is it possible for me to also see a healer? I keep meaning to look into being seen.”

“Of course.” Gornuk wrote a quick note before said note folded itself into a paper bird and flew from the office. “It is probably best that we have the healer see you first before we work on getting your magical core sorted out.”

“Thank you.” Evan clenched his hands together to hide the shaking. Merlin, he would never make fun of divination again. If the tea leaves hadn’t hinted at something being wrong with his magic, then he would still be unaware of the issues with his core. The idea of him walking unknowingly with a shard of what had likely belonged to the murderer of his parents inside him...It...he didn’t want to think anymore.

There was a knock on the office door, which thankfully pulled Evan out of his spiralling thoughts.

“Come in.” Gornuk called out and the door opened to reveal a Goblin in white robes. “Healer Blodnuk, thank you for arriving so promptly.”

“Your memo said it was urgent.” Blodnuk’s voice was more gravely than Gornuk.

“Indeed, this young wizard needs to have a medical scan before we can commence the unbinding of his magical core.”

“What?” The other Goblin hissed. “Some-” Blodnuk sneered something in the Goblin’s language but once again, Evan was pretty sure that they were swearing, “Bound, this youngling’s core?”

“May I show Healer Blodnuk the results?” Gornuk asked him. Evan liked the fact that he was asked and quickly nodded to give his consent.

Blodnuk accepted the parchment and let out a longer stream of Goblin expletives. They then took a deep breath before turning to Evan. “With your permission, I would like to cast the

medical scan on your person.”

“Do it.” Evan took a deep breath and steeled himself.

“Very well.” Blodnuk pulled out some parchment and a quill. “The spell will write down the results of the scan.” They explained before muttering a spell in their Goblin language. Evan felt a tingle throughout his body, from his head down to his toes before the quill started writing...and writing and writing. Then finally it stopped.

“Tsk.” Blodnuk rolled up the scroll after giving it a quick look. “Off to the healing halls with you.” They ushered Evan from the office. “We’ll have to put you asleep to do the rituals you need, so we might as well deal with everything else while you are unconscious.”

Evan didn’t like the idea of being so vulnerable, but the Goblins were just going to help him, so he should trust them to take care of him. He was paying them after all. “Alright, that makes sense.” He consented. “Do what you need to do.”

“Oh, trust me lad. By the time you walk out of our healing hall, you will be in the best shape you have ever been in.” Blodnuk promised.

Evan believed him.

Evan woke slowly, his body felt heavy with sleep but lighter at the same time. A tightness in his chest that he hadn’t ever noticed before was gone and he found it so much easier to breathe. His head felt lighter too, a constant low headache was no longer there, he never even noticed that he had one but now it too was gone. He did his usual body check, the check he did when he woke up and didn’t remember going to sleep in the first place. He wiggled his toes and then his fingers, making sure he could still feel and move them. Next, he took a deep breath and then let it out slowly to make sure that his ribs were fine. He tensed the muscles in his legs, his butt and then his abdomen before flexing his arms and finally his shoulders. Everything seemed to be in working order. He wasn’t in any pain and didn’t even feel stiff!

Finally, he opened his eyes.

“Glad to see you are back with us, Mr Fleamont.” A gravelly voice brought his attention to the Goblin that stood at his bedside. He looked around and saw that he seemed to be in some kind of infirmary.

“W-what happened?” He croaked. His throat was dry.

“You had fifty five percent of your magic bound since you were five years old, lad not to mention everything else.” The Goblin, he was pretty sure that it was Blodnuk, explained as they helped him sit up. “Here, sip this slowly.” A cool glass was pressed into his hands. Evan did as he was told. It was water. “We got rid of the parasite in your forehead, first. It fought hard but as your magic was bound; it didn’t have a lot to draw on and we were able to pull it from you.” They explained. “We moved it to an inanimate object and then destroyed it.”

“Good.” Evan grunted and tried to sit up. Blodnuk helped him into a sitting position.

“Next, we removed the bindings on your magic. They were oddly placed,” They frowned. “Imagine a circle as being a normal core, yours looked more like an uneven hourglass.”

“But you were able to remove them, right?”

“We did, although when we broke through the bindings, your magic flared out causing quite the spectacular show of accidental magic that I have ever seen before settling down.”

“Is everyone okay?” He asked. He was a little worried over what his accidental magic might have done, he hoped that he hadn’t inflated any Goblins like he had his Aunt Marge. He couldn’t remember any of this. “Why don’t I remember what happened?”

“Everyone is fine, lad. A little in awe of the amount of magic in your tiny body but unharmed.” The Blodnuk reassured him. Evan fought back a scowl at being called tiny. “And you don’t remember because you allowed us to put you asleep for the procedure.”

“Ah, okay.” Oh, yeah, he vaguely remembered agreeing to that. “So, my magic is alright now?”

“Yes, lad. Your magic is fine.”

Evan sank back into the pillows that were propping him up in relief. “Thank goodness.” He smiled.

“You were lucky that we caught it now before you progressed in your schooling. You wouldn’t have cast very high-powered spells yet but in your older years you would have struggled.”

“Thank you for fixing me.” Was all Evan could think to say. “Is there a way to tell who put the second block on me?”

“You’re welcome and normally yes. However, as the block was over five years old, the magical signature has degraded and is unreadable.”

That sucked. Evan would have liked to know who exactly it was that he needed to keep an eye on.

The Goblin fussed around him for a minute before speaking again. “The medical scan I performed flagged a few more problems that needed to be dealt with.” Well, that didn’t sound good.

“What else was there?” He asked nervously.

“You are malnourished, lack vaccinations and have a disturbing number of cracked bones.” The Goblin narrowed their eyes at him. Evan was tempted to pull up the hospital blanket and hide. “Your caretakers were clearly lacking in their duties. What little magic you had access to went towards keeping you alive, I’m surprised that you could even cast a lumos spell.”

The Dursleys weren't nice. He had always known this, but he never thought that it was odd. Sure, he slept in a cupboard until he was eleven, wore his cousin's leftover clothes and maybe he didn't always get much to eat...but he was a burden on them, on their normal family. It wasn't as if they hit him or anything! Well, Dudley and his gang did and okay, his uncle tended to shove him into walls or into his cupboard and his aunt had clipped him around the ear a few times but that was normal, wasn't it?

When Evan didn't say anything, the Goblin huffed and continued to speak. "We took advantage of the fact that you were unconscious to fix your bones and give you your vaccines. However, your malnutrition will take longer to fix. Before you leave here today you will be given a full course of nutrition, bone strengthening, appetite enhancing and stomach soothing potions. You will need to take the nutrition potion every morning and the bone strengthening every night before bed. And before each meal I want you to take the appetite enhancing and stomach soothing potions. They will help you eat a more appropriately sized meal and keep it down."

"Thank you." He said quietly, picking at the blanket. He felt so embarrassed! Now, the Goblins knew that he was a burden and had even gone out of their way to help him. "Have the fee for the test, the healing and the potions taken from my Fleamont vault, please." He decided to pretend that he wasn't affected by any of this. He would take his potions as it would be a waste not to but honestly, he was fine!

"Very well." Blodnuk sighed. "You may want to have a look at this as well." The Goblin passed him a sheet of parchment.

Evan nervously took it. The last lot of parchment that a Goblin gave him didn't exactly have good news written on it.

Warning! Non-Medicinal Potions detected.

Loyalty Potions keyed to Dumbledore

Temerarius Potion (invokes reckless behaviour in the recipient)

"I was potioned?" He squeaked in dismay. Loyalty potions and recklessness? And by Dumbledore? His hands shook, rattling the parchment that he held. "Can you tell for how long?" How long had been potioned for? When was he first given them?

"Yes, lad. It would seem that the Loyalty potions were first administered around the time that your core was blocked the second time." The Goblin scowled but Evan knew that it wasn't aimed at him, so he wasn't alarmed. "Thankfully, we were able to purge them from you while you were unconscious also."

"Thank you." Was there anything else he could say? The Goblins had done him a great service, freeing his magic, purging potions from his body, and healing him. He was incredibly grateful.

Wait, he had been potioned since his core had been blocked when he was five years old? The potions were keyed to Dumbledore. Did that mean that he was the one that-? Was stealing

from his vaults not enough? Did he have to strangle his magic and drug him too? Why? Why was he doing this? This must have the betrayal that the tea leaves had hinted at. Dumbledore had bound his core, potioned him and was stealing from his vaults under the guise of being his Magical Guardian. And there was nothing that Evan could do to remove himself as Harry Potter out from under the man's thumb.

"Your friend should be waiting for you in the lobby." Blodnuk said instead of acknowledging the thanks and brought Evan's mind back to the present. "You can leave now unless you have anything further that you wish to discuss with your account manager?"

"No, I'm good, thank you." Oh Merlin! He had forgotten about Trent. How long had all of this taken? Poor Trent would have spent it all waiting for him! "Uh, My friend doesn't know about..."

"The neglect and abuse you had gone through?" Evan winced at how blunt the Goblin was. "No, he does not. We at Gringotts take our clients' confidentiality very seriously. He is only aware of the magic block as he was there when you took the test."

"Ah, okay. Thank you." Evan smiled at them. "Thank you for all your help today, Blodnuk."

"You are most welcome lad." They passed him a wooden box. "All your potions are labelled both on the bottles and by row. Make sure you take them."

"I will." He promised and accepted the box.

Evan found Trent in the lobby like Blodnuk said he would be. The man was leaning against one of the pillars as he waited.

"Trent." Evan waved as he approached. "Thanks for waiting and for taking me here and well everything really." He smiled up at the man as he was given back his bag. He must have given him his bag before he left Gronuk's office, but he didn't really remember. It didn't matter, he decided as he put his potions box into the bag for safe keeping. He was tempted to stop by the Leaky Cauldron to put them in his room but seeing as he would likely have something to eat at the pub, he knew that it would be better if he kept them on him. He didn't want to upset Blodnuk by not taking the potions.

"No problem, pup." He ran a hand through his hair. "You got everything sorted?"

"Yep." He nodded and was thankful that Trent didn't comment on how long he had been gone for.

"Then let's head back to the Wyvern to let people know that you're alright."

"Hey pup," Fenrir waved them over as they entered the pub.

"Hi, Fenrir." Evan smiled as he approached the werewolf.

"Heard you had an upset?"

“Everything is sorted.” He promised. “But I am feeling rather hungry.” He looked to Ken who was standing behind the bar. “What’s on the menu?” He was starving, he had no idea how long he had been in Gringotts getting his magic and everything sorted but lunch felt like an age ago.

“How about some good ol’ fish and chips?”

“Sounds perfect.” Evan couldn’t remember the last time or if he had ever had fish and chips. He reached for his coin purse and was as usual rebuffed.

“Forget about it, kid.” Ken chuckled and left to get the food sorted.

Evan pouted. Why wouldn’t anyone let him pay for things?

“You’ve got no chance of paying a knut here so long as Trent owns the place.” Fenrir ruffled Evan’s blond hair roughly.

Wait what?! “Trent, owns the White Wyvern?” Evan was shocked. He had no idea!

“I do, indeed.” Trent replied as he approached from behind. “I’m actually kind of surprised that you hadn’t realised.” It wasn’t as if they had hidden it from the pup.

“Did you think he didn’t work or something?” Fenrir asked. “He’s here most days after all.”

“To be honest I didn’t even think about it.” He admitted sheepishly.

“Anyway, I’ll be right back with Finn. The bastard wanted to know when you were back.” Fenrir winked at Evan. Evan had to fight back a blush. “He sends me a passive aggressive note and everything.” He teased as he got off his stool and left to retrieve said bastard.

“Oh?” Trent looked back and forth between the werewolf that was leaving and Evan’s slightly reddened face. “Have I missed something?”

“Nope!” Evan was quick to deny. “Anyway, I guess we now know what the tea leaves meant.” He brought the conversation back to the reason for their excursion. His face darkened. Dumbledore was the most likely culprit to have bound his magic, he had started to give him loyalty potions around the same time, although he would like to know how in Merlin’s name, he managed to do that seeing as his relatives hated magic and feeding him. He couldn’t think of a single instance that would have allowed him to slip him the potions, so if it wasn’t Dumbledore then who else could have potioned him to be loyal to the headmaster?

“Were the Goblins able to tell who put the second block on you?” Trent asked, I doubt that magic thought that your parents’ block was a betrayal.”

“No, they said that the magical signature was too degraded to tell.” He frowned.

“Here you go.” Ken suddenly appeared with a plate of food that smelt heavenly and interrupted them.

“ Thank you.” Evan grinned and was about to dig in when he remembered his potions. With a sigh he pulled the wooden box from his bag and opened it. Inside were rows and rows of vials, far more than he would have thought could fit into the box. Then again, Magic was a thing. He plucked an appetite stimulant and a stomach soother from it and downed both before putting the empty vials back and the box back into his bag.

Thankfully, no one asked what the potions were for and instead a butterbeer was just pushed in his direction. He grinned in thanks and sipped it to get rid of the acrid taste the potions left in his mouth. He dug into the food with a relish as the appetite stimulant worked its magic.

He was halfway through his meal when Fenrir returned with Finn. Trent had been silently sipping a cup of tea next to him all the while. He hadn’t wanted to interrupt the pup’s meal by asking questions.

“Ildflue, you look better.” Finn stated as he approached. “Less... sykelig.”

At the sound of the Norwegian words falling from Finn’s lips Evan reached into his bag and pulled out his dictionary and first looked up ‘sykelig’.

“ What is that?” He asked bemused.

“ It's a Norwegian to English dictionary.” Evan stated smugly. “And yes, I’m much better now.” ‘Sykelig’ it seemed, meant ‘sickly’.

“ Lille jævelen.” Finn muttered under his breath, but he was by this point close enough to Evan that he still heard it.

He knew that ‘lille’ meant small or little. He was so tired of people commenting on his height! Hopefully the potions that Blodnuk had given him would help correct that. Though he wasn’t holding his breath, it would just be his luck if he stayed tiny for the rest of his life. Maybe there was Goblin ancestry in his family?

Evan flickered through the dictionary and frowned when he found the meaning of ‘jævelen’.

“I’ll have you know that my parents were married.”

Immediately Fenrir roared with laughter, wrapped a burly arm around Finn, and shook him playfully. “Hah! You’ll have to watch yourself around this one.”

Finn scowled as he shoved the werewolf off him but there was a smile twitching at his mouth all the same.

Evan grinned. He felt so much lighter, so much happier since he met these guys. It certainly helped that he had gotten his magic unbound. He was sure he was going to enjoy the rest of his summer for the first-time in...well ever!

He’d spoke too soon.

Evan returned to his room in the Leaky Cauldron and had literally just changed back to 'Harry' when an unknown owl peaked on his window. He took the letter from the owl but before he could offer a treat to the bird it flew away. Confused at who it could be, seeing as he had yet to write to McGonagall about his change in electives and he was pretty sure that she wouldn't have written to him on pink paper. He opened the letter, and his heart sank as he read it.

Dear Mr Potter,

The Minister Cornelius Fudge himself informed you that you were not to wander during this summer. You have been spotted out and about in not only Diagon Alley but Muggle London as well.

You were allowed to stay in a room at the Leaky Cauldron on the condition that you followed that condition. However, seeing as you are unable to behave yourself consider yourself grounded.

Tom, the barman, is under strict instruction to keep you from leaving the premise. You will be allowed on to the ground floor for your meals but otherwise you are confined to your room until the last week of summer.

Have a good summer!

Yours sincerely,

Deloris Umbridge

Senior Undersecretary to the Minister for Magic

Ministry of Magic

Harry stared dumbfounded at the letter. He...he was grounded?! By the Ministry of magic? Could they even do that? There was a knock on the door. With a frown, Harry opened it and found Tom looking annoyed.

"I'm sorry, lad." He sighed. "But I've been told that you're no longer allowed out of the pub until the last week of summer."

"Yeah, I just got a letter saying that too." Harry held up the pink letter.

"Well, I hope you got your fill of the alley then." Tom told him. "As it looks like you won't be seeing any more of it for three weeks. I'll see you tomorrow for breakfast." And with a solemn pat on the shoulder, the barkeeper left.

Harry closed the door after him and sank down heavily on the bed. Now what? It was almost like being back at the Dursleys but at least here he was allowed three meals a day and there was no Dudley to beat him up.

He crumpled up the letter and threw it across the room. Merlin, this sucked. How could this be allowed?

The morning after Harry received the letter grounding him, he went downstairs for breakfast. He didn't bother hiding his scowl. He had spent some time thinking last night about how to deal with the situation and he had realised that 'Harry' may be grounded but 'Evan' wasn't. Even if Evan was free to wander as he liked it still rankled him something awful that the Ministry was basically imprisoning him. But he would be fine, he had his Evan persona and so long as he wasn't caught coming and going, he was basically free to do what he wanted. At least that is what he thought.

Tom served him a full English breakfast with an apologetic look on his face and Harry felt his heart sink like a stone. What now?

"I forgot to do this last night lad, but while you eat your breakfast, I'm going to have to erect a ward on your door."

"A ward?" Harry had a bad feeling about this and no longer felt hungry. He pushed his plate away. "What for?"

"'fraid so, lad. It'll keep track of when you enter and leave your room."

"Can they seriously do that?" Harry exclaimed. This was ridiculous! "I'm paying for a room which I will literally be a prisoner in?"

"Excuse me." A voice from the next table interrupted them. "I couldn't help but overhear you." Harry turned to find a bald black man in red robes. "I'm Auror Shacklebolt. Am I to understand that this young man is being imprisoned in a room here?"

"Don't say it like that." Tom grimaced. "I got a letter from the Senior Undersecretary ordering that this young man was grounded."

"Grounded?" Auror Shacklebolt repeated dubiously. "Can I see that letter?"

"Of course, I'll go get it."

As soon as Tom left to fetch the letter, the Auror turned to Harry. "Are you alright?"

"Just very confused and annoyed." Harry answered honestly. "I got a letter as well, should I get it too?" He tried to remember what he did with it.

"That would be helpful, thanks."

Harry went straight back to his room and collected the crumpled-up letter from the floor where he had thrown it last night. He flattened it out the best he could before heading back downstairs. He hoped that the Auror would be able to sort everything out. He really didn't want to be confined to his room for the rest of the summer. He was a free-range kid and he did not want to leave one cage, the Dursleys, only to find himself in another!

He handed the letter to the Auror who was already holding an equally lurid pink letter. He was frowning quite fiercely as he read it. He accepted Harry's and read that one as well.

"May I make copies of these?"

"Sure." Harry shrugged, not seeing the harm in it.

"Thanks." He muttered a spell and tapped each letter with his wand. Two identical letters appeared. "Here." He handed back the originals. "I'll get this sorted for you, kid. But for now, you should probably just stay in the pub until I do."

"I'll grab a book and read it down here." Harry decided.

"Good idea." Auror Shacklebolt straightened his robes. "I'll be back as soon as I can." He turned and used the floo, vanishing into the green flames.

"Go get your book, lad. I'll get you a fresh breakfast." Tom paused and then added. "On the house this time."

"Thanks." Harry hoped that this could be sorted out easily.

Harry was about halfway through his book on ancient runes when Auror Shacklebolt returned. Only he did not return alone. A woman with a monocle dressed in the same uniform as Shacklebolt was on his heels.

"Mr Potter, this is Madame Bones, the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement." Oh, shit this has escalated.

"Nice to meet you, Ma'am." Harry closed his book and stood to greet her.

"I would like to apologise, Mr Potter." She started. "What Madame Umbridge has instigated is unlawful." Harry felt like there was a but coming. "However," There it is. "as you are currently without a guardian, the ministry has temporarily taken you on as a ward, making her actions legal."

"No." Harry shook his head in denial. She had to be kidding!

"I'm afraid that the restrictions that Madame Umbridge has put in place will stand." She continued as if Harry hadn't spoken.

"You can't do that." This wasn't fair.

"As a minor and currently under the guardianship of the Ministry, I'm afraid that she can." Shacklebolt butted in. "In fact, allow me to escort you back to your room and I will cast the ward."

"So much for helping me." Harry sneered at the Auror and clutched his book tight enough that his knuckles turned white. He stomped up the stairs. Was it childish? Yes, but at this point Harry didn't care. The head of the freaking law enforcement literally told him that it was unlawful, but she was still enforcing it?! This just wasn't right.

He stormed into his room and dumped his book on his bed. He turned to face the doorway and crossed his arms. He watched the Auror cast the ward while glaring at them. Surely this was violating his human rights? Who cared if the ministry had guardianship over him, they weren't paying for his room or his meals, he was! Anyway, he thought that Dumbledore was supposed to be his magical guardian. Sure, the bastard was stealing from him, had blocked his core and had dosed him with potions but! He wasn't confining him to the room that Harry was paying for. Unless he had given them permission to do so.

"Sorry, kid." Shacklebolt apologised after he finished the ward.

"Whatever." Harry shut the door in his face. He could save his apologies for someone who cared. So much for helping him. He sneered at nothing and spat out the new swear that Finn had taught him earlier. "Jævelen!" He practised saying until his pronunciation matched how he remembered Finn saying it. "Jævelen, jævelen, jævelen, jævelen!"

He eventually ran out of steam and threw himself backwards onto the bed with a huff. The swearing had helped him feel a little better but hadn't helped with the situation. What was he going to do now? He spotted the window. Could he possibly climb out that way? He stood and approached it and opened it as if he would to let Hedwig or any other owl in. He stuck his head out and saw that he was on the second floor, meaning there was a three story drop to the ground. He could use his broom maybe. But he would easily be spotted. Maybe if he got desperate, he could go that way.

Until he could think of a reusable and unnoticeable way in and out of the room, he should at least send Trent, Fenrir and Finn a letter explaining that he won't be visiting them again any time soon. Blood Ministry.

Harry went over to the desk and pulled out some parchment, quill and ink. He had some letters to write.

Dear Fenrir and Trent,

I will not be able to return to the White Wyvern at all this summer. I have been grounded by my guardians as they did like how often I left the premises in which I was required to stay. It's been great hanging out with and thanks for everything.

Evan.

He grimaced at how stilted his language was, but he couldn't exactly just come out and say that he was Harry Potter. Or could he? He crumpled up his first attempt and started again.

Dear Fenrir and Trent,

I want to first apologise for lying to you. My name isn't Evan its Harry, as in Harry Potter. I ran away from my muggle relatives which is why I was able to hang out at the White Wyvern but..

He paused and ran the feather of his quill over his lip as he thought.

..the ministry for some reason as my temporary guardian this summer has confined me to my room in the Leaky Cauldron. They have put a ward across my doorway that will keep track of all my comings and goings. I am only allowed to leave the room to eat. What really, really annoys me about this though is that I am the one paying for the room and food not the ministry. I am being held prisoner in a room that I am paying for. I hate it! I don't like being shut away in a room under what is effectively lock and key. I am a free-range kid, damn it!

So again, sorry for lying to you and I had a great time hanging out with you guys.

Harry Potter (Evan Fleamont).

P.s. To prove that I am Evan I have this to say to Fenrir: When casting the colour changing spell with my left hand, I summoned purple lightning. To Trent: A cat over a clover in the tea leaves.

With that letter written he put it to the side to dry and started on the next.

Dear Finn,

I want to first apologise for lying to you. My name isn't Evan its Harry, as in Harry Potter. I ran away from my muggle relatives. I was understandably in disguise so as not to be mobbed when out and about the alleys.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to pick up the Owl that I have commissioned from you in the time that you said it would be completed. The reason for that is..

Harry pulled the other letter closer and just rewrote the same explanation for Finn.

*For some reason, the Ministry as my temporary guardian this summer has confined me to my room in the Leaky Cauldron. They have put a ward across my doorway that will keep track of all my comings and goings. I am only allowed to leave the room to eat. What really, really annoys me about this though is that I am the one paying for the room and food not the ministry. **I am being held prisoner in a room that I am paying for.***

Also, as the fact that I am Harry Potter is out of the bag, if possible, could I change the Eagle Owl I commissioned to a snowy owl? If not, that's fine too!

He paused and dug out his Norwegian dictionary. He spent a few moments looking through the book and scribbled on a spare piece of parchment trying to get the words right. In the end he kept it simple so hopefully he wouldn't get it too wrong.

Sorry if I butcher your language:

Beklager at jeg løy til deg.

Harry Potter (Evan Fleamont)

Should he also write to the Goblins? That was probably a good idea, maybe? He sighed and leant back in his chair and looked over at Hedwig

“What do you think, Hedwig? Should I write to the Goblins as well?”

She barked and chirped.

“I’ll take that as a yes.” He nodded and pulled out more parchment.

Manager Gornuk,

I am writing to inform you that I will not be available to do any more business this summer due to a change in circumstances beyond my control. The Ministry of Magic is claiming to be my current guardian and has grounded me. They have put a ward on my door in the Leaky Cauldron that will monitor every time I leave or enter the room. When I complained to an Auror named Shackbolt, he said he would investigate and then came back with Madame Bones who told me that what was being done was unlawful but was also out of her hands. That they had no choice but to enforce it due to the Ministry being my temporary guardian.

I am wondering if as my temporary guardian if they have any access to my vaults and if so, is there a way to prevent this? Because it is bad enough that I am being held prisoner in a room that I am paying for, I do not want them stealing from me as well.

Sincerely,

Harry Potter.

And then because he was already writing so many letters, he penned one to McGonagall as well about his electives.

Dear Professor McGonagall,

I would like to change my electives to also include Ancient Runes and Arithmancy. I know that four electives are a lot but I promise that if I am struggling with the workload that I will meet with you and discuss dropping one, but I would really like to give them a try.

Sincerely,

Harry Potter.

Once the four letters were dry, he folded and sealed them. He turned to Hedwig and gently stroked her feathers.

"I have four letters for you to take, three of them are for people close by and the last is for McGonagall. Is that okay?"

She stuck out her left leg in response.

"This one is for Trent and Fenrir." Harry tied on the letter. "This one is for Finn." He tied that on and then she stuck out her other leg. "This one is for Master Gornuk and this last one is for Professor McGonagall."

She cooed, groomed his hair gently before taking off and left through the window. With that task completed, Harry sighed and tried to figure out what he should do next. In the end he decided to practice his Occlumency while he waited for replies.

Chapter 6

Trent had come into his pub early to make sure everything was running as smoothly as it always did. Okay, yes part of him hoped that his and Fenrir's pup, Evan would be there earlier than his usual three o'clock arrival. No gobstones. He wasn't there. He ignored the amused look from Steve, the morning and early shift barkeep. Ken tended to come in around three o'clock...he tended to start work not long before Evan turned up. Weird coincidence.

He stuck out his tongue at Steve before taking a seat that had become Evan's table after he had smited it with purple lightning. He smiled fondly when he thought of his pup before it pulled down into a frown. There was so much that Evan was keeping a secret, one was a huge secret that he and Fenrir had already found out purely by accident, but it didn't clear up anything. Their pup, and honestly Evan was their pup now, was so complicated and hurt. Trent wanted to do nothing more than wrap him in a big hug and never let the pup go! But he knew that wasn't possible nor would Evan thank him for it.

"Tea?" Steve brought over Trent's usual morning brew.

"Thanks, mate." He accepted the cup and inhaled the bergamot scent of the Earl Grey. Continuing with his morning ritual he closed his eyes and thought on what he wanted to know. What will the day bring? It was a question he asked his tea every morning and would do so for as long as he could. What will the day bring? He blew on his tea and when it was cool enough, he drank it, still thinking of his question. He swirled his cup when there was only a teaspoon of liquid left before turning it upside down on its saucer to drain before flipping it back over and peering in.

Arrows, pointing towards the window. Hmm, he was going to get some bad news then probably delivered by an owl judging by the direction. He frowned. At least there weren't any clouds. And there was an axe which was good, that meant that they would overcome the bad news. It was a mixed cup. He sighed and placed it back onto its now wet saucer.

"What's the matter darlin'?" Fenrir's husky voice by his ear startled him. He jerked back in his seat.

"Morgana, Fen!" He exclaimed a hand to his chest, his heart was racing. "Are you sure you're a werewolf and not a werecat? Make some noise when you move, love."

"Haha, you're hilarious." He deadpanned as he pulled out a chair next to him before throwing himself into it and draping his upper body across the table, twisted toward Trent, his hand supporting his head. "Seriously, you haven't looked this concerned when reading your tea leaves since the time that they told you that your Great Aunt Fanny passed away."

And that was why he loved his husband. Fenrir may seem like the big bad wolf and he could be if needed but he always remembered the little things. It also helped that he was gorgeous.

"We're going to get some bad news today." He sighed and reached for his husband's free hand, the one that wasn't propping up his head. "It will be resolved or overcome, but the

news will still be bad.”

“We’ll cope.” Fenrir tightened his hand around Trent’s. “Whatever the news is, we’ll deal with it together.”

“Yeah.” He smiled softly at his softie wolf.

“If you two are finished being sickeningly cute, you have a letter.” Steve waved in the direction of the window where a snowy owl was perched, waiting impatiently to be noticed.

“Huh.” Trent stood and approached the owl. “Is that for me, beautiful?” He asked the owl sweetly. The owl held out their leg where a letter was tied. Her other leg also carried a letter. “Thank you.” He carefully accepted the letter and then stepped back to give them space to take off, they clearly had another delivery to make.

“Who’s it from, love?” Fenrir asked as Trent returned to his seat.

“I don’t know.” He opened the letter and as he read it, his face paled. “Well, this explains the bad omen in my teacup.” He passed the letter over to his husband and sighed. What the hell was wrong with the British Ministry? They grounded their pup and upset him enough to share his real name.

“Can they do this?” Fenrir growled low in his throat. He threw the letter onto the table and clenched his fists. Their pup had run away from home, a home that he and Trent were pretty sure was at the very least neglectful, and now he was being held as a prisoner by the ministry in a room that he was paying for.

“I’ve never heard of it happening before.” Trent rubbed his face tiredly. “But I don’t know what we can do to fix it either.”

“Ken!” Fenrir barked. “Can you get me some parchment and ink, please?”

“What are you planning?”

“We may not be able to do anything overt to help our pup, but we can certainly show him our support.”

“I love you.” Trent smiled at his loving husband.

“Right back at ya.” He smirked.

Ken came back with the requested parchment and ink when Finn stormed into the pub. His magic was agitated and was almost tangible, he was waving a letter that Trent had a sinking feeling was from their pup.

“Did you know?” He demanded and slammed the letter onto the table between the werewolf and wizard.

“About Evan?” Trent put extra emphasis on the name, he didn’t want Finn to blurt out the wrong one. “Yes.”

“The pup rubbed off his makeup when Trent here gave him the ‘Talk’ during his first visit.” Fenrir filled in. “We figured that the pup had a good reason to hide.”

Finn growled as if he was the werewolf before storming straight back out of the pub.

“I hope he gets over it.” Trent worried his lip with his teeth. “Evan is rather fond of him.”

“If he doesn’t then he isn’t worthy of being our pup’s first crush.” Fenrir sneered. “Now enough about him, we have a pup to sooth.”

Trent sighed and nodded. His husband was right. He was pretty sure that Finn would come round but until then they needed to show their pup that he had their support. They might not be able to do anything overt, but he was sure that he had a few connections in the ministry that could make the life of whoever decided to ground their pup hell. He would also send a missive to the goblins to see if there was anything they could do, the wix had the tendency to forget how cunning they could be. If anyone would be able to help their pup, it would be the goblins.

Dear Evan,

Fen and I already knew. We’re not mad. How did we know? You accidentally wiped off your makeup covering up your scar whilst I was giving you ‘The Talk’. I don’t think anyone else noticed so don’t worry. Unfortunately, your identity was a surprise for Finn. Don’t worry about it though! He didn’t seem too angry and I’m sure he’ll send a letter to you soon.

Harry sat down on the bed, his knees weak with relief and laughed at how careless he had been. Merlin, he had messed up when he had first met them! Harry grimaced at Finn’s reaction but hopefully Finn would forgive him or just send a letter. He probably wouldn’t even mind if it was a howler, just so long as he spoke to Harry again.

As for the rest of your letter? It is absolutely despicable what the ministry is doing. Unfortunately, Fen and I can’t do anything to help you. He’s a werewolf with a bad reputation and I am a dark wizard and mate of said werewolf. I hope the fact that I am a dark wizard doesn’t scare you off but seeing how open you were to learn about all different kinds of magic gives me hope that you will still wish to be in contact with us.

You are always welcome at the White Wyvern whether as Harry or Evan (but for your safety you should probably come as Evan).

Hang in there,

Trent.

Harry opened the second letter which was a lot shorter.

Evan

Just because you can't come to the pub doesn't mean that you can let your magic lessons slip. Especially as Trent told me that you got your magic unbound. You'll need to practice spells starting from your first year to get used to casting spells now that you have access to more magic. Hopefully, you won't have an issue with your wand. I want a letter at the end of each week, detailing what you have achieved during the week. At the start of each week, I will be giving you exercises to do. For example, your task for this week is to practice your first-year spells, try and perfect them until you can cast them with ease or even wordlessly.

Keep your chin up kid,

Fenrir

He was relieved that his new friends didn't hate him but also understood that there wasn't anything that they could do to help him get free of his imprisonment. Harry was pretty happy that Fenrir was still going to try and teach/tutor him. He hadn't even thought about what having his magic unbound would do to his spell casting! He picked up his traceless wand, it felt warmer than usual in hand, and he had a horrible thought. What if neither wand worked for him? He would then be stuck in his room without a working wand, unable to do the exercises that Fenrir asked him to do, unable to perform any magic! It would be worse than being at the Dursleys! At least there he knew from the start that he wouldn't be able to use magic and was able to focus on other things like the impossible number of chores they made him do, but here? If he was unable to use magic while being surrounded by it? That would be torture!

"*Lumos.*" Harry cast and was instantly blinded. "*Nox!*" He quickly cancelled the spell and tried to blink away the black spots that now covered his vision. Well at least he knew his traceless wand still worked. He also understood what Fenrir meant now about getting used to casting spells now that his magic was unbound. He grinned relieved. He could still use magic! Oddly, the traceless wand seemed to be happier now that his magic was unbound. He wasn't sure how or why he knew that though.

Once his vision cleared, he put his wand back into the holster and searched his trunk for his first-year textbook. He had every single book that he had ever bought from the wizarding world in his trunk because he wouldn't put it past his relatives to destroy them if he left them in Dudley's second room. Due to having a new trunk and a library section in it, he hadn't gotten around to organising them, yet which meant that it took far longer than he would have liked for him to pull out the right book.

He decided that he wasn't going to try any other spells until he had better control over the *lumos* spell. After all, he didn't want to end up blowing up his room! So, he spent the rest of the time until lunch practising the *Lumos* spell which he had managed to get down to a less-likely-going-to-blind-someone glow.

For lunch he went down to the bar to eat (after he had taken his potions) but gave everyone the cold shoulder. He was essentially being held prisoner after all and held no affection towards any of the wizards or witches that knew about it and refused to do anything to help him. His friends were excused due to the fact they weren't in any reasonable position to be able to help him.

"Hey, chin up lad. It's not so bad." Tom tried to console him at one point, but Harry just continued to silently eat.

As soon as he finished eating, he returned to his room and went back to practising his spells. Not just Lumos but the Softening Charm: *Spongify*; the Severing Charm: *Diffindo* ; the Mending Charm: *Reparo* and the levitation charm: *Wingardium Leviosa*. He didn't dare try the Fire making charm: *Incendio* out of fear of setting his room and thus the whole pup on fire especially after he had blinded himself with just a simple *lumos* ! He also didn't try the locking and unlocking charms because he wasn't sure if the ward on the door would pick up on the magic.

He was in the middle of trying to mend one of the pillows that he had used *diffindo* on, it had torn the pillow apart completely rather than just making a small cut, when an owl flew in. It wasn't Hedwig, obviously as she was on the way to Scotland to deliver a letter to McGonagall. It was instead, a rather stern looking eagle owl.

"Hello." He greeted the bird. "Thank you." He accepted the letter and small parcel. He decided to read the letter first, it was sealed with golden wax and a capital G stamped into it. "Could be Gringotts." He guessed as he broke the seal.

Dear Evan Fleamont,

It disturbs us at Gringotts greatly to hear that you are being treated in this way. However, due to the limited thinking of wizards we have come up with a way to allow you to come and go from your room as you please. Understandably you must still show up for meals, to do otherwise may invite suspicion.

From what you have told us, the only thing keeping you from leaving your room is a simple ward on the door that registers when you leave and enter. This is easy to work around. In the parcel sent with this letter is an anklet. It is a portkey. A portkey is an item that has been enchanted to instantly bring anyone touching it to a specific location. The location that was chosen was that of the White Wyvern pub as it has come to our attention that you spend a great deal of time there. The proprietor was more than willing to give us permission to create this portkey with that destination in mind.

The activation phrase is: purpura fulgur . It means Purple Lightning in English and we are told that you would understand the meaning behind the phrase. As you have likely not had the joy of using a portkey prior to now, you should be aware that after stating the above phrase you will feel a sensation not unlike a hook "somewhere behind the navel" pulling the traveller to their location.

We will discuss the price at a later date, but we are more than sure that you will be able to afford it nor will it bankrupt you. For the record, the correct way to finish a correspondent with Gringotts is the following:

May your Vaults never empty,

Master Gornuk,

Account Manager at Gringotts Bank

Fortius Quo Fidelius

Harry grinned once what the letter said sunk in. He was free! He quickly opened the parcel and found the anklet as promised. It was silver and was a simple chain that on closer inspection was covered in tiny runes. He kicked off his shoes and socks and slid the chain over his foot. Harry thought that the chain was going to be too large and be in danger of falling off when it shrunk to fit him.

"Cool!" It was official, he loved Goblins.

Harry waited until it was dark before trying out the portkey. He had spent the rest of the day acting as he had been and after dinner, he shut his door with the knowledge that he wouldn't be expected downstairs until daybreak. It was still fairly early in the day, only six in the evening so he waited for another hour and a half before changing into Evan and with his heart beating loud and fast in his ears, he activated the portkey.

"Purpura Fulgur."

It was exactly like the letter said. It felt like some had dug a hook in his belly button and pulled. His world spun and then suddenly everything stopped, and he fell to the floor with a thump. He felt nauseated and dizzy but after a moment his stomach settled, and he opened his eyes and looked around. He grinned at the sight of the tiny courtyard of the White Wyvern.

He was free!

Evan wasted no time in entering the pub. He beamed when he saw Fenrir and Trent sat at the bar and hurried over to them.

"I'm free!"

"Kid!" Fenrir grinned and scooped him up in a tight hug, he was literally taken off his feet by the werewolf before he was plunked back on his feet only to be squeezed and smothered by Trent.

"I am so glad that the Goblins managed to work around those Ministry bastards." Trent mumbled into Evan's hair, but he still heard him.

"Language." He teased as the man let him go.

"Oh, hush you." Trent rolled his eyes, but he had a big grin on his face. Then he turned to Ken who was the barman that evening. "A butterbeer for our free-range kid!"

Evan groaned. “You’re never going to let me forget that I wrote that, are you?” Why did he write that?

“Not at all.” Trent smirked.

“Fenrir.” He whined to the werewolf hoping to have him on his side.

“Now, now darlin’. Don’t make fun of our free-range kid.”

“Gah!” Evan threw up his hands in exasperation, but he was smiling all the same. He was so happy that he would still be able to meet up with them for the rest of the summer he totally owed the Goblins.

As he laughed and joked with Trent and Fenrir and genuinely had a good time, he couldn’t stop himself from looking towards the main entrance waiting for Finn to walk in.

He never did.

The rest of Harry’s summer passed like this:

In the morning he would meditate and practise his occlumency, take his potions and then have breakfast downstairs where he would be carefully watched by Tom the barman before returning to his room. He would then spend the morning practising his first- and second-year charms and then take his potions before lunch.

After lunch he would practice his transfiguration and then some simple defence spells like the knockback jinx from his first year and *Expelliarmus* that he just learnt in the past year. He would then have dinner (after taking his potions, sure they were to fix the damage his relatives did, but they were disgusting!).

After dinner he would become Evan and visit the White Wyvern where Fenrir would put him through his paces and then Trent would give him a masterclass in Divination. He basically ended up drinking a lot of tea and learning how to really read the tea leaves and their placement in the cup and Trent started to teach him the meanings behind each tarot card.

He also spent a lot of time making sure Errol wasn't actually dead as he didn't move much from the chair that Harry had placed him on when he first arrived. He was okay but it just solidified the idea of getting the Weasley's a new owl. Hedwig had also arrived back with a reply from McGonagall who had approved his change of electives with a stern word that he would come to her if he struggled with the workload. His school letter had also arrived, but he just put it to the side seeing as he couldn't go out as Harry to buy the stuff yet.

He didn’t see Finn at all and every time he tried stopping by the forge it was shut. His heart sank after the first few times he checked until he stopped looking for him. It was just a stupid crush; he didn't care if Finn didn't want anything to do with him after finding out he was Harry Potter. It didn't matter. It really didn't.

At one point he did visit Gringotts to sort out payment for the anklet portkey which he also thanked them wholeheartedly. It didn't cost as much as he thought it would, it was only a hundred galleons which yeah, okay was a lot of money but was nothing in comparison to his actual fortune and the freedom that it had given him.

Then the day before his 'grounding' was up, a grumpy owl arrived with a parcel.

Harry accepted the parcel with a confused frown and the owl flew off, the sender was clearly not expecting a reply. He had no idea who would be sending something to him. It wouldn't be Hermione or even the Weasleys as he would be seeing them tomorrow. With a shrug he opened the parcel and his breath caught at what was inside.

It was a snowy owl made completely from metal. Each feather looked individually made and probably took a great deal of time and effort to make. The eyes were glass and were an exact match to Hedwig's. It was unpainted but there was a variant in colour of the wings from the different types of metal that must have been used. It was stunning and Harry knew exactly who it came from.

Finn.

Finn hadn't been avoiding him, he had been busy making this...this masterpiece.

"Hedwig!" He called over the model of the piece. "Look what Finn made, it's you!"

She flew over and perched on his shoulder and peered at the statue. She cooed and puffed up her chest with pride.

"He did a really good job, didn't he?" He felt like crying, Finn didn't hate him. "I should send him a thank you note. Want to carry it?"

Hedwig barked as if saying yes.

"Excellent! I'll just write it then."

Dear Finn,

Thank you, she's perfect.

It's my last night at the White Wyvern as I will be unable to sneak off as my school friends and their families will be descending upon me. I will also be 'officially' free.

I hope to see you there to thank you again in person,

Evan.

He hesitated over what name to use but, in the end, stuck with the one that he was using when in Knockturn even if Finn knew the truth. He handed over the letter to Hedwig.

"It's for Finn at the Fyrig Forge." He told her and tied the letter to her leg. She cooed and took off.

He couldn't take his eyes off the statue, it was just so beautiful, a true art piece and- damn it he still owed Finn the other half of payment. If Finn didn't turn up at the pub, then he would just have to see if he could transfer the money into his vault.

Hedwig came back rather quickly with a note. She settled on the back of the chair that Errol was practically nesting in. He took the note from her. It held one sentence.

I'll be there.

-Finn.

Evan arrived in the courtyard of the White Wyvern pub with his heart in his throat. This would be the last time this summer that he would be able to visit his friends in Knockturn...and after three weeks of not seeing him, Finn would be there too. Finn who had made a stunning replica of Hedwig. Evan's palms felt sweaty, so he rubbed them on his robes before taking a deep breath and entered the pub.

It was as warm and welcoming as usual and Evan made his way over to the table next to the bar which had become his regular table these past weeks. Fenrir, Trent, and Finn were already there. He grinned as he took his seat next to Finn.

"Hi!"

Finn grunted but there was a small smile on his face.

"Kiddo." Fenrir grinned and reached across the table to mess up Evan's hair.

"Hello Evan." Trent greeted him with a warm smile as well.

"Hi." Evan repeated basking in the warmth that they were happy to see him.

"Not sure how you managed it, but you got old grumpy out of his forge." Fenrir lifted his glass and gestured with it. "We've been trying to pry him out for weeks!"

Finn just scowled.

"I'll go get you a drink, Evan while my husband gossips with you."

"It's not gossip!"

"Whatever you say, dear." Trent teased and pressed a kiss to the werewolf's cheek. "I'll be back now in a minute."

"Anyway," Fenrir continued as if Trent hadn't interrupted him. "What have you been up to, Finn? Seriously? I know you don't like to socialise overly much, but you've practically been a ghost these past weeks."

“I had a commission.” He explained simply and Evan had to fight down a blush. That commission had been for him after all. Wait, speaking of commissions.

“Oh!” Evan exclaimed, bringing both men’s attention to him as he turned in his seat to face Finn. “I need to give you the other half of the payment.”

“I had forgotten that you were getting something made by him.” Fenrir commented. “What was it again?”

“A Bubo Scandiacus.” Finn answered, drawing blank looks from both Evan and Fenrir. He sighed. “A snowy owl.”

“Well, why didn’t you just say that in the first place?” Fenrir huffed.

“It’s really pretty.” Evan butted in before Fenrir could get too annoyed. “I love it and so does my owl.” He avoided saying Hedwig’s name out of fear that someone would overhear and put the pieces together. He didn’t want anyone other than who already knew to know.

“Did you bring it with you?”

“No, it was too big and well my owl has really taken to it and wouldn’t let me.” It was true, Hedwig only left the side to hunt for both herself and Errol. She had even tried to preen its feathers before realising that she couldn’t because it was made of metal. It was adorable.

“You’ll have to get yourself a camera and send me a photo, later then.” Fenrir pouted. It was weird to see a man as large as Fenrir pout like a four-year-old.

“Sure.” He agreed. It would be cool to get a wizarding camera, he would have to work out where to get one and how he would develop the photos. He suddenly realised that Finn hadn’t answered his question about how much Evan owed him but before he could ask again the lights suddenly dimmed.

“Happy Birthday,” Trent’s voice came from behind him. He turned and saw the man approaching with a birthday cake with thirteen candles. “to you, happy birthday to you!” Everyone else in the pub joined in and suddenly Evan was having a flashback to his actual birthday and how everyone in the Leaky had sung to him too. He liked this rendition better especially with Finn’s baritone voice rumbling next to him.

“Happy birthday to Evan, happy birthday to you!” They finished and started cheering.

“I realised that we missed out on your birthday and as today is the last time you can visit for a while, I thought we could throw you a little party.” Trent explained once the noise died down. He placed the candle lit cake in front of him. The candles must have been spelled to not drip wax because if Dudley had waited this long to blow out his candles (which he did one year) the cake would have been covered in the stuff (that was not a fun day for Harry).

“Thank you so much, you didn’t have to.” Evan’s smile was so big that it hurt.

“No but we wanted to.” Trent beamed at him, “Now go on, blow out your candles and make a wish.”

As Evan looked around him, at Fenrir who had become a mentor, at Trent who had taken him under his wing, at all the patrons in the pub that never begrudged the messy results of his spell casting as he adapted to his new levels of magic and at Finn, who was his first major crush; He knew what to wish for.

He closed his eyes and blew out the candles. *I wish that I could spend all my summers here.*

“Three cheers for our friend Evan!” Fenrir roared boisterously when all the candles were blown out. “Hip-hip?!”

“Hooray!” The rest of the pub shouted back.

“Hip-hip?”

“Hooray!”

“HIP-HIP?”

“HOORAY!”

“Thank you.” Evan felt like crying. He was so touched! This felt so much more special than the cringy version he had experienced in the Leaky Cauldron. “Now, who wants cake?” It was a large chocolate cake that looked big enough for everyone in the establishment to have a slice.

The people in the pub cheered again and Evan laughed happily. Merlin, this was probably the best night of life!

After dishing out a slice of chocolate cake to everyone, things settled down again. Evan took a large bite of his slice and groaned. It was delicious! It was just so rich and chocolatey and soft and just yum!

“Now it's time for gifts!” Fenrir pulled out a box wrapped in green paper.

“You didn’t.” Evan denied the very idea of presents. “The cake was more than enough, honest.”

“Oh hush,” Trent chided gently. “We wanted to get you something.” He too pulled out a box, but it was smaller than Fenrir’s. “Now you best open Fenrir’s first or he’ll burst a blood vessel from being so excited.”

“Okay,” He accepted the box from the werewolf that was acting more like a golden retriever puppy than a big bad wolf. “Thank you.” He carefully unwrapped the box and opened it to find a grey rock on top of a book. He pulled the rock out first. It sat nicely in the palm of his hand and was fairly weighty.

“It's stone enchanted with a strong notice-me-not.” Fenrir explained as Evan examined it. It had tiny runes engraved on it. “To activate it you hold it in your hand and send a pulse of magic into it then when you place it in the library compartment of your trunk it will keep people from noticing some of your less than legal books.”

“Which of my books are less than legal?” Evan asked, confused. He didn’t think that any of his books were unlawful.

“Well...” Fenrir suddenly looked sheepish. “Um, all of the ones I’ve given you?”

“Including the one on magical theory?”

“Unfortunately, the ministry has blacklisted a lot of books just because they don’t fit in line with what they want the general public to know.” He explained.

“That doesn’t actually surprise me.” Evan frowned as he remembered the disgusting travesty of the ministry grounding him in a room that he was paying for and the head of the law enforcement not doing anything to help him. If they could do that, he wouldn’t put it past them to control what people know. It was just a form of propaganda; he had learnt about that during primary school when they had learnt about WWII.

“Anyway, like I said. Stick the stone in your trunk and it’ll stop you from getting caught with them.”

“Thank you.” Evan then pulled out the book that was also in the box. It was titled ‘Defence Against All Arts’ and after a quick page through, he thought it looked rather interesting.

“This looks great!”

“You’re welcome kiddo.”

“Me next.” Trent slid his box over to Evan.

Evan put the book and stone back into the box to keep it safe before opening the gift from Trent. Inside was a deck of tarot cards, a slim book, and a thicker book underneath that.

“I thought that you should have your own personal deck of tarot cards.” He explained. “The images on the cards are of famous witches and wizards from around the world. There is also a booklet to explain how to take care of your deck and a book on the history of those witches and wizards.”

“Neat!” He touched the deck with reverence. Trent had explained how you should bond with your deck and not let others touch it unless necessary. Evan was still trying to memorise the meanings of the Minor and Major Arcana cards but silently promised that he would try harder because of the gift. “Thank you so much.”

Finn cleared his throat. “My gift is that the rest of the payment on your owl has been waived.”

“What? No!” He protested. “You must have put hundreds of hours into making her.”

“So?” He shrugged.

“I’ll have the Goblins put the money in your vault anyway.” Evan narrowed his eyes.

“You do that, and I will simply transfer the money back into your account including your original down payment.” He smirked. Merlin, Evan wanted to hit him and kiss him but mostly hit him as he was too young to do anything his hormonal mind would want to.

“Fine.” He pouted for a moment before smiling softly at the gruff man. “Thank you, I seriously love the statue.”

“I’m glad.”

Evan had to look away before he combusted from the gentle look on Finn’s face. Why was the man so gorgeous, generous, and talented?!

“And from the rest of us,” Ken the barman suddenly popped up, breaking Evan from his thoughts on how pretty Finn was. “Here is a twelve pack of Butterbeer. All the regulars put in a few sickles. Steve and I paid the rest.” It took Evan a moment to remember that Steve was the other barman, he was the one that refused to let him pay off Fenrir’s tab.

“Thank you, and tell him I said thank you, please.” He accepted the case.

“Course kid, just don’t get caught with it.” Ken winked before heading back to the bar.

“I could get in trouble for having this at school?”

“Might do.” Fenrir shrugged. “So, like Ken said, just don’t get caught.”

Evan laughed, “I’ll keep that in mind.”

The night ended with two crushing hugs from Trent and Fenrir and a pat on the head from Finn that made him feel as if he could walk on air. He was told to write to them or else. He promises that he will and then he’s walking back to the courtyard and activating the portkey for the last time that summer.

“*Purpura fulgur*.” Evan sighed sadly as he was portkeyed back to his room in the Leaky Cauldron.

He landed easily as he was rather used to them by now. He sighed, feeling bereaved before he shook it off. He could still send Fenrir, Trent and Finn letters and he would see them next summer even if he had to run away again but next time, he would be smarter about it.

He gently placed his presents on his bed before focusing on his appearance. Evan’s blond hair bled back to the black of Harry’s, he wiped off the make-up covering his scar and swapped out his demiguise glasses to the normal pair. He was Harry Potter again and would be for the next year. With that done he focused back on his presents.

He pulled out the notice-me-not stone first and placed it in his library compartment after giving it a pulse of magic to activate the enchantments; it also locked the stone to his magical signature so only he would be immune to the effects.

Next, he picked up his tarot cards and took them out of their box. They were wrapped in a pure silk cloth which he had read about, it was supposed to keep the card clean from interference when not in use. He gently removed the cards from the cloth and shuffled them. They fit perfectly in his hands and were absolutely gorgeous. Each card was a beautifully illustrated artist's impression of a famous witch or wizard.

Just having a quick shuffle revealed: Minister Hesphaestus Gore, Elladora Ketteridge, Flavius Belby, Minister Artemisia Lufkin, Herpo the Foul, Paracelsus, Ingolfr the Iambic and Josefina Calderon. Harry didn't recognise a lot of the names so quickly grabbed one of the coloured journals he had bought and scribbled down the names. He then carefully rewrapped the deck of tarot cards before putting them under his pillow. He would need to sleep with them under his pillow for a month before trying his first reading with them, this way his magic would sync with them.

Harry grabbed the history book that Trent had also given him and flipped through until he found the names of the cards that he had written down. It turns out that **Minister Hesphaestus Gore** was one of the earliest Aurors and became Minister in 1752 and served until 1770. Harry hoped that their current Minister wouldn't be in office for as long a time.

Elladora Ketteridge was born in 1656 and died in 1729. She was the first witch to discover the magical properties of Gillyweed.

Flavius Belby, born in 1715 and died in 1791, was the only known wizard to survive a Lethifold attack. Harry didn't know what a Lethifold was, so he put the book down and pulled out the Monster Book of Monsters to find out.

After gently stroking the spine of the vicious book he opened to the contents page and found the creatures beginning with 'L'. He quickly found the right page and read: ... *The Lethifold (also known as the Living Shroud) was a carnivorous and extremely dangerous magical beast. It resembles a large black cloak, roughly an inch thick but appears slightly thicker if it was digesting a victim. Its main prey are humans, and it attacks at night while the target is asleep. It kills by suffocating the victim before digesting them. The only known effective method of protection against a Lethifold is by using the Patronus Charm, similar to that of a Dementor, as discovered by Flavius Belby...*

Well, Harry was going to be having nightmares about them tonight. Seriously? It was a living human eating blanket! That was horrifying. He shut the book and regretted looking up what a Lethifold was. To take his mind off it he went back to looking up the historical figures that were on his tarot cards.

Minister Artemisia Lufkin was the first female Minister for Magic for Great Britain. She was a former Hufflepuff and served in office (after being elected twice) from 1798 to 1811.

Herpo the foul was an Ancient Greek Wizard who was infamous for creating the Basilisk which Harry did not thank him for! He rubbed his arm where the fang of the Basilisk at the end of the year had entered.

Paracelsus whose birth name was Phillipus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim which was rather a mouth full so Harry could understand why he went by a

shorter name. He was born in 1493 and died in 1551. He was an alchemist and made some significant contributions to the field of medicine and was accredited with the discovery of Parseltongue.

Ingolfr the Iambic was a Norwegian wizard and poet in the early 1400s. He wrote a verse about the game of Quidditch that showed how the game had spread to Europe, Harry wondered if where he could get a copy of that poem, it could be a fun way to help improve his Norwegian not that he was anywhere that level yet!

And finally, **Josefina Calderon** was a 17th-century Mexican witch and Healer who became the wife of Chadwick Boot, one of the founders of Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Harry scribbled down notes on all these witches and wizards in the journal he had grabbed which turned out to be his blue one. He would have to get Hermione her own copy of the book otherwise she might nick it from him. He chuckled to himself at how jealous she would have to be to steal the book but would look for a copy in the bookshop when they meet up tomorrow.

Thinking about tomorrow, he should probably head to bed. He didn't know when the Weasleys or Hermione would turn up but seeing as he would also be officially free from his Ministry enforced grounding, he planned to stay out of his room as much as possible. He closed the history book and put his writing things and journal away.

He made a mental note to pick up more of the things as it was helpful to have coloured journals for specific subjects. He had already used his purple one for Divination, his red one for Runes and now his blue one was being used for History stuff. He had a green and yellow left; he should probably get at least one more of each colour and see if they have any other colours. The journals were the closest thing in the wizarding world he had found to a notebook.

He put his new book from Fenrir away in his trunk alongside the history book, taking care to place them next to the notice-me-not stone. As he was tidying up, he decided that he might as well pack up the rest of his things too. Sure, he had a week left but not all of his things were stuff that he wanted to have on display when his friends arrived.

All of the books, including all ten from Fenrir. Books which not all were on magical theory but some on defence and other specific branches of magic that Harry now knew weren't exactly legal. That bloody werewolf, he shook his head fondly at the fact that the wolf had been so sly in not telling him about the legality of the books before Harry had gotten attached to them. Oh well, at least he came up with a way for Harry to hide them. Harry was pretty proud of the small library that he was amassing.

With his books sorted he moved onto the Miscellaneous compartment where, with reverence, he placed the owl statue. He would have loved to keep the statue out but he didn't know where he would tell his friends that he got it from. Hedwig barked crossly at him at the action.

“Sorry, Hedwig but I don’t want anyone knowing that Finn made her for us.” He tried to explain. “I wasn’t exactly supposed to go down Knockturn and could get in trouble for it.”

She ruffled her feathers and then turned on her perch at the back of what he had dubbed as ‘Errol’s chair’ and turned to face the wall.

“Don’t be like that, girl.” Harry begged. “I wish that I could keep her out as well but I’m afraid that if I do, she might be confiscated from us if the Ministry finds out where we got her from. They did after all abuse their powers to keep me confined in this room.”

Hedwig seemed to sigh, before turning back round to face him. Harry took that as her accepting his apology.

“Thanks, girl.” He stroked her feathers gently.

Harry finished packing his trunk until only the clothes that he was going to wear tomorrow; his pyjamas and his bathroom things were left out. He would live out of his trunk for the last week. He climbed into his bed and wiggled to get comfortable and easily ignored the new lump under his pillow that was his deck of tarot cards. He would have to make sure not to forget them when he left at the end of the week.

The statue of a Snowy Owl made by Finn:



Chapter 7

Harry was woken by a knock on his door. He gazed groggily at the door wondering if he imagined the noise when the knocking came again. With a sigh he slipped on his glasses and climbed out his bed. He opened the door a crack, he was still in pyjamas after all, and saw the red robes of an Auror.

“Mr Potter?” The voice was familiar, and it took him a moment to place it. It was Shacklebolt, the Auror who said that he was going to help him and then didn’t.

“Yes?” Harry covered his mouth as he yawned. “Are you here to tell me that my grounding has been extended?”

“No, sir.” Huh, Harry had never been called ‘sir’ before. “I’m here to remove the ward from your door now that your Ministry enforced grounding is over.”

“You mean the illegally enforced grounding.” He corrected but opened the door wider.

The Auror merely grimaced and went to work removing the ward that would have kept him prisoner if not for the wily Goblins. Harry sat on his bed and watched the man work, was he being a little shit by staring at the man unblinking? Yes, but really who could blame him.

“There.” The man put his wand away. “The ward has been disassembled.”

“Thank you, ever so much for your services, I will never forget what you have done for me.” He said facetiously and felt darkly pleased as the Auror left without another word.

As he was awake now, he closed the door which the Auror had rudely left open, and got ready for the day. He, as Harry, was free and he wasn’t about to waste the day. He got dressed, hid the makeup that he used as Evan in his library compartment with the notice-me-not charmed stone along with the demiguise glasses. For the rest of the summer and for school year, he was Harry Potter.

Harry planned on buying an owl for the Weasleys before they arrived that way they couldn’t say no. Errol was still staying with him and at this point Harry was wondering if the feather duster of a bird was ever going to leave for the burrow or if Harry was going to literally hand him over to the Weasleys when they arrived.

However, Harry barely reached the bottom step of the stairs before he was tackled by a blur of brown hair and strangled in a hug.

“Ack!” He struggled in the hug for a moment before it registered that it was Hermione that was attacking him. “Hermione! Can’t. Breathe.” He flailed trying to push his best friend away. As much as he loved her, he did not enjoy her suffocating hugs.

“Let him breathe, Hermione.” Ron came to Harry’s rescue looking very freckly and slightly red. “Good to see you mate.” He grinned.

“It’s great to see you too!” Hermione as she finally freed him from her death hold.

“You guys look great, looks like you both got a lot of sun.” He commented as he took in Hermione’s dark tan and the extra freckles on Ron’s face.

“Yeah, it was a blast and hey, look at this!” Ron pulled out a wand box and opened it.

“Brand-new wand. Fourteen inches, willow, containing one unicorn tail-hair.”

“Nice!” Harry made the appropriate cooing noises over the new wand. “At least this one won’t backfire on you.” He teased as they moved over to a table so that they weren’t blocking the stairs.

“Oh shut up, Harry.” Ron stuck his tongue out at him. “Anyway, what’s this I heard about you blowing up your aunt?”

"I didn't mean to," said Harry, setting Ron off into peals of laughter. "I just...lost control." Honestly, it feels like forever ago that it had happened, and he no longer felt embarrassed by the lapse in control.

"It's not funny, Ron," said Hermione sharply. "Honestly, I'm amazed Harry wasn't expelled."

“Me, too honestly.” Harry agreed. “Instead, I got told to stay in Diagon but.” His face darkened. “After about a week I suddenly got a letter telling me I was grounded and restricted to my room except for meals.”

“What?” Ron stopped laughing.

“The Ministry told me I had to stay at the Leaky, in a room that I was paying for and then confined me to the room.” He explained. “They even went as far as putting a ward over my door so they would know if I left more than the three times a day for food.”

“That’s bloody unfair, mate.”

“Is that even legal?”

"It's not. I spoke to an Auror on the first day of my confinement and he said it wasn't right, that he would try and fix it but when he came back, he was with the head of law enforcement who herself told me that it was unlawful but there was nothing they could do about it. They then put the ward up themselves." He said bitterly. Yeah, he still wasn't over it.

“When is the grounding up?” Hermione wanted to know.

“Today, they took down the ward this morning.”

“Excellent, then let’s have ice cream for breakfast.” Ron suggested.

“I want to have breakfast first here if that’s alright,” Harry rejected the idea before Hermione could. “Apparently I paid for all my meals in advance.”

“Like you did for the room?” Ron looked disgruntled.

“Exactly.”

“Well, I’m sure there’s a reasonable explanation.” Hermione offered half-heartedly but backed down at the droll look Harry gave her. “Never mind. Let’s have breakfast and then we can do our school shopping and then Ronald, yes we can have ice cream.”

“Sounds like a plan!”

After breakfast they set out, heading first to the bookshop to pick up their school books, then to potion shops to restock their supplies and so on. They chatted about their holidays, not that Harry had much to talk about. He stuck with his ‘Harry’ side of things. He would maybe tell them about ‘Evan’ later once they were at school but not here out in the open where they could get overheard. He did learn that the Weasleys were staying at the Leaky Cauldron for the last week before school and so was Hermione.

They went to the pet shop first as Ron wanted to get Scabbers checked out. The rat hadn’t been doing very well since they had come back from Egypt. The sight and sound of the animals reminded Harry of his promise to Errol.

“I have an errand to run, I’ll meet you back at the Leaky Cauldron.” He told his friends as they stepped over the threshold of the shop.

“You sure mate? We could just wait for you here.”

“Nah, it’s fine.” He waved the idea away.

“Alright,” Hermione sighed, and Ron nodded before heading further into the pet shop leaving Harry by himself.

He went straight to Eeylops Owl Emporium which only sold owls while the shop that Ron and Hermione went into sold all animals apart from owls. It was dark and noisy inside, so he didn’t want to spend too long in the shop. He went straight up to the woman at the till.

“Hi,” He gained her attention.

“How can I help you today?”

“I’m looking for an owl that can travel long distances easily and perhaps can carry heavy loads?” He figured that an owl like that would be the best choice for the Weasleys.

“Then you’ll probably want a Great Horned owl or an Eagle owl.” She decided after a moment of thought. “We have a few of each in stock.” She stood up. “If you’ll follow me?”

“Sure.” Harry followed her over to a row of cages inside which were owls screeching for attention. He immediately hated the place even more. “Are they okay?”

“They know it is feeding time shortly,” She chuckled. “They’re a bit like cats that way. Anyway, these here are the Eagle owls.” She pointed to the cages with large owls with long eyebrows that looked like ears. “And those are Horned owls.” She pointed to the cages with the smaller owls.

Harry stepped closer to the larger owls and found one that he immediately liked for the Weasleys. Their eyes were almost the same orange as the Weasleys’ hair. “I’ll have this one please.”

“Sure thing,” The shopkeeper carefully took the cage down. “This is a male Spotted Eurasian Eagle owl.” She explained. “You can tell that he is a male because of his lighter colouring on his facial disk. You picked a good one, the orange eyes are rather rare.”

“Cool.”

He paid for the owl and some treats, he bought enough for Hedwig to have as well, which he stashed in his opposite pocket and left the shop.

“You bought yourself another owl, mate?” Was the first thing out of Ron’s mouth as soon as Harry entered the Leaky Cauldron.

“No, this is for you and your family.”

“What?” Several red heads exclaimed.

“Oh, Harry dear.” Mrs Weasley approached him with a slight frown. “That is awfully kind of you, but we have Errol and-”

“But Mrs Weasley, Errol is really old and the journey from Egypt to England almost killed him!” Harry widened his eyes as he looked up at her. “He hasn’t moved from the chair in my room since he arrived almost a month ago!”

“Oh my!”

“Errol is really old and maybe I’m overstepping but you really should retire him, only use him on small journeys.” He continued. “Anyway, this fella is a gift and it would be rude not to accept him, right?” He cajoled.

“Oh you,” She sighed and caught sight of the puppy eyes the rest of her children were pulling. It was obvious that they all wanted the owl. “At least let us pay you for him.”

“Nonsense, he’s a gift.” Harry denied as he passed over the cage. “He hasn’t got a name yet, but I thought he would be perfect because his eyes match your hair.”

“Well, he’s definitely a Weasley then!” One of the twins shouted.

“Practically another brother.” The other twin added.

“How about Rory?” Mr Weasley suggested as he peered over his wife’s shoulder at the owl. “We were going to name Ginny that, if she had been a boy.”

“Rory it is!” One of the twins agreed before anyone else could suggest a different name.

“Welcome to the family, Rory!” The other beamed.

“He’ll probably be less annoying-”

“Than Percy.”

“Oh, you two, behave.” Mrs Weasley scolded them before turning back to Harry. “Thank you, dear boy. This was very sweet of you.”

“It was nothing.” Harry squirmed, not used to receiving thanks.

“Harry,” Mr Weasley saved him from further thanks. “Why don’t you and I go collect Errol from your room? I can then go and drop both him and Rory off at the burrow.”

“Sure.”

As Mr Weasley scooped up Errol, who cooed at seeing the man, he turned to Harry and gave him a serious look. “Now, before we go back downstairs for an early dinner there is something I need to discuss with you Harry.”

“What is it?” Harry furrowed his eyebrows as he wondered what this was about.

“You might have heard about the escape of Sirius Black.” He hedged carefully.

“Oh, um I already know Mr Weasley.”

“Pardon?” The man blinked in shock.

“I read the newspaper. He’s a mass murderer and generally a bad guy.”

“Well yes, he is that.” Mr Weasley agreed. “But there is a chance that the man will be out to get you.”

“What why?” Harry felt a chill go down his spine as he remembered that Sirius Black was technically his father due to a blood adoption and had, according to the Goblins ‘allegedly’ betrayed his parents to Voldemort.

“Well, uh.” The man struggled to find the right words. “There is no gentle way to put this.” He sighed. “Sirius Black, betrayed your parents to Voldemort.” He said in a rush.

“And now that he’s out you think he might be after me.”

“It’s not definite, but yes.” He nodded. “So, you must promise me that you will be careful this year, Harry. You mustn’t go looking for him.”

“I promise.” He didn’t really want anything to do with the man that had betrayed his parents after all but if he found Harry, well Harry had learnt quite a few nasty hexes over the summer...

“That’s a good lad.” He laid a comforting hand on Harry’s shoulder. “Now let’s go downstairs so I can take the owls home.”

Downstairs, Harry was introduced to Hermione’s new cat. His name was Crookshanks, he was orange and had a rather squished face. He was kind of cute, he had to admit but apparently was trying to kill Ron’s rat.

“Why don’t you put Scabbers in his cage, Ron?” He suggested as the boy cupped the rat protectively to his chest. “You said he hadn’t been feeling well, right? Maybe he should take a nap upstairs where it is calmer?”

“Fine.” He scowled at Hermione. “Just keep your bloody cat away from him!” He stomped upstairs to do exactly as Harry had suggested.

“Maybe try and keep Crookshanks away from Scabbers?” Harry told Hermione hesitantly.

“Fine.” She huffed and flounced off to talk with Ginny. Harry rolled his eyes at his friends’ antics and went to go hang out with the twins who were huddled suspiciously in the corner.

The last week of the summer passed quickly now that he was free, and his friends were with him. They spent their days wandering up and down Diagon Alley and eating ice cream. Harry did in fact pick up some more coloured journals and even some nice parchment and envelopes now that he had people to write to. And wasn’t that a novelty! He felt a little excited about sending his first letter from Hogwarts to his new friends. Sure he had sent a letter to them before but somehow, the act of doing it from Hogwarts felt different.

Then before he knew it, they were boarding the train. They, meaning Harry, Hermione Ron, and Ginny, leaned out of the train window, and waved at Mr. and Mrs. Weasley until the train turned a corner and blocked them from view.

“I need to talk to you in private,” Harry muttered to Ron and Hermione as the train picked up speed. He hadn’t had a chance to speak with them in private all week, there had always been another Weasley lurking. And as usual it had been hectic getting everyone packed, ready and on the train on time so he couldn’t even pull them to the side while everyone was packing.

“Go away, Ginny,” said Ron.

“Oh, that’s nice,” said Ginny huffily, and she stalked off. Harry rolled his eyes, Ron could have done that with a little more tact.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione set off down the corridor, looking for an empty compartment, but all were full except for the one at the very end of the train.

This had only one occupant, a man sitting fast asleep next to the window. Harry, Ron, and Hermione hesitated before entering. They hadn't seen an adult on the Hogwarts' Express before, well other than the Trolley Lady. The stranger was wearing an extremely shabby set of wizard's robes that had been darned in several places. He looked ill and exhausted. Though quite young, his light brown hair was flecked with Grey.

In the end they decided to sit in the compartment as it was probably the emptiest, they were going to find and the man was asleep, so it wasn't as if they were going to be overheard by him. Although it did make Harry change his mind about telling Ron and Hermione about his 'Evan' persona, that would have to wait just in case, but he could tell them about the warning Mr Weasley gave him about Sirius Black.

"Who d'you reckon he is?" Ron hissed as they sat down and slid the door shut, taking the seats farthest away from the window.

"Professor R. J. Lupin." whispered Hermione at once.

"How'd you know that?"

"It's on his case," she replied, pointing at the luggage rack over the man's head, where there was a small, battered case held together with a large quantity of neatly knotted string. The name Professor R. J. Lupin was stamped across one corner in peeling letters.

"Wonder what he teaches?" said Ron, frowning at Professor Lupin's pallid profile.

"That's obvious," whispered Hermione. "There's only one vacancy, isn't there? Defence Against the Dark Arts."

"Well, I hope he's up to it," said Ron doubtfully. "He looks like one good hex would finish him off, doesn't he? Anyway..." he turned to Harry, "what were you going to tell us?"

"You know how Sirius Black has escaped." He started. "Well apparently he was the man that betrayed my parents and therefore he might be out to get me now." He explained quickly and simply.

Ron looked thunderstruck, and Hermione had her hands over her mouth.

"Sirius Black escaped to come after you? Oh, Harry... you'll have to be really, really careful. don't go looking for trouble, Harry..." Hermione started to scold him before he had even done anything.

"I don't go looking for trouble," Harry insisted. "Trouble usually finds me."

"True." Ron nodded. "So, what's the plan?"

"I promised your dad that I wouldn't go after Sirius Black." Harry reminded him before a wolfish grin crept over his face. "But I never promised not to hex him if he found me." If

Harry could have seen his face, he would have realised that he looked a lot like Fenrir when he talks about the Ministry in that moment: Blood thirsty.

They passed some of the journey by talking about the classes that they were taking.

“Mate, I can’t believe that you’ve added to your electives!” Ron exclaimed around a mouthful of cauldron cake.

“Well, I think that it's rather admirable.” Hermione commented as she stroked Crookshanks who sat next to her on the bench.

“Before I was grounded by the Ministry,” Harry scowled, remembering that injustice before continuing. “I had enough time to pick up some random books from Obscurus books and one of them was on Runes and the other Arithmancy. Then I was locked up and I had nothing else to do but read.”

“But still.” Ron whined as he grabbed another cake.

“They ended up being interesting, sorry mate.” Harry shrugged. “We can still play chess and hang out during our frees and after dinner though.”

“Maybe you should take a page out of his book, Ron.” Hermione huffed. “I don’t know why you only want to do the bare minimum.”

“I don’t like to study.”

“I promised McGonagall that I would drop a class if I’m unable to cope with them.” Harry interjected before they could really get a row started. He really didn’t want another Crookshanks Vs. Scabbers style argument on his hands.

“Fine, mate. But I still think you’re bonkers.”

“Thanks Ron.” Harry laughed amused and nudged his best mate playfully. “I happen to think that you’re bonkers too.”

“Oi!” Ron grinned and shoved him back.

They would have descended into full roughhousing if the professor hadn’t shifted in his sleep. Harry and Ron froze. They waited to see if the man was going to wake up but when it seemed like he wasn’t they let out relieved sighs and settled down.

At one o'clock the Trolley Witch arrived at the compartment door. Harry met her at the door and asked for some cauldron cakes, he got enough to share with both Ron and Hermione.

“D'you think we should wake him up? He looks like he could do with some food.” Ron asked awkwardly, proving that he was his mother’s son, always trying to feed someone.

Hermione approached Professor Lupin cautiously. "Er, Professor?" she said. "Excuse me? Professor?"

The man didn't move. He must be a heavy sleeper, Harry thought as Hermione daringly reached out to shake his shoulder. She was stopped by the Trolley Witch's voice before her hand made contact.

"Don't worry, dear," The witch said as she handed Harry a large stack of cauldron cakes. "If he's hungry when he wakes, I'll be up front with the driver. "

"I suppose he is asleep?" said Ron quietly, as the witch slid the compartment door closed. "I mean, he hasn't died, has he?"

"No, no, he's breathing," Hermione whispered and accepted the cauldron cake Harry passed her.

The professor had his eyes even while unconscious as Malfoy and his goons took a step into their compartment, mouth open to mock them when he spotted the adult on the opposite bench, he froze.

"Who's that?" said Malfoy demanded and took a step back.

"New teacher," said Harry, he held out his arm to stop Ron from getting up. He was pretty sure that Malfoy wasn't going to pick a fight in front of a teacher even if said teacher was asleep. "What were you going to say, Malfoy?"

Malfoy's pale eyes narrowed but like Harry thought he would, he retreated, and his goons followed him out. Once he was sure Malfoy was gone, Harry removed his arm from where he had it stretched across Ron's chest to keep him from charging at the prat.

"I'm not going to take any crap from Malfoy this year," Ron declared. "I mean it. Especially after what his dad did last year. If he makes just one crack about my family, I'm going to get hold of his head and..." Ron made a violent gesture in mid-air.

"Ron," Hermione hissed and pointed at Professor Lupin to remind the redhead that they were in the presence of an Adult. "Be careful. . . " But Professor Lupin was still fast asleep.

"Must be a really heavy sleeper." Harry commented as all three of them stared at the sleeping teacher.

"Yeah."

It got darker as they travelled further north and soon the windows were pelted with rain as it poured heavily outside. The lanterns in the corridor and the compartments flickered to life and Harry and Ron were trying to out yawn each other. The train rattled, the rain hammered, the wind roared but still the professor slept.

Then the train started to slow down.

"Finally!" Ron stood and stretched "I'm starving. I want to get to the feast..." said the boy who ate the majority of the cauldron cakes, Harry thought with exasperated fondness. His best mate seemed to have a bottomless pit for a stomach

"We can't be there yet," said Hermione, checking her watch with a frown

"So, why're we stopping?" Harry had a bad feeling about this, so he summoned his holly wand from its holster into his hand. It felt strangely hot in his hand, and he tried not to be worried about it as he poked his head out the door to look into the corridor. All along the carriage, heads were sticking curiously out of their compartments.

The train came to a stop with a jolt, and distant thuds and bangs told them that luggage had fallen out of the racks. Then, without warning, all the lamps went out and they were plunged into total darkness.

"What's going on?" said Ron's voice from behind Harry.

"Ouch!" Hermione cried. "Ron, that was my foot!" There was a yowl as Ron must have also stood on Crookshanks. "Be careful!"

Harry felt his way back to his seat. "D'you think we've broken down?" He hoped that was what was happening but why would the lights have gone out?

"Dunno..." Ron said as he wiped the window clear of condensation to peer out. "There's something moving out there, I think people are coming aboard..."

The compartment door suddenly opened, and someone fell painfully over Harry's legs. His wand rose but thankfully the mystery person spoke before Harry tried to hex them.

"Sorry! D'you know what's going on. Ouch! Sorry.." It was just Neville.

"Hullo, Neville," He lowered his wand and felt around and pulled Neville up by his cloak.

"Harry? Is that you? What's happening?"

"No idea! Sit down."

There was a loud hissing and a yelp of pain. Neville had tried to sit on Crookshanks. Ouch.

"I'm going to go and ask the driver what's going on," came Hermione's voice. Harry felt her pass him, heard the door slide open again, and then a thud and two loud squeals of pain.

"Who's that?" Hermione and another girl asked at the same time.

"Ginny?"

"Hermione?"

"What are you doing?"

"I was looking for Ron --"

"Come in and sit down."

"Not here!" said Harry hurriedly. He didn't want to get sat on. "I'm here!"

"Ouch! "Neville hissed in pain as one of the girls stood on his foot.

"Quiet!" A hoarse voice that didn't belong to any of his friends cut through the noise. It appeared that Professor Lupin had woken up at last. None of them spoke as they waited to see what the professor would do. Harry wondered if this adult would be competent or if he would be another dud like Lockhart.

There was a soft, crackling noise, and a shivering light filled the compartment. Professor Lupin appeared to be holding a handful of flames. They illuminated his tired, grey face, but his eyes looked alert and wary. That was cool! Harry wondered what spell he used as it didn't look like a normal Lumos.

"Stay where you are. " he said in the same hoarse voice, and he got slowly to his feet with his handful of fire held out in front of him. But the door slid slowly open before Lupin could reach it.

Standing in the doorway, illuminated by the shivering flames in Lupin's hand, was a cloaked figure that towered to the ceiling. Its face was completely hidden beneath its hood. Harry's eyes darted downward, and what he saw made his stomach contract. There was a hand protruding from the cloak, and it was glistening, greyish, slimy-looking, and scabbed, like something dead that had decayed in water. . . .

Dementor!

Harry raised his wand that felt too hot in hand and scramble for a happy thought as an intense cold swept over him. He felt his breath catch in his throat and the cold seemed to go deeper than his skin, but he shook it off and thought of the joy and the feeling of belonging when Trent, Fenrir, and the whole of the White Wyvern pub sang him happy birthday. How happy and loved he felt at their thoughtful gifts. He focused on those feelings and cast the spell that he had only read about and never practised before:

"*Expecto Patronum!*" His wand heated up to boiling as it spat out a silvery white light. Merlin, it felt like his wand was burning his hand! But still he kept forcing magic into the spell. He had read about what Dementors could do, and he really did not want any of his friends to get kissed. He forced more and more magic through his wand and the silvery white light grew larger until it was almost a-

His wand exploded.

Harry screamed as the wand seemed to spit lava as it shattered into splinters in his hand. He was barely aware of the Dementor fleeing, he was in so much pain. It felt similar to when he

was bitten by the Basilisk only this time, Fawkes wasn't there to cry on his wound to heal it.

"Harry!" Heard his name shouted before he passed out.

Harry slowly became aware of a dull throb emanating from his wand hand. He knew that he was lying down and judging by the scratchiness of the blankets, he was in the hospital wing. He just couldn't remember why. His mind felt fuzzy.

"Mr Potter," The Matronly Madame Pomfrey bustled over to him. "I know that you are awake dear, so you might as well open your eyes."

Harry did as asked, wincing at the light as he did. He attempted to reach up and rub his eyes but he couldn't move his right hand. That probably wasn't a good sign. "What happened?" He stared down at his hand, it was covered in bandages making it look three times the normal size.

"You overpower your wand," Pomfrey explained as she waved her own wand over his hand. "Not to worry, you're not the first it has happened to." She hummed as she read the parchment that her wand spat out. "Of course no one has ever done it as spectacularly as you did, dear."

"Why did it explode?" He asked, trying to keep his mind off the fact that he couldn't move his hand.

"Some students are late bloomers and so the wand that they first get when they are eleven may not actually be able to handle the amount of magic a student has once they have received.." She paused searching for the right word. "Their magical growth spurt."

"Is my hand going to be okay?" He asked while also feeling relieved that this wasn't a totally unique situation and it covered the true reason for his sudden increase in magical power. He didn't want Dumbledore to become aware that his bindings on Harry's core had been removed. He already had too many thumbs in Harry's bank vault and seeing as he was not afraid to give him loyalty potions... he would prefer it if the man bought Madam Pomfrey's explanation.

"Your hand will be just fine." She reassured him. "It was easy to heal the burns but due to the magical components of your wand there will unfortunately be some scarring."

"But will I be able to use magic fine?" He didn't care about the scarring.

"Yes, Mr Potter. You will be able to cast normally once you get a new wand."

Harry sank back into his pillow feeling relieved. He had been worried for a moment that he wouldn't be able to use magic with his right hand or at all! He did wonder why his wand from Jimmy Kiddell's Wonderful Wands didn't explode on him though. He wouldn't ask because he didn't want anyone else to know that he already had a second wand and it was one without the Trace on it and he would prefer that it stayed that way.

“So, my wand can’t be fixed then?”

“I’m afraid not. I had to banish most of the wood to even get a look at your hand and the phoenix feather seems to be the reason for your burns, it disintegrated.”

“Oh.” Harry didn’t know how to feel. Sure he had grown to love his secondary wand over the summer but his holly and phoenix wand had been the thing that had convinced him that he hadn’t been dreaming, that a big friendly giant had knocked down his door and introduced him to magic. That he was magic. And now that wand was gone, burnt up from excessive magic. He wondered if this is what it felt like to lose a good friend.

“Your Head of House is unfortunately too busy to take you to Diagon but fortunately the current DADA professor offered to go in her stead.” She tapped her wand on his bandaged hand and the bandages unravelled and vanished. She muttered another spell under her breath and his hand tingled like he had pins and needles. “Try moving your hand now, dear. I had to immobilise it while I healed it.”

Harry gently stretched and closed his hand. It didn’t even ache.

“Any pain?”

“No, it’s great. Thank you.” He grinned at her. Magic was truly awesome!

“Excellent.” She put her wand away. “You may get dressed and head to your dorm. Professor Lupin will meet you in the Great Hall after breakfast to take you to get a new wand.”

“How long was I out?” He asked as he got to grab his clothes.

“The Hogwarts Express arrived on Friday evening and it is now Saturday evening.” A whole twenty four hours?! “Oh,” She paused on her way out of the little screened off section that he was in. “The password for your common room is ‘Fortuna Major’.”

“Thank you.” He called after her as she disappeared from view. He quickly got dressed in his uniform that had been laid out for him. He wondered who had gone through his trunk to get it. It was probably the same people or magic that dealt with all of the laundry and food...Harry should probably find out who or what did, now that he thought about it. He had discovered over the summer just how little he knew about the wizarding world.

It was as he was getting dressed that he caught sight of the palm of his hand. Where his wand had lain in his hand there was now a reddish scar in the shape of a feather. It looked as if it wasn’t fully healed but he knew that it must have been because it didn’t hurt and if it hadn’t Pomfrey wouldn’t be letting him out of her clutches. It was kind of cool looking for a scar even if it did feel warmer than the rest of his hand when he touched it. He supposed that was due to the fact that it was caused by a phoenix feather opposed to a normal feather. oh well, it was just another scar to add to his collection.

As soon as he walked through the opening of the common room he was mobbed by Hermione and Ron.

"Mate!"

"Harry!"

They both cried charging at him. It was likely that the only reason that they didn't actually tackle him was because he had just come back from the hospital wing.

"Hey guys." He waved sheepishly at them. He suddenly felt shy as all the people in the common room at that moment turned to face him.

"Harry James Potter! Do you realise how worried we were?" Hermione scolded him with her hands on her hips. "And yet you come waltzing in here with only a 'hey guys'?!"

"Madame Pomfrey said I was fine?" He tried.

"Oh lay off him." Ron came to his rescue. "He can't exactly tell us what happened if you're too busy yelling at him." Never mind.

"What *did* happen?" Hermione asked slightly calmer. "One minute you were casting a spell and the next you were on the floor screaming." Ah yes Hermione please tell everyone how I was screaming, it's not as if that's embarrassing or anything.

"My wand exploded." He told them simply. He could have sworn that one of the older years sniggered but he ignored them.

"What?!" She screeched and Harry suddenly wished that he was back in the Hospital Wing.

"Look, do we have to talk about this, here?" He made a point of looking at everyone who was watching.

"Yes, you worried everyone."

"Fine." Harry tried hard not to scowl. "Apparently, I went through a sudden magical growth spurt and my wand was unable to handle the increase of power and exploded." There, that was concise and to the point but obviously that wasn't enough for her. Harry wanted to groan.

"That can happen?!"

"Madame Pomfrey said it wasn't unusual."

"Bloody hell, mate." Ron sighed gustily and then showing that he was a true friend he asked, "Is your hand alright?"

"Yeah," Harry smiled. "She fixed me up but I do have a wicked scar."

"Let's see it!" Ron shuffled closer.

"Here." Harry opened his palm so that both Ron and Hermione could see it.

"Neat."

"No, not neat, Ronald." Hermione scowled. "It's evidence that he got hurt." Oh now you're worried about the fact that he got hurt? Harry wanted to scoff but knew that it would just set her off. He loved her, truly he did but he imagined that if he had a sister, whether they were older or younger, she would fit the description: Bossy, know it all but with a large heart. Still incredibly annoying though at times.

"Anyway, can I go to bed now?" Harry asked with a sigh. "I have to get up early tomorrow to get a new wand."

"Tough luck mate, didn't you say that it took like a hundred tries to find your wand the first time?" Ron winced in sympathy.

"Yeah."

"You'll be fine Harry." Hermione dismissed his worries. "Now off to bed with you."

Harry sent her a disbelieving look, was she seriously ordering him to bed when he already said that he wanted to go? What was he five? Instead of getting into a row with her he just agreed and grabbed Ron by his robes to take him with him. He wanted to spend some time with his best mate.

"So, how are you really?" Ron asked as soon as they were up in their dorm. The other boys were still downstairs in the common room, so they had the dorm to themselves.

"A little shaken to be honest."

"It was terrible." Ron gently took Scabbers out of his cage and gently stroked the patchy fur. "One minute you looked incredibly strong casting a spell that I had never even heard of, then the next you were on the floor screaming, your hand was blistering, and the creature was looming over your fallen body." Ron shivered. "It was so cold, and I felt like I was never going to be happy again."

"It was a dementor." Harry explained. "They feed on your happiness leaving behind only your negative emotions. They can also suck out your soul." Harry wrapped his arms around himself as he thought about the creature, they were in his opinion pure abominations.

"Tha-that's awful! Why were they on the train?"

"I dunno." Harry shrugged. "But it's a stupid idea in my opinion."

"I second that."

They fell into a comfortable silence for a few moments and Harry's eyes were drawn back to the poorly Scabbers and then to his tiny cage. No wonder Ron hated leaving his rat in that cage; it was too small for it to be comfortable.

"Ron." Harry started trying to think of how to phrase his suggestion without setting his friend off.

"Yeah?"

“I want to get Scabbers a better cage.” He hurried on when he saw his friend’s face turning red. “It’s just that I know how much you worry about him and now with Hermione’s demon cat,” And let’s be honest the thing did look demonic. “I know you are going to be even more stressed about him. It would be safer for him to be in his cage, but your current cage isn’t suitable for long term stays.”

“So what? You wanna buy me a new cage?” He scowled.

Uh oh, quick Harry fix this! “Think of it as an investment.” He blurted out. “Scabbers will be able to live out the rest of his life in luxury and then afterwards, you could use it for future pet rats.” He could see Ron calming down. “It will keep him safe from Crookshanks and if you let me do this, I will only buy you chocolate frogs for Christmas as this would count as your main present?”

Ron sighed gustily. “You promise that this will count as my Christmas present?”

“I promise.”

“Then okay, you can buy a nicer cage for Scabbers.” He paused and then added. “Thanks, Harry.”

“No worries, what are best mates for?”

They spent the rest of the evening going through the pets’ shop owl order catalogue at all the available cages after Harry had spelled all the prices to be hidden. He didn’t want Ron to worry about the price. In the end they settled on a cage that was bigger on the inside with an automatic water and food dispenser and it automatically vanished waste. It had a magical lock that could only be unlocked with a password so there was no chance of the rat escaping or of any creatures *cough*Crookshanks*cough* getting in. It was a little expensive, but it was worth it for Ron’s peace of mind.

“I’ll pick one up tomorrow while in Diagon getting my new wand.” He promised Ron. “I’m sure the Lupin won’t mind.” Or at least he hoped the man wouldn’t. “But if he does, I’ll just fill out the owl order forms and get it sent off as soon as I can.”

“Thanks mate.”

Harry just shrugged and tried not to make it a big deal by changing the subject. “Tell me more about Egypt?”

And Ron was off, complaining about the heat, how he got sunburned until his older brother Bill took pity and cast a sun protection charm on him after he had to get slathered with burn cream.

Harry winced and oohed in all the appropriate places and asked clarifying questions to show that he was listening.

“Wait, they did what? To Percy?”

“Shut him up in a tomb, of course he wasn’t in there for long because Bill caught them. Read them the riot act too! He was furious because we had been warned that they hadn’t actually finished checking that particular tomb for curses.” Ron explained. “Mum was livid and I had never been so happy to be left out of their pranks.”

“Did Percy set off any of the curses?”

“Nah but Bill nearly got in trouble for even showing us the tomb let alone the fact that the twins locked Percy in there. Thankfully, he didn’t actually get in trouble or else the twins would still be limping from a hiding he would have given them.”

Harry blanched. “He would have hurt them?”

Ron must have seen his face because he was quick to clarify. “Oh no, no.” He waved his hands in denial. “It’s a figure of speech, I promise. He would have pranked the hell out of them or worse still ignored them. To Fred and George there is nothing worse than being ignored.”

Harry felt a little silly. Of course, Ron’s brother wouldn’t have hurt the twins, the Weasley’s weren’t like that. Or at least from what he had heard and seen then again, he knew personally that people wore masks. His relatives projected perfect normality and yet they were right tossers.

“Mate,” Ron hedged after a moment of silence. “Do-” He cut himself off before trying again. “Look, I know that Fred, George and I had to rescue you last year and we never asked but...” He sighed before steeling himself and just asked. “Do your relatives hurt you?”

“I-” Harry’s mouth felt as dry as a desert all of a sudden. He hadn’t expected this, he hadn’t expected this at all.

“You don’t have to tell me.” Ron quickly back pedalled his ears red. “But can you at least tell me that you’re safe?”

“I have a plan.” Harry decided to say instead. “Only I can’t tell you.” He quickly continued. “Not because I don’t want to but I learnt this summer that there are wizards out there that can read your thoughts.”

“What?!”

“Yeah, so I want to tell you. I really do. But I can’t in case someone takes the information from your mind.”

“Is there a way to stop people, you know.” He waved abstractly around his head. “Reading our minds?”

“Yeah, I found a book before I was grounded.” Harry lent closer to Ron. “It’s called occlumency.”

“Can we learn it?” The fact that Ron was willing or even suggesting learning this, really showed how worried he was.

“Yeah, but it’s difficult.” Harry bit his lip. “You start out with meditation which is harder than it sounds. I’m still on the meditation bit.”

“Will you teach me?” Ron asked. “I want to be able to keep your secrets, and I really don’t like the idea of someone reading my thoughts.”

“Of course!” Harry agreed quickly.

“But can we..” Ron hesitated. “Can we do it without Hermione?”

“Uh,”

“I mean don’t get me wrong, I think she’s brilliant, scary but brilliant! But she’s also been a little...high strung this year already and we’ve only been back at school for one day.”

Harry could see his point and he too liked the idea of this being a thing that they did together.

“Yeah, okay.” He agreed. “Let’s make it a guy thing.”

“Brilliant.” Ron grinned. “Now let’s get started. What do I have to do?”

Harry walked him through meditating for the first time. It was weird to be the teacher rather than the student, but he tried his best. Harry had shown him how to set an alarm using his wand and soon Ron was breathing deeply with his eyes closed and seemed to be doing well. Harry took the chance to do his meditating too.

Harry was startled out of his mediation by Ron’s alarm going off. He hadn’t bothered setting his own as he had just helped Ron do his own. He opened his eyes and smiled fondly as he found Ron slumped over and asleep. He cancelled the alarm and took his mate’s shoes off before lifting his legs onto the bed so he could lie down. After covering him with the duvet, Harry himself got ready for bed.

Harry woke to find Ron sat up on his own bed trying to meditate again. He cast a quick *tempus* to check the time and found that he had enough time to do his own practice before he would have to get for breakfast.

“I can’t believe I fell asleep.” Ron complained as they walked down to breakfast together. Harry was dressed in some of his nice non-school robes as he would be nipping to Diagon Alley with a professor after breakfast.

“Don’t worry about it. I fell asleep loads when I started.” He told him. “I found that doing it before bed tended to lead to that, so I started to do it in the morning like we did today.”

“I did sleep well though.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, maybe I could do it in the morning and before bed?”

“Sounds like a good idea.”

“What sounds like a good idea?” Hermione asked as she suddenly appeared next to them.

“Bloody hell, where did you come from?”

“Never mind that, what were you talking about?”

“Ron said he was going to start having more fruit at breakfast.” Harry said quickly and hid a wince at the look of betrayal his friend gave him. When Hermione turned her attention onto Ron he mouthed ‘I’m sorry’.

“Well, I agree that is a good idea.”

They entered the Great Hall and Hermione liberally filled their plates with fruit before they could even grab anything themselves.

“Hermione, we aren’t five.” Harry sighed and removed the strawberries from his plate. “Also you didn’t know this but I can’t eat strawberries, I’m allergic.”

“Wait? You are? Since when?” Ron asked around a mouth full of grapes.

“Yeah, I had a really bad reaction to one when I was younger.” He told them. “I think that was the first time the Dursleys took me to a doctor.”

“Mr Potter.” A low, slow drawl came from behind him. Harry froze for a moment before he twisted in his seat to face Snape.

“Yes, Professor?” He was being polite as he didn’t wish to get in trouble before his first lesson this year.

“I couldn’t help but overhear your conversation.” He folded his arms in front of him. “Have you made Madame Pomfrey aware of this allergy of yours? Certain potion ingredients and other foods have the same proteins that tend to set off a strawberry allergy. She needs to be aware so that she does not accidentally poison you.”

“Oh.” He hadn’t thought of that. “I’ll be sure to tell her, sir. After I’ve come back from getting my new wand.”

“Make sure you do.” And with that the man spun on the spot and stalked towards the front of the hall to have his own breakfast, his robes billowing behind him.

“Blimey, that was weird.” Ron croaked from next to him. “I thought for sure you were going to lose points there for a moment.”

“Me too.”

“He’s right, you know.” Hermione chimed. “You really should have told Madame Pomfrey.”

“And now I know that I will.” He sighed and grabbed a piece of toast. “Can you pass the marmalade please?” He asked Neville who was sitting opposite them.

“Here.”

“Thanks.”

Harry had just finished his toast when Professor Lupin approached him.

“Are you ready Mr Potter?”

“Yes sir.” He climbed to his feet. “I’ll see you guys later.”

“Later mate, good luck!”

“Thanks, I’ll need it.” He grinned before following the shabbily dressed professor from the Hall. He could feel the eyes of other students on his back as he walked. They probably all knew by now that his wand had exploded but he wondered precisely what the rumours were saying.

“Have you ever used the floo before?” Lupin asked as they headed towards McGonagall’s office.

“Yes, once but I ended up being spat out in the wrong fireplace.” He thought back to the summer before his second year and how he had ended up in Knockturn Alley but in the odds and ends shop that he never caught the name of. He remembered being scared which seemed silly to him now.

“You just have to make sure you say the name clearly.” Lupin lectured. “And walk forward once you stop spinning.”

“Okay.”

They arrived at McGonagall’s office.

“Professor McGonagall has allowed us to use her floo.” Lupin knocked the door before entering. The office was empty so Harry watched the professor head straight to the fireplace and pick up a little tin. “Grab a small handful.”

Harry did as told and the professor copied him before putting the tin back.

“I’ll go through first so you won’t get in trouble for being out of school without an escort.” He then stood in the fireplace. “Make sure you repeat what I say.” Then he threw the powder down and said confidently. “The Leaky Cauldron.” The fire burned green and then the professor was gone and it was Harry’s turn.

With a sigh, Harry took his place and copied the man. He threw the powder and said, “The Leaky-” He sneezed.

It felt as though he was being sucked down a giant drain. He seemed to be spinning very fast and he tried to keep his eyes open but the whirl of green flames made him feel sick. Merlin, he was dizzy! He remembered to tuck in his elbows this time so although he didn't catch them on anything he seemed to be spinning faster and faster and then suddenly he stopped. He didn't have a chance to take a step like the professor suggested before he was spat out at a frightening speed.

He flew out of the fireplace and landed with a hard smack on a wooden floor. He groaned before freezing. He wasn't in the Leaky Cauldron. There wasn't enough noise around him for him to be there. He had messed up again. He had sneezed as he was saying the destination. Merlin only knew where he had ended up this time.

"Didn't expect to see you again so soon, Evan."

Oh thank goodness. "Hi Fenrir." Harry scrambled to his feet and found that he was in a living room. This must be Fenrir and Trent's home, cool! The werewolf helped him stand and dusted him off before squeezing him in a tight hug.

"It's good to see you kid." He gently placed Harry back on his feet. "Why did you come out of the fireplace like a cannonball?"

"I sneezed while saying the destination." Harry rubbed the back of his head sheepishly.

"Okay, but why were you using the floo in the first place?" He asked crossing his arms and Harry had a sudden vision of him and Mrs Weasley tutting together like she had when he had gotten lost the first time. "Aren't you supposed to be in school?"

"I'll tell you on the way? I need to get to my teacher in the Leaky Cauldron." Harry bartered. "I don't need him to be sending out a search party."

"Trent will have to take you." Fenrir pouted. "Trent!"

"What?" Trent should back as he rounded the corner of the room only to stop in his tracks when he spots Harry. "What are you doing out of school young man?"

"He got spat out of the wrong floo. He's supposed to be with a teacher in the Leaky."

"Why were you using the floo?" The man echoed the werewolf's question.

"He'll tell you on the way. He needs to be reunited with his teacher."

"Which is why you called for me." Trent nodded. "Alright." He summoned his shoes and after he had tied his laces and pulled on a cloak he gestured to the door. "Let's get going then."

"Thanks, sorry for cannonballing into your living room."

"You did what?"

Chapter 8

“I sneezed as I was saying ‘The Leaky Cauldron’ and then ended up being thrown out of your fireplace.” Harry explained as Trent led him out of his apartment and down a set of narrow stairs.

“And why were you needing to floo to Diagon?”

“My phoenix feather wand exploded in my hand.” Harry told him bluntly while preparing for the inevitable reaction.

“WHAT?!” Trent shrieked, scaring the birds outside. “Are you alright?! You were healed quickly, yes? I mean of course they healed you, you wouldn’t be allowed out of the school if your hand was falling off.” He descended into ramblings as he twisted on the stairs and made a grabby motion towards Harry’s wand hand.

Harry held out his hand to the man knowing that he wouldn’t calm down unless he saw for himself that he was alright. “I’m fine.” He tried to reassure the man. “I’ve just got a cool scar.”

Trent gently took hold of his hand and examined the scar that the feather of his wand left. He tsked but his shoulders relaxed as he saw that Harry was truly alright. “It is a pretty neat scar.” He grudgingly admitted. “How did it happen? What caused the wand to explode?”

“Well,” Harry was suddenly nervous about telling Trent about the dementors on the train but figured that he would probably find out anyway from someone else. “There were dementors on the train and-”

“Dementors on the Hogwarts Express?” Trent looked faint and Harry suddenly wished that he had waited to share this information until they had reached the bottom of the stairs.

“Do you need to sit down?” Harry offered to give him a moment to breathe. He did not want him to fall down the stairs.

“No, I’m alright.” Trent took a deep breath. “Just give me the cliff note version now but write it out properly for me later, okay?”

Homework already even before the first day of classes? Harry huffed amused but did as he was told. “Basically I tried to cast the patronus charm as I had read about them but my wand exploded. Madame Pomfrey said that it wasn’t totally uncommon as some wizards and witches have a late magical growth spurt.” They continued down the stairs. “But I think it’s more likely to do with the fact that my magic was unbound.”

“Most likely.” Trent agreed.

“Um, let’s see what happened next? Chatted with my friends, convinced Ron to let me get him a nicer cage for his ill rat, argued with Hermione a little. Oh! Apparently I should have

told people that I'm allergic to strawberries.”

“You are?”

“Yeah, I had a really bad reaction to them when I was younger and everything.” Harry nodded before continuing. “Then a teacher said they were taking me to Diagon Alley to get a new wand and well you know the rest.” He shrugged.

“Only you, kid.” Trent reached out and ruffled his hair.

“Oh and you know Sirius Black?” Harry decided to tell him everything now that he had started. “According to the Goblins he's my blood adopted father and the alleged betrayer of my parents.” He still didn't know how to feel about that and up until now hadn't let himself think about it.

“Oh.”

“Yeah.” Harry felt his face start to crumble. No, he blinked rapidly. He would not cry!

“I don't really know what to say to that.” Trent wrapped an arm around Harry's shoulders. “Just know that no matter what happens you always have a family in me and Fenrir.”

“Thanks.” He sniffled and rubbed his eyes. He was thirteen, far too old to be crying. “I just, the goblins said alleged, doesn't that mean he might not have done it?” He asked the question that he had been avoiding.

“Perhaps, you need to hire a solicitor?”

“A solicitor?”

“It's a person of a legal profession that should be able to act on your behalf to find out things like whether Black really was the betrayer of your parents and so on.”

“How would I even get one?” Harry hadn't even heard of what a solicitor was before now. It wasn't as if the Dursleys would have mentioned the profession around him nor would it have been mentioned at all in his primary school.

“Your best bet would be to ask the goblins for suggestions.” It was at that point that they reached the entrance of Diagon Alley. “Now, let's find your teacher.”

They didn't even have to enter the Leaky Cauldron to find Professor Lupin as the man stomped towards them as soon as they were out in the sun.

“Mr Potter.” The professor had a thunderous look on his face. Harry automatically took a step back and stood partly behind Trent. “What in Merlin's name were you doing coming out of Knockturn Alley when I specifically told you to meet me in the Leaky Cauldron.”

“I sneezed.”

“I beg your pardon.” If anything Harry’s answer made him look angrier and suddenly Harry wished that he had been taken to the Alley by Snape. At least with Snape he knew what to expect, the man would never get physical no matter how much Harry drove him mad but this man, the new professor, Harry didn’t know him or how he would react to things.

“Excuse me.” Trent placed a comforting hand on Harry’s shoulder. “This young man has just had a fright and you are scaring him with your anger.” His voice was calm.

“And who are you?”

“I am the owner of the fireplace that this young man cannonballed out of.” Trent smiled fondly down at Harry. “Like he said, the poor thing sneezed as he was saying the name of the destination and ended up in the wrong fireplace.”

“It’s not the first time it’s happened either.” Harry tentatively added. “Just ask Mrs Weasley or even Hagrid. Last year I ended up in the wrong fireplace too.”

“Then perhaps you should be more exact in your pronunciation, it would be shameful of you to waste your parents’ sacrifices.”

Harry flinched as if the man had struck him.

Trent hissed beside him. “What in Morgana’s name did you just say?”

Harry didn’t wait for Lupin to respond; he just turned to Trent and asked. “Do you mind terribly picking up a cage for my friend’s pet rat that I mentioned?” Harry pulled out his pouch of coins and the owl order form with the chosen cage circled. “It’s just I don’t know how long it will take to get my wand.”

“Shall I meet you outside of Olivanders?” Trent accepted the few galleons that would be enough to pay for the cage.

“Mr Potter what do-” Lupin got all huffy again but was ignored.

“Yes please.”

“Then I shall see you shortly.” Trent promised.

“Thank you.” Harry smiled before dropping the expression when he turned back to his professor. “Shall we go?”

“10 points from Gryffindor.” Lupin scowled before marching off towards the wand shop. Harry rolled his eyes but followed behind the man. It was like Lupin was trying to beat out Lockhart and Quirrelmort as worse defence teachers and they hadn’t even had a class yet. How dare he accuse Harry of wasting his parents’ sacrifice! He had no right to mention them at all. If he wasn’t his professor then Harry would have hexed him, instead he would tell the twins when he got back to school and hopefully they would come up with a good prank. Bastard.

“Well, well, well, Mr Potter. I did not expect to see you back here so soon.” Mr Olivander said as he appeared out of nowhere.

“My wand exploded.” Harry confessed and ignored the glaring professor in the corner of the shop. That man was officially on Harry’s shit list.

“Oh my.” His silvery eyes widened as he took a look at Harry’s hand. “Tsk. Well your new wand certainly won’t be a phoenix feather.”

“Why?” Harry was curious.

“Your old feather has left an imprint in your hand and phoenixes are fussy birds.” His voice carried well in the shop despite the fact that he disappeared behind the towering shelves of wand boxes. “They don’t tend to get on well with other phoenixes.”

“However, as I fitted you with your first wand, finding your second shouldn’t be as difficult.” He came back to the front of the shop with an arm full of boxes. “Let’s get started shall we? Try this one, it’s 10 inches, English oak with a unicorn hair for a core.”

Harry gave it a wave and the vase next to Lupin shattered. Fortunately or rather unfortunately, Harry thought uncharitably, the professor managed to get up a shield in time to protect himself from the shards of glass.

“Nope, not that one.” Olivander took the wand back. “Try this one,”

And so it went much like it had the first time.

Wand after wand caused all sorts of mayhem in the little shop as Harry tried to find one that fit him. The longer it took the more excited Olivander seemed to get until finally they found it.

It was a dark wand, long and thin with a hook at the end so it kind of hooked onto his palm when he held it. It was comfortable in his hand, although not as good as his wand from Knockturn, and when he waved it silver sparks came out the top.

“Bravo!” Olivander cheered, clapping. “Oh excellent. Ebony and Dragon heart string from a rather protective Horntail. Fourteen inches exactly and very springy. Oh yes this is a nice wand indeed.”

“How much do I owe you?”

“Seven Galleons.”

Harry paid the man and slipped his new wand into his wand holster.

“Good, let’s go.” Lupin grunted as he stood from the chair in the corner. Harry flinched when he spoke up. He had completely forgotten that the professor was there.

They left the shop to find Trent waiting for them with a cage in hand. He grinned when he spotted Harry.

“Looks like you had quite the eventful time.”

“How long were you waiting?” Harry asked as he accepted the cage.

“Since you exploded all of Mr Ollivander’s lights.”

“Yikes, a while then.” Harry cringed. That was the fourth or fifth wand that produced that particular reaction.

“It’s fine.” Trent smiled. “Anyway, I’m sure you should be getting back to school.”

“Indeed, he should.” The Debbie Downer that was his new defence professor butted in. Harry scowled.

“See you round, Harry.” Trent ruffled his hair and Harry knew that he would have hugged him if Lupin wasn’t there but as far as Lupin was aware they had just met and therefore were not on hugging terms.

“See you.” Harry barely had time to wave goodbye before Lupin was dragging him away by the shoulder of his robes. “Hey!” He complained as he stumbled to keep up with the older man’s stride.

“I can’t believe that you would let a complete stranger...” He was mumbling darkly under his breath.

Harry decided to ignore him. He didn’t know this teacher and he certainly didn’t care to, after what he had said about his parents being ashamed of him. He had no right to even talk about them.

“Are you listening to me, Mr Potter?” Lupin asked sharply, pulling them to a stop.

“Honestly, professor? No.”

“Ten points from Gryffindor.” He snarled. “Your parents-”

“Do not bring my parents into this.” Harry interrupted him furious. “I don’t know what has got you so mad. I mucked up with the floo, yes but it was an accident and since then you have been horrible to me. But you have no right to talk about my parents!”

“I was their friend! I knew them far longer than you.” Lupin spat and then paled as he realised what he had just said.

“What?” Harry felt as if he had been slapped. This man, this mean professor had been friends with his parents and all he had done since they had met was berate him for things that were out of his control and now, he is rubbing the fact that he wasn’t raised by his parents in his face. “Bastard.” He glared at him.

“Mr-”

“I want to go back to school now.” Harry turned away from him. “What do I need to say into the floo to get back?” The professor didn’t answer. Harry kept walking and entered the Leaky Cauldron ahead of the professor.

“Harry, lad?” Tom the barman approached him as soon as he saw him. “What are you doing here?”

“I needed a new wand.” Harry explained while blinking tears out of his eyes. They were angry tears, he was absolutely furious at the bastard that was apparently his parents’ friend, a friend that he had never heard of before this moment. Merlin, he knew more about Sirius Black than he did about this Professor Lupin! “How do I get back to Hogwarts? Professor Lupin-”

“Is right here.” The bastard appeared at his side and Harry scowled.

“Just say Hogwarts as you throw in the floo powder, and you’ll appear in one of the Heads of Houses’ offices.” Tom explained. “You go ahead lad; I think I need to speak to your professor for a moment.” Harry saw Tom shoot the man, a dark look. He must have picked up on how upset Harry was with him.

“Thank you.” Harry nodded to Tom and without looking back, he took a pinch of floo powder and stepped into the fire. “Hogwarts.” He managed to say it clearly before throwing the powder down.

Harry was spat out of the floo, thankfully not as violently as before but he still ended up on his face on the floor. The stone floor. Thankfully, the cage he had bought for Scabbers wasn’t damaged by the fall.

“Mr Potter?” Snape said in surprise. Well at least he was at Hogwarts. Harry heard him sigh and get up from his chair.

Harry sat up and rubbed his nose and fought the urge to cry. Why had Professor Lupin been so horrible to him? Especially as he was a friend of his parents!

“Would you like to explain, Mr Potter, why it is that you have just fallen out of my floo.” Snape had a way of asking questions without them being questions.

“I went to get a new wand.”

“I am aware.”

He had already lost twenty points for Gryffindor so what was a few more? “I fought with Lupin and asked Tom at the Leaky Cauldron how to get back.”

“And is Lupin aware that you were heading back?”

“Yes sir.”

“Then take a seat.” Snape waved his wand and the chair opposite him moved back from the office desk. He moved back to his seat and sat down, laying his hands on the desk. He raised an eyebrow and merely waited for Harry to comply.

Harry, having nothing better to do, although he did promise to head to the hospital wing when he came back, took the seat. He placed the rat cage on the floor next to him. He watched dazed, half believing that he was dreaming because there was no way that Snape would ever be so nice, as the professor summoned a tea set and went about preparing himself a cup

“I know we have not always gotten along, Mr Potter.” Snape started after a moment of silence. “However, due to your history with defence professors I would like to know what it is that you and Lupin argued about.” The grimace on Snape’s face when he said ‘Lupin’ actually made Harry feel more confident.

“You don’t like him either?”

“My distaste of him is irrelevant.” So that was a yes. “However, you need not fear loss of points if you speak badly of him.” Oh, wow. Snape definitely didn’t like him then.

“It’s probably easier if I just start from the beginning.” Harry mumbled before clearing his throat. “I’ve never been good at flooing.” He started. “And I’m pretty sure I told him that before we even reached Professor McGonagall’s office.” He made sure to use the right titles when speaking of the other professors as he wanted Snape’s good mood to last. “He went first to show me what to say, I guess? But when it was my turn I sneezed while speaking and ended up being thrown through the wrong floo again.”

“Where did you end up?” Snape sat up at the news that he had not ended up where he was supposed to.

“In a flat off Knockturn.” Harry said truthfully. “Luckily the bloke that owns it was someone I had met whilst I was staying in the alley during the summer.” Again, not a lie but also not telling him everything. “He was really nice and walked me back to Diagon.”

“What was this man’s name?” Snape inquired.

“Trent.”

“No surname?”

“I didn’t think to ask.” Which was also true but seeing as he was Fenrir Greyback’s husband he could only assume that they shared a surname. “Anyway, we reached Diagon and...” And so, he went on and regurgitated everything that had happened, how horrible Lupin had been and what he said about his parents. “The fact that I never knew my parents is not my fault.” Harry scowled down at the desk. “For him to throw that in my face...” Harry trailed off too angry to continue.

“While it probably wasn’t advisable to trust a man you had just met this summer, I also cannot condone Lupin’s attitude towards you and this Trent person.” Snape sighed. “The loss of points will stand, as upsetting as his words may have been, he is still a professor.”

Harry scowled down at his hands wondering what he had been expecting. “Yes, sir.”

“However,” He continued. “If Lupin gives you a detention, you will serve it with me instead. I am sure you will much prefer scrubbing cauldrons than whatever it is he would assign.”

“Thanks sir.” How weird is it that he would prefer a detention with Snape over detention with another teacher.

“Now, don’t you have somewhere else to be?”

“Sir?”

“The hospital wing, Mr Potter.”

“Oh right.” Harry nodded. He had forgotten about that, what with reliving the nightmare of a morning he just had. “Thanks, sir.”

As Harry left the office, rat cage in hand, he could have sworn that he heard a crash and a muffled curse. It was probably nothing, he shrugged and continued his way out of the dungeons although part of him hoped that it was Lupin coming through the floo. If so, maybe Snape would turn him into potions ingredients. It was weird to get along with his hated potions professor but how did that saying go again? The enemy of my enemy is my friend? Maybe that applied to them.

Harry went straight to the Hospital Wing. He didn’t want to see his friends just yet and he wanted to get this part of his day over and done with. He entered the wing and was immediately spotted by Madame Pomfrey.

“Back again, Mr Potter?” She frowned. “Have you been having issues with your hand?”

“Oh, no its fine.” He was quick to reassure her. He had forgotten that he had not long gotten out of hospital wing. “Um, apparently I should have told you about my allergy to strawberries?”

“You do?” She seemed shocked.

“Yes, ma’am.” and then he remembered that he was on potions too, but he had been neglecting them lately oops! He made a mental note not to tell the goblin healers that he had missed a few doses of his potions. “Oh, I should probably that I saw a healer during the summer, and I am on a few potions.”

“Yes, that is something that I should be made aware of.” She conjured some parchment and a quill. “Which ones?”

“Um,” What were they again? “Nutrition, bone strengthening, appetite enhancing and stomach soothing.” He recited.

“I shall make a note of your allergy as well. There will be certain potions that you will be unable to have due to it.” She hummed and then the nature of the potions that he had listed seemed to register. “Mr Potter are you...” She hesitated but he could guess at what she was going to say.

“I missed a few doses, but I promise that I’m usually very good at taking my potions.” He tried to reassure her.

“That wasn’t what I was going to say but please do make sure that you don’t miss anymore doses.” She banished her quill and put the parchment down. “Would you allow me to do a medical scan?”

“Sure?” He didn’t see why he shouldn’t. “Everything is confidential right? You can’t even tell the headmaster?”

“That is correct, Mr Potter.” She nodded but didn’t seem happy about it. She waved her wand, and some parchment was spat out of it. She looked even unhappier at the results. “Are you sure that you do not wish for anyone to know?”

“It’s being sorted.” Harry realised that she was unhappy about the state of his health and therefore his home life, a home that he had no intention of returning to regardless of what happened with the solicitor that he was going to hire or what they found out. He didn’t even want to think about what it would mean if Sirius Black was innocent like the Goblins were hinting at. “It will work out better with the less people that know.” He didn’t want Dumbledore to know that he wasn’t going to be returning to his ‘loving family’, and well the plans weren’t concrete yet either.

“Very well.” She sighed and banished the results. “I want you to come back to me when you start running out of your potions so I can do another scan. We can revisit the treatment plan you are on.”

“Thank you.”

“No thanks are necessary, Mr Potter.” She folded up the parchment with his allergy and current potions written on. “I am merely doing my job. Now off you go, go enjoy the rest of your weekend.” Not that there was much left to enjoy.

“Yes ma’am!” Harry left the Hospital Wing and went in search of his friends.

Harry headed straight to the common room as soon as he left the hospital wing. He could see Ron playing chess by himself and immediately went over to him.

“You’re back!” Ron grinned. “Got your wand?”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded and pulled it out of the holster. “Ebony and dragon heartstring.”

“Nice.”

“I also got the cage.” He lifted up said cage that was clutched in his other hand.

“Sweet!” Ron accepted it. “Let's put Scabbers in it straight away. I'll feel better once I know he's safe.”

“Sure.” This was perfect, Harry would be able to tell Ron about what had happened in private.

They ran up to their dorm and Harry helped Ron move Scabbers to the new cage and get him comfortable with all his straw bedding and showed him the refilling water and food bowls.

“Thanks again for this Harry.” Ron said without looking at him, his ears turning pink.

“It was no problem mate.” Harry waved away the thanks and changed the subject before his friend could linger on his low self esteem when it came to money. “Do you think Fred and George would be willing to prank someone for me?”

“Yeah, I reckon so, who? Malfoy?”

“No, Lupin.”

“The new defence teacher?” Ron stopped fussing over Scabbers and turned to look at Harry. “Did he do something when he took you to get your wand?”

“He was really horrible.”

“Worse than Snape?” Ron asked with concern because he'd never seen his mate get so upset even when the bat was a right tosser.

“Way worse” Harry scowled.

“Let's go ask them, I think they were in the common room.” Ron led the way down and over to his brothers who were sitting in a corner speaking in low tones to each other.

“Well, well if it isn't little Ronnikins and Harrykins.” Fred smirked as they approached.

“We need you to prank someone for us.”

“Well, that'll cost you.” George folded his arms.

“It's the new teacher.” Ron lowered his voice. “He was horrible to Harry.”

“Worse than Snape?” Fred asked.

“That's what I asked.” Ron said.

“Yeah, way worse.” Harry replied the same as when Ron had asked. The twins exchanged a look that Harry couldn’t read before standing.

“Let’s take this up to our dorm then.” George suggested. “Lee and Oliver are away doing goodness knows what.”

“Sure.” Harry agreed but as they approached the stairs Hermione spotted them and stormed over.

“What are you doing?” She demanded.

“We’re going to talk about guy stuff.” Harry blurted out. What the hell? He scrambled to figure out what he even meant by that and then remembered receiving the talk from Trent...that would work. He couldn’t exactly tell her that they were going to talk about pranking a teacher. She would have a fit!

“Guy stuff?” She looked at him sceptically with her hands on her hips.

“Yeah, guy stuff.” He looked at his crotch and then back at her with a raised eyebrow

She turned bright red as she caught onto what he was implying. “I’ll er, leave you to it then.” She stumbled over her words before scuttling off.

Free from Hermione, they raced up the stairs and settled in the twins’ dorm. Ron and Harry sat on Fred’s bed while the twins sat on George’s.

“Why did ‘guy stuff’ scare her off?” Ron asked.

“Have you ever had The Talk?” Harry asked instead.

“Oh!” Ron flushed. “So you meant...”

“I implied that I had questions about the male body, yes.” Harry laughed as his friend turned even more red.

“It was a great prank.” George praised him.

“But if you do have any questions about that sort of thing, you can ask us.” Fred continued.

“Yeah, we promise to talk seriously about it.”

“Thanks guys,” Harry smiled at them. “I may take you up on that.”

“Good.” George nodded. “Learning this stuff is important.”

“Okay, enough about that!” Ron interrupted looking rather flustered. “Harry, you said that Lupin was really horrible to you?” He got the topic back to the real reason they were there.

So Harry explained exactly what happened. He was rather impressed that none of them interrupted him but their expressions did get darker the longer he talked.

“Can we shelve the fact that Snape was actually decent to you for a later discussion.” Ron was the first to speak after a moment of silence once Harry had finished.

“Seconded.” George raised his hand.

“Motion carried.” Fred pretended to hit a non existent gavel. They laughed for a moment before being serious again.

“That's right rotten what he said to you.” Ron scowled darkly.

“So, you'll be wanting the not so nice kind of pranks then?” Fred rubbed his hands together with a gleeful look on his face.

“Yeah.” Harry nodded.

“Then leave it to us little brother.” George promised solemnly.

“Free of charge.” Fred added.

“Are you sure?” Harry was more than willing to pay them.

“Yes.” Both twins said at the same time.

“Your money is no good here.” George continued.

“And we won't tell you our plans so you have deniability.” Fred smirked.

“Thanks.”

“No problem littlest bro.” Fred reached out and ruffled Harry's hair.

“It's weird that Snape was nice to you.” Ron brought the Snape thing back up.

“He said that he would take over any detention that Lupin assigns me.” Harry reminds them.

“You sure that's a good thing mate?”

“Yeah at most he'll have me scrubbing cauldrons and mindless cleaning can be rather relaxing especially as unlike at the Dursleys he can't hit me.” Harry was looking away and so he missed the dark looks that the three Weasleys exchanged. “It's way better than spending time with Lupin.” He grimaced at the very idea of spending more time than he had to with that man.

“Harry.” Ron's tone of voice warned him that he may not like what his friend had to say.

“What if we told people what he said?”

“What do you mean?” Harry eyed him cautiously. “I already told Snape.”

“I meant the students.” Ron quickly continued when he saw that Harry was going to protest.

“I know you don't like having your business spread about the castle but everyone knows that the one subject they shouldn't touch is your parents.”

“Think of it as a prank Harry,” George chimed in to help Ron explain. “You would be turning the students against the man before lessons even started.”

“Even the Slytherins know by now not to talk about your parents.” Fred pointed out.

“You really think it’ll be a good idea?” Harry bit his lip as he considered it.

“At the very least it will explain why you don’t like him.” Ron explained. “Otherwise your avoidance of him wouldn’t make much sense.”

“Alright.” He sighed. “You can tell people.”

“It’ll be alright, mate.” Ron patted his shoulder. “We’ve got your back.”

“And if anyone does become an issue...”

“Just let us know.” The twins grinned menacingly.

“Thanks.” He was lucky to have such good friends.

They headed down for lunch, the twins splitting away from Ron and Harry to sit with Angelica and Katie while Ron and Harry moved to sit with Hermione. Harry was starving after his long morning and so he started putting food on his plate before he had even sat down.

“Hungry, mate?” Ron teased as he put twice as much food on his plate.

“Starving.” Harry grinned before shovelling a large forkful of a loaded baked potato into his mouth.

“Did you manage to get a wand?” Hermione asked not two seconds after he had put the food in his mouth.

Harry pointed to his rather full mouth.

“Let the man eat, Hermione.” Ron complained, talking with his mouth full. Harry loved his best friend but he really wished that he would work on his table manners. It was always gross to look at him during meal times.

“Don’t talk while eating, Ron.” She scolded him

“Oh lay off.”

“Anyway,” She flicked her hair. “Harry. Let’s see it then.”

Harry swallowed his food before wiping his hands on a napkin and summoning his wand from his holster. “It’s ebony and dragon heartstring.” He tapped his goblet and muttered the

colour changing spell. It was with his wand hand and his magic was unbound so it worked perfectly and the goblet turned the same orange/red as Ron's hair.

"Nice one!" Ron whistled. "Looks like it works better than the old one."

"Harry!" Hermione looked at him crossly. "You aren't supposed to do magic outside of class."

"Lighten up Hermione." Ron came to Harry's defence as he put his wand away and went back to his dinner. He hated how Hermione treated them as if they were five years old and decided to ignore her.

"Talking about things you shouldn't do." She continued, ignoring Ron completely. "Are you sure you want advice from the twins?" She glanced up at the table where they were sat. "I mean, they aren't exactly..."

"Aren't exactly, what?" Harry narrowed his eyes at her. "Go on, finish your sentence." He challenged her. "But do remember that you are sitting next to their brothers."

"Brothers? You mean brother, as in one." She tried to correct him.

"Naw," Ron said around a mouth full of food. "'Arry is practically a Weasley in all but blood."

"And hair." Harry added with a laugh before glaring at Hermione. "So, you were saying?"

"Never mind, I'm going to the library." She huffed and stood. "I'm going to get a head start on studying." She paused as if waiting for one of them to jump and join her.

"I may be taking more classes than I originally planned but I'm not going to the library the day before classes begin." Harry scoffed, turning back to his plate. Well, that and he didn't really feel like being around her right now. Sure the twins could be silly but like they proved earlier, they could be serious too!

Ron just avoided her eyes and continued to eat.

"Suit yourselves then." She sniffed and stalked off.

"Do you think we upset her?" Ron asked warily.

"She started it."

"True." He stabbed a sausage on his plate. "Want to play chess after?"

"Sure."

Harry and Ron spent the rest of the day playing chess up in the dorm, only breaking to do some meditating. It was Ron that reminded Harry which gave Harry an idea.

“Hey Ron?” Harry decided to broach the subject after they had finished their five minutes of meditating.

“Yeah?”

“Can you remind me before every meal that I need to take my potions? I also have a set I need to take before bed, oh and one when I get up first thing in the morning.

“Blimey, mate.” Ron exclaimed. “That’s a lot of potions.”

“Yeah,” Harry shrugged. “But they...” He struggled to get the words out before deciding to hell with it. He trusted Ron and he was even learning occlumency for him, he could at least tell him a bit about what the Dursleys did to him. “They are going to help fix what my relatives did.”

“Harry,” Ron hesitated before steeling himself and striding across the dorm to wrap Harry in a hug.

He froze at the sudden affectionate contact before sinking into the hug. He had gotten plenty of practice over the summer in accepting hugs. It didn’t last long and as soon as Ron stepped away he looked at Harry sternly.

“I will make sure you take your potions.”

“Thanks Ron.”

“So it's morning, before each meal and then before bed right?” He checked.

“Yeah.”

“Okay, I can remember that.”

They spent the rest of the time until dinner down in the common room playing chess. Ron won every game but declared that Harry was slowly getting better. Then just before they were going down to dinner, Ron took Harry aside and reminded him about his potions.

“Ah, thanks!” Harry ran back up to their dorm and pulled out the little box that, when he thought about it, looked a little like a mini treasure chest that his potions were kept in. Ron had followed him up and watched carefully as he took his potions. It was the appetite enhancing and stomach soothing potions. They tasted vile.

“Can I ask?” Ron started after Harry had put the rest of the potions away.

“Hmm?”

“What potions are you on?”

“Appetite enhancing and stomach soothing, which I just took.” Harry listed. “Then its the Nutrition one in the morning and bone strengthening in the afternoon.”

“Those monsters didn’t feed you enough did they?” Ron sighed and Harry hated that the light in eyes seemed to dim a little.

“Not really.” Harry confirmed.

“This plan of yours, it’ll work right?”

“Yeah.”

“Good.” Ron nodded firmly. “Now let's go have dinner.”

They arrived in the great hall and sat near the twins and away from Hermione. Harry was still a little miffed with her.

“Oh,” Ron paused as he was filling his plate. “Did you tell Madame Pomfrey about your allergy?”

“You have an allergy?” Fred asked, leaning closer.

“Yeah, to strawberries.” Harry told him before turning back to Ron, missing the looks shared between the twins. “And yes, I did. I went after I arrived back. Professor Snape reminded me.”

“It’s Professor Snape, Harry.” Hermione chided from several seats down.

“Um, I said that?” Harry shot her a confused look.

“Ignore her mate.” Ron nudged him. “Eat up.”

“Alright.” Harry smiled warmly at his friend and dug into his food. He would tell Ron later that thought that he would make a good healer, he had the caring manner down already.

Harry had eaten all the vegetables that Ron had not so secretly snuck on his plate when the boy nudged him.

“Look.” Ron hissed and nodded towards the teacher’s table.

Harry looked over and saw that Lupin had arrived to dinner...with green hair. It would seem that the twins had started their pranks on Lupin already and judging by their slightly sinister smirks, they were only just getting started.

After dinner, Harry wrote and sent off three letters.

Dear Fenrir and Trent,

Before you freak out, I am completely fine. As you already know I was in Diagon Alley earlier today to get a new wand. I already told Trent the quick version of things but thought I would go into more detail about what had happened in a letter.

On the Hogwarts Express, there was an incident. Dementors boarded the train in search of the alleged criminal Sirius Black. One tried to enter the compartment I was in. I had read about them and that like Lethifold they are weak to the patronus charm. I tried to cast it but my wand felt odd in my hand and when I cast the spell it, well, it exploded in my hand. I'm okay! Madame Pomfrey fixed me up no problem! I have a wicked scar though, it looks like a feather on the palm of my hand, just a little more red than a normal scar due to the fact that my wand had a phoenix feather in it.

So I needed a new wand. I was taken to Diagon Alley by the new defence professor. Lupin. As you know I came out of the wrong fireplace and Trent was there for the first part of things, but Lupin was really horrible. He was furious about my accident with the floo and then things only got worse from there. He told me that I was wasting my parents' sacrifice by being so uncareful. Like the sheer nerve of that man! How could he say that?!

Luckily he kept his tongue to himself other than to take ten points from Gryffindor, the jerk, when I went to get my wand and Trent went to purchase a cage for a friend's rat. Thank you for doing that for me, Trent! I doubt he would have let me linger to get it myself and Ron has been really concerned about a housemate's cat getting to Scabbers when he is so unwell. The cage is great and he's settled in nicely.

Anyway, I got my new wand after like a hundred tries. Its ebony and dragon heartstring from a Horntail dragon, fourteen inches and very springy. After Trent gave me the cage and left, Lupin had the gall to drag me by my robes to the Leaky Cauldron. We argued a little and well...

Lupin said he was perfectly in the right to talk about my parents because he was their friend and so he knew them for much longer than I did.

What kind of a jerk says that to an orphan?!

Anyway, I managed to floo back to school okay and ended up in the Head of Slytherin's office. Professor Snape had never really liked me, but seeing as I was upset and he knew that I had just been out with Lupin, he asked what was wrong. It turns out that he really doesn't like Lupin. So we kind of bonded over our dislike of him? Either way, he's offered to take on any detention that Lupin gives. Sure that will mean that I will have to clean cauldrons but like I told Ron: mindless cleaning can be rather relaxing especially as unlike at the Dursleys he can't hit me.

The twins said that they would prank Lupin for me and they've already managed to turn his hair green! Oh and Ron said that he would learn occlumency with me, its pretty nice meditating together. He's also reminding me to take my potions because I forgot to take them what with everything that happened. Oh! I should also mention that I am allergic to strawberries. Apparently that is something that I should have told people when I first started

school? I discovered the allergy when I was younger so don't worry, I have not had a reaction since then because I avoid the fruit religiously.

I think that's everything.

How are things with you guys? How's the pub going? Make sure you drag Finn out of his forge to socialise every once in a while.

Love,

Harry.

He almost crossed out the 'love' before deciding to leave it in. The letter was longer than expected and his hand was cramping slightly. He stretched and rubbed his hand for a few minutes before starting on the next letter. The main body of it would be the same.

Dear Finn,

Before you freak out, I am completely fine.

On the Hogwarts Express, there was an incident. Dementors boarded the train in search of the alleged criminal Sirius Black. One tried to enter the compartment I was in. I had read about them and that like Lethifold they are weak to the patronus charm. I tried to cast it but my wand felt odd in my hand and when I cast the spell it, well, it exploded in my hand. I'm okay! Madame Pomfrey fixed me up no problem! I have a wicked scar though, it looks like a feather on the palm of my hand, just a little more red than a normal scar due to the fact that my wand had a phoenix feather in it.

So I needed a new wand. I was taken to Diagon Alley by the new defence professor. Lupin. But, I sneezed as I was saying the destination in the floo ended up coming out of the wrong fireplace. Luckily it belonged to Trent and Fenrir and Trent was able to walk me back to Diagon to meet with my teacher.

Trent was there for the first part of things, but Lupin (my teacher) was really horrible. He was furious about my accident with the floo and then things only got worse from there. He told me that I was wasting my parents' sacrifice by being so uncareful. Like the sheer nerve of that man! How could he say that?!

Luckily he kept his tongue to himself other than to take ten points from Gryffindor, the jerk, when I went to get my wand and Trent went to purchase a cage for my friend's rat. Scabbers (the rat) had been really ill and Ron (my best friend) has been worried about him being eaten by a housemate's cat so I wanted to get him a better, more secure cage.

Anyway, I got my new wand after like a hundred tries. Its ebony and dragon heartstring from a Horntail dragon, fourteen inches and very springy. After Trent gave me the cage and left,

Lupin had the gall to drag me by my robes to the Leaky Cauldron. We argued a little and well...

Lupin said he was perfectly in the right to talk about my parents because he was their friend and so he knew them for much longer than I did.

What kind of a jerk says that to an orphan?! And he took more points from Gryffindor.

Anyway, I managed to floo back to school okay and ended up in the Head of Slytherin's office. Professor Snape had never really liked me, but seeing as I was upset and he knew that I had just been out with Lupin, he asked what was wrong. It turns out that he really doesn't like Lupin. So we kind of bonded over our dislike of him? Either way, he's offered to take on any detention that Lupin gives. Sure that will mean that I will have to clean cauldrons but like I told Ron: mindless cleaning can be rather relaxing especially as unlike at the Dursleys he can't hit me.

The twins said that they would prank Lupin for me and they've already managed to turn his hair green! Oh and Ron said that he would learn occlumency with me, its pretty nice meditating together. He's also reminding me to take my potions because I forgot to take them what with everything that happened. Oh! I should also mention that I am allergic to strawberries. Apparently that is something that I should have told people when I first started school? I discovered the allergy when I was younger so don't worry, I have not had a reaction since then because I avoid the fruit religiously.

I think that's everything? Sorry that this letter is really similar to Trent and Fenrir's. It was just easier to copy what I had written seeing as I was telling you the same things.

Did I tell you that Hedwig really likes the statue of her that you made? She ignored me for a good two hours when I packed it away. I don't blame her, I really like it too.

Harry.

He decided not to write, 'love from' seeing as he has a crush and that might be a little weird. 'Best wishes' was also too formal so in the end he just signed it off with his name. He put that letter to the side and started on his last one.

Dear Master Gornuk,

I hope you are well,

I have been informed that I should employ a solicitor to act in my stead for certain things and was wondering if it was possible for you to provide a list of trusted solicitors. It was also suggested that I use said solicitor to investigate Sirius Black and his alleged crimes especially seeing the results of my blood test.

I look forward to your response,

May your vaults never empty,

Harry Potter.

With the letters written and dried, he made a quick trip to the Owlery where Hedwig was waiting.

“Hey girl,” He greeted her. “I have some letters for you.” He tied the three letters to her leg. “Trent, Finn and Gringotts.” He pointed to each corresponding letter. “Don’t wait for a reply unless they ask. Deliver Gringotts first please.” He stroked her feathers. She groomed his hair for a moment before barking and flying off.

Harry returned to his dorm to find Ron meditating on his bed. Harry smiled at the sight, proud that his friend was taking things so seriously before getting ready for bed. He was about to go brush his teeth when Ron spoke up.

“Potion, Harry.” He reminded him.

“Thanks.” Merlin, it was a good thing he had recruited Ron to help him remind him. He drank his potion, grimacing at the chalky taste before going to brush his teeth.

Harry climbed into bed and bid his friend a goodnight before closing his curtains and settled down to meditate until he fell asleep.

Chapter 9

"That bastard!" Fenrir snarled as he reread the letter from his pup. Lupin had no right to say those things or treat Harry like that!

"I know he was mean while I was there, but I hadn't thought that he would stoop that low." Trent glared into his cup of tea and wanted something stronger. He felt so hopeless, their pup was at Hogwarts with his bully of a teacher and Trent couldn't do anything to help him!

"Did you get a letter from Ildflue?" Finn thundered as he stormed into the pub. Hedwig must have gone to him first as the man hadn't even put his hair up his usual bun. It implied that he hadn't even had the chance to light his forge.

"Yeah." Trent sighed. "Pull up a stool." He pointed to the empty seat next to Fenrir before signally to Ken who was bussing the bar. "Three firewhiskeys please." Eh, it was five o'clock somewhere in the world.

"On it."

"Our pup has only been at school for three days and look at what he's gotten himself into already!" Fenrir took a large gulp of the firewhiskey, the burn as it went down his throat did nothing to sooth his worry over Harry. "Dementors. Exploding wands. And verbally and emotionally abusive teachers."

"He just has the worst luck." Trent sighed. "I'm going to put together some things that will hopefully make him feel better." He decided. Showing the pup his support was probably the only thing he could do for the moment. "I'll stop by Marge's bakery for some nice treats and hmm do you think he would like a new scarf?" He would have to make sure that there were no strawberries in anything he bought from Marge.

"You do that," Fenrir smiled lovingly at his kind husband and kissed his hand. "Finn and I will think of a suitable punishment for his teacher."

"Could send him a cursed item." Finn grumbled. "Or a poisoned treat, something to melt his tongue off for daring to speak such vile words?"

"Or..." Fenrir suddenly got a really good idea. "Do you know how to send a Howler?"

"You can't send him a howler!"

"Why not?"

"You can't yell at him without explaining why or how Evan knows us." Trent tried to reason with him, but it was obvious that his heart wasn't in it. He was just relieved that they were focusing on a howler rather than a cursed object.

"Ah but it's not going to be filled with words." Fenrir grinned sinisterly. "I think it's time for Lupin to remember that there are bigger, badder wolves out there."

"He's a varulv?" Finn asked, looking at the wolf in surprise. "How'd he land a teaching job?"

"If you mean werewolf, then yes and he's Dumbles' lapdog." Trent explained as Fenrir took a deeper swig of his whiskey. It still burned that a pup he had personally bitten had turned his back on everything they were.

"He's a pathetic excuse for a werewolf and I regret biting him." He announced before quickly going back to his question he didn't want to talk about what a failure Lupin was. "If it didn't go against everything I stand for, I would send an anonymous note to the prophet about his 'condition'." His face twisted as if he had eaten something sour when he said the word 'condition'.

"We can always resort to that if he gets worse?" Trent leant into him and sighed. "If only the Dark Lord hadn't gone barmy."

"You mean, batshit insane." Fenrir snorted. "The bastard caused the rights of Werewolves being put back by hundred years." It was also during the war that the rumours about Fenrir had started.

"Rumour has it that he might not be as gone as first thought." Ken chimed in as he topped up their drinks.

"Great." Finn scowled. "Just what we need, an insane Dark Lord back from the dead."

"He wasn't always insane." Fenrir stared into his drink. "Once a upon a time he was charismatic, intelligent and more importantly, calm."

"What happened?" Finn asked. "I got drawn in thanks to my old man, Thorfinn Rowle the first." He sneered. "By then he was already violent and crucio happy."

"No one knows for sure." He downed his drink.

"But he is a problem for another day if the rumours are true." Trent interjected. "Our priority is Evan." Even if it would put them in a difficult position further down the road. Their pup was the 'Boy Who Lived', Dumbledore's golden boy but he was also a boy who was open to all areas of magic and didn't even flinch when Fenrir confessed to a werewolf.

"Yeah, he is." Fenrir agreed. "Now how do I go about sending a howler?"

"I'll leave you two to it." Finn stretched as he rose from his stool.

"What? Not going to help scare the lapdog?"

"Got my own idea." He dropped a few sickles on the bar to pay for the drinks and left the pub as quickly as he arrived.

"I will never understand that man." Trent shook his head bemused. "But Evan likes him..." He trailed off as he wondered why his and Fenrir's pup liked such a caustic man. He was such a grump.

"Never mind him." Fenrir waved his hand as if to clear the air. "Help me send a howler." He grinned sharply.

"Of course, love." Trent looked at his husband with adoring eyes. His wolf could be so protective, it was so cute!

Lessons started bright and early the next morning. Ron was brilliant and made sure that Harry took his potions before they went down for breakfast. Hermione was already fifty pages deep into a thick textbook and munching on dry toast, so the boy decided to sit further along the table.

"I hope we don't have defence first." Harry comments as he chooses marmalade to put on his toast and a glass of milk.

"Same." Ron added some bacon to Harry's plate before munching on some and filling his own plate with what looks to be the makings of a full English.

"I-i-is t-true?" Neville asked as he sat down opposite them.

"Is what true?" Harry took a sip of his milk, allowing it to wash away the taste of his potions.

"That the new defence teacher was awful to you a-ab-about y-y-your p-p-par-parents?"

"Yeah." Harry scowled down at his plate at the reminder. "He thought it would be a good idea to tell an orphan that as he had been friends with his parents, he knew them for longer."

There was a collective sharp inhale of breath around him. Obviously, Neville had been the spokesperson for the rest of the Gryffindors in their year group.

"Bloody hell, that's low." Seamus exclaimed.

"Is that why his hair was green at dinner yesterday?" Dean leaned forward to ask.

"No comment." Harry's lips twitched at the memory of the sullen look on the man's face.

"Nice!"

They were then handed their timetables by a seventh-year student and although Harry knew he had taken a lot of class, the full timetable still made him wince.

"Blimey," Ron whistled as he looked over Harry's shoulder. "You sure you're happy about taking so many classes?"

"Yeah." Harry tapped his timetable. "Looks like we have divination first."

“Yes! An easy class.”

“I think I’m actually going to try.” He didn’t want to disappoint Trent and he had found that he enjoyed the subject when the man was tutoring him in the summer. He had the tarot deck that he had gotten for his birthday under his pillow.

“Try what?” Ron asked around the food in his mouth.

“To take divination seriously like charms.” Harry nibbled at his toast. He felt slightly nervous about how Ron would react especially as he was so looking forward to having an easy class.

“Why?” thankfully Ron didn’t look annoyed only confused.

“One of the friends I made over the summer, the same one who’s floo I fell through,” He clarified. “Well, they’re big into divination and even walked me through a few exercises. I did the tea leaves reading and it was accurate.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, and well as a birthday gift he gave me these really nice tarot cards.” He confessed. “I’ll show them to you later. But I just feel like I would be disappointing him if I didn’t try you know?”

Ron looked conflicted so Harry pushed on. He wanted Ron to understand why he felt like he did, and he also wanted to show his best friend that he did trust him.

“It’s embarrassing to admit.” Harry lowered his voice leaning closer to Ron so his voice wouldn’t be carried across the table. “But I’m starting to see the guy and his husband as father figures and so…”

“And so, you want to make them proud of you.” Ron’s face softened in understanding. “Alright, I’m a little peeved but I won’t stop you from trying your best. Who knows, maybe we’ll even be good at it.” He bumped shoulders with him. “Anyway, I wonder what Hermione’s timetable looks like, if yours is so full and she’s taking more classes.”

“I dunno.” Harry finished his toast and brushed his hands clean of crumbs. “Let’s go ask her.”

They stood and wandered down the table to where Hermione was sat and peaked at her timetable as she examined it herself.

“Hermione,” Ron, frowned as he looked over her shoulder. She startled and twisted to look at him. “They’ve messed up your timetable. Look.” He pointed to it. “They’ve got you down for about ten subjects a day. There isn’t enough time.”

“And I thought my timetable was full.” Harry chimed in as he looked over her timetable as well.

“I’ll manage. I’ve fixed it all with Professor McGonagall.”

“But look,” Ron laughed and pointed Monday. “See this morning? Nine o’clock, Divination. And underneath, nine o’clock, Muggle Studies. And...” Ron leaned closer to the timetable, disbelieving, “Look! Underneath that, Arithmancy, nine o’clock. I mean, I know you’re good, Hermione, but no one’s that good. How’re you supposed to be in three classes at once?”

“Don’t be silly,” Hermione said shortly and stuffed her timetable away. “Of course, I won’t be in three classes at once.”

“Well then-”

“Pass the marmalade,” said Hermione cut him off.

“But-”

“Oh, Ron, what’s it to you if my timetable’s a bit full?” Hermione snapped. “I told you, I’ve fixed it all with Professor McGonagall.”

“Calm down Hermione.” Harry frowned at her. “Ron’s only worried that you’ll over work yourself. There’s no reason to take that tone with him.”

“Thanks, mate.” Ron smiled at him before nudging him teasingly, “but you sound like my mum.”

“Wise woman, your mum.” Harry grinned back enjoying the gentle ribbing.

Just then, Hagrid entered the Great Hall. He was wearing his long moleskin overcoat and was absent-mindedly swinging a dead polecat from one enormous hand.

“All righ’?” he said eagerly, pausing on his way to the staff table. “Yer in my firs’ ever lesson! Right after lunch! Bin up since five getting’ everthin’ ready... hope it’s okay... me, a teacher...hones’ly...”

“Looking forward to it Hagrid.” Harry smiled at the half giant. “I’m sure you’re going to be great!”

“Thanks, ‘Arry.” Hagrid patted him solidly on the shoulder. Ron had to hold Harry steady to stop him from collapsing under Hagrid’s strength. He grinned broadly at them and headed off to the staff table, still swinging the polecat.

“Wonder what he’s been getting ready?” said Ron, a note of anxiety in his voice. “After all he thought a dragon was a good pet.”

“I’m sure it’ll be fine.” Harry tried to reassure him but didn’t quite believe the words himself.

They noticed that the Hall was starting to empty as people headed off towards their first lesson.

Ron checked his schedule. “We’d better go, look, Divination’s at the top of North Tower. It’ll take us at least ten minutes to get there...”

They managed to get to the north tower by following a painting of a barmy knight that kept challenging them to a duel as he led the way from painting to painting.

They climbed the last few steps and emerged onto a tiny landing, where most of the class was already assembled. There were no doors off this landing, but Ron nudged Harry and pointed at the ceiling, where there was a circular trapdoor with a brass plaque on it.

““Sybill Trelawney, Divination teacher,”” Harry read. “How’re we supposed to get up there?””

As though in answer to his question, the trapdoor suddenly opened, and a silvery ladder descended right at Harry’s feet.

“After you,” Ron grinned and so Harry climbed the ladder first.

He emerged into the strangest-looking classroom he had ever seen. In fact, it didn’t look like a classroom at all, more like a cross between someone’s attic and an old-fashioned tea shop. Twenty small, circular tables were crammed inside it, all surrounded by chintz armchairs and bean bags.

Everything was lit with a dim, crimson light; the curtains at the windows were all closed, and the many lamps were draped with dark red scarves. That has got to be a fire hazard, Harry thought as he took in the rest of the room. It was stiflingly warm, and the fire that was burning under the crowded mantelpiece was giving off a heavy, sickly sort of perfume as it heated a large copper kettle. The shelves running around the circular walls were crammed with dusty-looking feathers, stubs of candles, many packs of tattered playing cards, countless silvery crystal balls, and a huge array of teacups.

Ron appeared at Harry’s shoulder as the class assembled around them, all talking in whispers. “Where is she?”

A voice came suddenly out of the shadows, a soft, misty sort of voice. “Welcome,” it said. “How nice to see you in the physical world at last.”

A woman stepped forward into the firelight. She was very thin, and her large glasses perched on her nose gave the impression of a large glittering insect as they magnified her eyes to several times their natural size. She reminded Harry of a circus fortune teller he saw on telly once while he was hoovering the living room. Aunt Petunia had left the telly on while she went to do the laundry otherwise, she would have changed the channel as soon as the program came on.

“Sit, my children, sit.” She ushered them forward into the odd classroom. They all climbed awkwardly into armchairs or sank into bean bags. Harry, Ron, and Hermione managed to claim a table to themselves. Harry had to admit that the armchair was rather comfortable even if they were a little too flowery for his taste.

“Welcome to Divination,” said Professor Trelawney, who had seated herself in a winged armchair in front of the fire. “My name is Professor Trelawney. You may not have seen me before. I find that descending too often into the hustle and bustle of the main school clouds my Inner Eye.” Nobody said anything to this extraordinary pronouncement. Professor Trelawney delicately rearranged her shawl and continued, “So you have chosen to study Divination, the most difficult of all magical arts. I must warn you at the outset that if you do not have the Sight, there is very little I will be able to teach you... Books can take you only so far in this field...”

At these words, both Harry and Ron glanced, grinning, at Hermione, who looked startled at the news that books wouldn't be much help in this subject. Harry couldn't help but wonder though, if there wasn't much, she could teach those without the 'Sight' then why weren't students screened before the class?

“Many witches and wizards, talented though they are in the area of loud bangs and smells and sudden disappearing's, are yet unable to penetrate the veiled mysteries of the future,” Professor Trelawney went on, her enormous, gleaming eyes moving from face to nervous face. “It is a Gift granted to few. You, boy,” she said suddenly to Neville, who almost toppled off his pouf. “Is your grandmother well?”

“I-I t-think so,” Neville stuttered

“I wouldn't be so sure if I were you, dear,” said Professor Trelawney, the firelight glinting on her long emerald earrings.

Neville gulped. Harry frowned and made a mental note to check on Neville after class. They had never been close, but he looked rather upset at the idea of his grandmother being ill.

Professor Trelawney continued placidly. “We will be covering the basic methods of Divination this year. The first term will be devoted to reading the tea leaves. Next term we shall progress to palmistry. By the way, my dear,” she shot suddenly at Parvati Patil, “beware a red-haired man.”

Parvati shot Ron a wary look and scooted her chair further away from him.

“In the second term,” Professor Trelawney went on. “We shall progress to the crystal ball if we have finished with fire omens, that is. Unfortunately, classes will be disrupted in February by a nasty bout of flu. I, myself will lose my voice. And around Easter, one of our number will leave us forever.” A very tense silence followed this pronouncement, but Professor Trelawney seemed unaware of. “I wonder, dear,” she said to Lavender Brown, who was nearest and shrank back in her chair, “if you could pass me the largest silver teapot?” Lavender, looking relieved, stood up, took an enormous teapot from the shelf, and put it down on the table in front of Professor Trelawney. “Thank you, my dear. Incidentally, that thing you are dreading? It will happen on Friday the sixteenth of October.”

Lavender trembled and all but fell back into her seat.

“Now, I want you all to divide into pairs. Collect a teacup from the shelf, come to me, and I will fill it. Then sit down and drink, drink until only the dregs remain. Swill these around the

cup three times with the left hand, then turn the cup upside down on its saucer, wait for the last of the tea to drain away, then give your cup to your partner to read. You will interpret the patterns using pages five and six of Unfogging the Future. I shall move among you, helping and instructing.”

When Harry and Ron had had their teacups filled, they went back to their table.

“You’ve got to think about what you want tea leaves to answer for you.” Harry whispered to Ron as Hermione was off getting her own cup of tea. “Like I would like to know if I’m going to do okay with the class load this year or if I’ll have to drop one.”

“Okay,” Ron bit his lip and looked to be thinking hard before nodding to himself and picking up his cup.

They drank their tea, wincing at the scalding temperature but Harry was surprised to find that he liked the flavour. He hummed quietly to himself as he sipped it and focused on his question. Will I be able to cope with this year’s course load?

Once the tea was drunk, they swilled the dregs around as Professor Trelawney had instructed, then drained the cups and swapped over.

“Right,” Ron exhaled gustily as they both opened their books at pages five and six. “What can you see in mine?”

“Right, you’ve got a crooked sort of cross...” He consulted Unfogging the Future. “That means you’re going to have ‘trials and suffering’ — sorry about that — but there’s a thing that could be the sun. Hang on...” He squinted at the book. “That means ‘great happiness’. So, you’re going to suffer but be very happy?” He wondered what exactly Ron was thinking about while he drank the tea.

“Huh.” Ron looked thoughtful before shaking it off. “Right my turn,” He peered into Harry’s cup. “Well, there seems to be what looks like an acorn or maybe an apple?” He turned the cup. “So, you are either going to come into some wealth or be knowledgeable?” He looked back between the book and the cup. “And that could be a bee, which means that you’re going to be busy.”

“Let me see that, my dear,” Trelawney suddenly appeared at their table and all but snatched Harry’s cup from Ron’s hand. Professor Trelawney stared into the teacup, rotating it counter clockwise. “The falcon... my dear, you have a deadly enemy.”

“But everyone knows that” said Hermione in a loud whisper. Professor Trelawney stared at her.

“Well, they do,” said Hermione. “Everybody knows about Harry and You-Know-Who.”

Harry and Ron stared at her in surprise. They had never heard Hermione speak to a teacher like that before. Professor Trelawney chose not to reply. She lowered her huge eyes to Harry’s cup again and continued to turn it. “Oh my,” She exclaimed. “Well, it looks like you

have someone protecting you, my dear boy. You have an angel in your cup.” She put the teacup back down and patted his shoulder. “So, you need not worry.”

Harry peered into the cup and saw the tea leaves move into the formation of an angel and then back into an acorn/apple and a bee. Huh, that was cool. He was really glad that he had talked Ron into taking this seriously, divination was brilliant.

“And you dear?” She reached for Hermione’s cup. “Hmm.”

“What?” Hermione asked scathingly. “Is it the grim? Am I going to die?”

“Hermione.” Harry hissed in warning. He was taken aback by her attitude. At first it was kind of cool that she had spoken back to a teacher, but this was just a bit much wasn’t it? Trelawny hadn’t even done anything to set her off. She shot him a dark look before lifting her chin and staring straight at Trelawny.

“No dear, but the owl in your cup indicates that you should perhaps think more carefully about your future endeavours as they may make you ill but there is also a candle. So, ask your friends for help and you maybe escape your fate.”

Hermione stood up and looked over Trelawny’s shoulder. “That doesn’t look like an owl.” She said flatly.

Professor Trelawney surveyed Hermione with mounting dislike. “You’ll forgive me for saying so, my dear, but I perceive very little aura around you. Very little receptivity to the resonances of the future.”

Harry winced at the dig and the thunderous look building on Hermione’s face.

“I am sure that I will be just fine.” She huffed and stalked back to her seat. Harry and Ron were quick to avoid her gaze.

“I think we will leave the lesson here for today,” said Professor Trelawney in her mistiest voice. “Yes... please pack away your things...”

Silently the class took their teacups back to Professor Trelawney, packed away their books, and closed their bags. Everyone seemed to be a little uncomfortable now due to Hermione’s attitude. Harry felt disappointed in her, he had been enjoying the lesson until she got a bee stuck in her bonnet and verbally lashed out at the teacher. She was worse than he ever was with Snape!

“Until we meet again,” said Professor Trelawney faintly, “fair fortune be yours. Oh, and dear,” She pointed at Neville. “You’ll be late next time, so mind you work extra-hard to catch up.”

Harry, Ron, and Hermione descended Professor Trelawney’s ladder and the winding stair in silence, then set off for Professor McGonagall’s Transfiguration lesson. It took them so long to find her classroom that, early as they had left Divination, they were only just in time.

Hermione stalked to the front of the classroom and took her seat with a huff. Ron and Harry reluctantly sat beside her, Harry took one for the team and sat directly beside her and Ron was next to him. He felt uncomfortable at all the looks Hermione was getting. She was sat so still it looked like she wasn't even breathing. He tried to focus on McGonagall though and what she was telling them about Animagi. Apparently, Wizards could turn into animals at will, how neat was that? He wondered how hard it was to become one. He watched as McGonagall transformed herself in front of their eyes into a tabby cat with spectacle markings around her eyes. He had a flashback to their very first lesson where she was sat on the desk as a cat waiting for them. He had forgotten about it until that moment.

"Really, what has got into you all today?" said Professor McGonagall, turning back into herself with a faint pop, and staring around at them all. "Not that it matters, but that's the first time my transformation's not got applause from a class."

Everybody's heads turned toward Hermione, but nobody spoke.

Then the girl of everyone's focus raised her hand. "Please, Professor, we've just had our first Divination class, and we were reading the tea leaves, and-"

"Say no more, Miss Granger." McGonagall cut her off with a sigh. "Tell me, which of you will be dying this year?"

"Um, no one?" Harry answered with a concerned look on his face. Did someone usually get threatened during the first class of Divination?

"That's a first then." It was probably meant to be said quietly to herself, but the room was silent and so everyone heard her. "What's gotten into you all then?" She asked more loudly.

"She told me that I was going to be ill."

"Then perhaps you should head to the hospital wing." The Professor replied dryly. "But I don't see how that would wind you all up into such a state."

The class stayed silent. No one wanted to grass on Hermione. They may not be Hufflepuffs but that didn't mean they were going to drop their fellow lion in trouble even if their actions were a little out of line.

"Very well, let's get back to the lesson then."

When the Transfiguration class had finished, they joined the crowd thundering toward the Great Hall for lunch, but they had barely left the classroom before Hermione started ranting.

"Can you believe what that hack said to me?" Hermione was in a right snit. Not even two hours of Transfiguration had calmed her down.

"Well, you were being a little antagonistic." Harry said carefully but regretted it immediately as Hermione spun to face him.

“What? You actually believe her?”

“I don’t see why I shouldn’t?” Harry continued bravely. “I mean, you are taking a lot of classes and well stress can make you ill...” He trailed off.

“Just because she said that you had a protector doesn’t mean that she’s right.” Hermione glared at him. “If that was true then surely you wouldn’t have-”

“Okay!” Ron cut in before Hermione could finish her sentence. All the students around them let out a sigh of relief. “Let’s calm down, yeah?”

“Fine, but I am right you know.” She said snootily. “That woman is a Charlatan.”

“Right, well Harry and I need something from the dorm, so we’ll meet you in the great hall.” Oh right, his potions.

“What do you need to get?” She demanded to know.

“I left my Monster book of monsters in my trunk.” Harry lied. “I didn’t think we would have it on the first day.”

“Well, go get it then.” She ordered as if Harry and Ron hadn’t just said that they were going to. She stalked off towards the Great Hall.

“Blimey.” Neville let out a shuddering breath. “She’s really on a roll today, isn’t she?”

“Yeah.” Harry and Ron agreed.

“I’ll save you two a spot at the table.”

“Thanks Nev.”

“Thanks, mate.”

Harry and Ron hurried up to the dorm. Harry took his two potions and then carefully added the next dosage to his bag for him to have before dinner.

“I have Ancient Runes right before dinner.” He explained to Ron.

“Ah good thinking.” Ron nodded. “You should get a carrying case for them.” He suggested.

“I’ll order one tonight.” He agreed. It would be safer for the vials and that way he could carry around the day’s doses without having to return to the dorm before every meal to take them.

After a quick lunch they headed out to the grounds for Care of Magical Creatures. They walked in a tense silence as Hermione refused to talk to either of them. Harry was annoyed

by the fact that she was so sure that she was always in the right. Then to make matters worse he spotted the backs of some Slytherin students in front of them.

“Darn, looks like we have the class with Slytherins.” Harry scrunched up his face. He hoped that Malfoy wouldn’t be taking the class, but his platinum blond hair stood out like a beacon.

“Blood hell.” Ron cursed. “This isn’t going to go well for Hagrid.”

Harry had an awful feeling that Ron was right. He eyed the Slytherins with trepidation before an idea came to him. Ron wouldn’t like it much though. He bit his lip before pulling up his Gryffindor courage and sharing the idea with his best mate.

“I think I know how to make sure they don’t make this hard on Hagrid.”

“Yeah?” Ron raised a sceptical eyebrow. “How?”

“What if..” Ugh was he really going to suggest this? Then he thought about how upset Hagrid would be if his lesson was ruined. “What if we tell them that if they don’t mess up Hagrid’s lesson, we’ll show them the chamber of secrets?”

“Are you serious?” Ron’s face started to turn red as his temper started to rise. “You want to show the slimy gits, the famed chamber?”

“You mean the crumbling, flooded and really gross chamber.” Harry corrected him.

A sudden smile filled Ron’s face. “It is a rather unpleasant place, isn’t it?” Not that Ron got to see much of it but the state of Harry and Ginny when they had emerged, it was filthy, and he couldn’t wait to see the look on Malfoy’s face when he saw that it was so grungy.

“Yeah.” Harry grinned as Ron caught on to his idea. “We better hurry though.” The Slytherins were almost at the paddock that they were supposed to be meeting Hagrid at.

They hurried and caught up to them before they could merge with the other students.

“Malfoy!” Harry called out, knowing that he was bound to get the other boy’s attention if only so he could be a berk.

“What do you want, Potty?”

“We want to make a deal with you.” Harry’s heart thundered in his chest as he hoped desperately that this would work. He really didn’t want Malfoy to ruin Hagrid’s first lesson. He tried to remember what he heard his Uncle Vernon tell Dudley about making deals.

“A deal?” Malfoy looked stumped for a moment before sneering. “And would a-”

“Look.” Harry interrupted him before he could call them derogatory names. “I know you don’t like Hagrid and you don’t care if this goes well for him, but we do and we want you to not muck around in his lessons.”

“Why not?” Malfoy crossed his arms. Crabbe and Goyle bracketed the blond boy and cracked their knuckles menacingly.

Harry had to phrase this carefully. “Wouldn’t you like to see the Chamber of Secrets?”

“That isn’t real.” Malfoy rolled his eyes and made to move away.

“Don’t you remember the mess of last year? The petrification’s and how the school was almost closed!”

“The writing on the wall.” Ron chimed in. Everyone seemed to pause as the scene of Malfoy shouting ‘you’ll be next mudbloods’ seemed to pass through everyone’s minds.

“Yes, but that doesn’t mean that the chamber is real.” Malfoy scoffed.

“Ah but it is.” Harry stepped closer to the blond. “I went down there to rescue Ron’s sister.”

“Liar.”

“It’s the truth.” Harry handed Ron his book bag and then took off his outer robe.

“What are you doing?” Malfoy eyed him weirdly.

“Showing you the scar, I got from the monster of course.” He rolled up his right sleeve until the circular scar was visible.

“Neat.” Crabbe whispered before quickly looking away.

“You could have gotten that scar anywhere.” Malfoy blustered after glaring at his minion for speaking out of turn. The prat.

“Fine, don’t believe me.” Harry shrugged, acting as if he wasn’t disappointed that Malfoy hadn’t agreed. He put his robe back on and accepted his bag back from Ron. Damn, it had hoped that Malfoy would take the deal.

“How about this?” Ron interjected. “You don’t ruin this one lesson of Hagrid’s and we’ll show you the chamber. If it isn’t real, then you haven’t really lost anything as you can always just make things difficult for him in the next lesson. But if it is then you must treat Hagrid with respect while he is teaching.”

Malfoy narrowed his eyes. Harry could almost see his brain ticking over. Would he accept this deal? Harry really wanted this lesson to go well for Hagrid, he was just so excited for his first lesson as a teacher and if it went well then it would give him a lot of confidence. He was glad that he had Ron at his back, but he did wonder where Hermione was, if she wasn’t careful, she would be late.

“Fine,” Malfoy huffed. “But if you’re lying or trying to trick me, then I will make your lives and the oaf’s life miserable.”

“Then it's a deal.” Harry tried not to show how relieved he was. “Oh, to read the book for class? You need to stroke its spine.” And with that parting wisdom, Harry and Ron walked around the Slytherin and his goon and joined the rest of their classmates.

“Well, done, mate.” Ron nudged him with a grin.

“I couldn't have done it without you.” Harry told him honestly. “If you hadn't stepped in, I doubted it would have worked.”

“What wouldn't have worked?” Hermione asked from behind them.

“Merlin!” Harry and Ron jumped apart and turned to see a rather frazzled Hermione clutching her book bag.

“Blimey, where did you come from?”

“What do you mean? I've been here the whole time.” She dismissed him. “Now I hope you two are prepared for the lesson. We want this to go well for Hagrid.”

“What are you implying Hermione? That we don't?” Harry felt offended and he honestly didn't know what was going on with her. She had been a right arse since they came back to school. And it was only the first day of lessons. He hated to think what she would be like in a few months' time when it's the winter exams.

“I didn't say that.” She said defensively as if she was the injured party but thankfully before she could say anything else Hagrid arrived.

“That was brilliant!” Harry told Hagrid honestly. The lesson had been a success. They learnt about and got to meet Hippogriffs. Half bird half horse creatures that were incredibly proud. Harry had silently thanked his lucky stars that he had made a deal with Malfoy otherwise the lesson might have gone south quickly. Instead, several students had gotten the chance to have a ride on the Hippogriffs including Harry, Ron and yes, even Malfoy.

“You think so?” Hagrid asked shyly.

“Even Malfoy had a good time.” Ron reminded him.

“You did a great job, Hagrid.” Hermione smiled gently at the giant and for a moment Harry could see his friend before her face did this weird thing and she turned back into the awful person that she had been since they had arrived at Hogwarts this year. “Now we should hurry and get to class.”

“I have a free period.” Ron shrugged and crossed his arms. He didn't look like he was going to go anywhere soon.

“I have runes!” Harry suddenly paled. “I have to go. Hagrid.” He turned to the half giant.

“You were an awesome teacher, and I can't wait for your next lesson, but I have to go before

I'm late." He grabbed his bag from where he had left it when he had been riding the Hippogriff. "I'll see you at dinner Ron."

"Have fun, mate." Ron waved him away before turning back to Hagrid.

As Harry hurried off, he noticed that Hermione had already vanished.

He slid into a seat in the Ancient Runes classroom just in time. The door shut behind him and the professor entered the room from her office. She was a slim woman of average height with dusky skin. She wore a rather beautiful hijab that had the pattern of falling leaves on it and she reminded Harry of a photo of Sheikha Mozah Binte Nasser that he saw in a newspaper in primary school when they each had to bring in a paper. He couldn't remember why they had to bring in newspapers, but it was odd enough that he remembered it clearly.

"I am Professor Bathsheda Babbling," She introduced herself. "Welcome to Ancient Runes." She spread her arms out as she spoke as if trying to hug the room. "Runes can be used for many things." She folded her arms. "From warding to minor healing spells, they are diverse in their use so long as you have the right mindset." She sighed. "Unfortunately to get to that point, you must memorise several runic alphabets. I will be blunt with you. It will not be fun, it will be boring, but once you have them down the world of magic will be open to you."

Harry disagreed. He was already trying to learn a runic alphabet and was finding it kind of fun

"I will try and make it as least painful as possible, but I do not hold much hope that all of you will remain in this class but for those that do, next year will be more exciting."

"Like what?" Hermione asked as she raised her hand. Harry startled as he didn't realise that he had been sat next to her.

"When you raise your hand, please wait for me to call on you before you shout out your question." Professor Babbling scolded her. "As to your question, you will just have to wait and see. I am of the opinion that if you cannot stick it through the boring things then you do not deserve to know about the more exciting things."

Hermione seemed to wilt in her seat at the gentle telling off she received. Babbling turned away from her and went back to the black board. She tapped it with her wand and a rune appeared. It was drawn in chalk and rather large so that everyone could see it clearly. It looked like an 'F' only instead of two horizontal lines coming off the vertical they went diagonally upwards and were slightly lower down on the vertical line

"We will be focusing on the Elder Futhark alphabet. The Elder Futhark, also known as the Older Futhark, Old Futhark, or Germanic Futhark is the oldest form of the runic alphabet." She explained. "It is made up of 24 runes that have both symbolic and phonetic meaning. As we only have an hour today, we will be focusing on only one rune. The first in the alphabet: FEHU." She pointed to the board. "I want you all to pull out some parchment and a quill and practice writing this rune."

Harry pulled out some parchment and his quill and ink. He had already practiced this rune over the summer, but he guessed that more practice wouldn't hurt. As he dipped his quill in the ink, he tried to remember what the rune meant. He knew that it stood for the letter 'F' but...He frowned as he made a vertical stroke on the parchment. Oh! That was it! Fertility, the rune stood for fertility and harvest and things that were similar to that. He felt pleased that he remembered its meaning and happily copied out the rune until the professor told them to stop.

"I want you to all write your names at the top of your paper and I will collect them at the end of class."

"They'll be marked?" Hermione squeaked quietly.

"Yes." Babbling's mouth twitched with amusement. "Now, does anyone know the meaning behind Fehu?" She asked the class.

Harry tentatively raised his hand while Hermione's flew into the air next to him.

"Mr Potter?" Babbling chose him and he could feel Hermione's glare.

"If used as a written alphabet then it would stand for the letter 'F'." He started slowly. "But symbolically it stands for fertility and the harvest?" He hated how unsure he sounded at the end of his sentence.

"Well done, Mr Potter." She smiled at him. "Take five points to Gryffindor. You are correct. Fehu does indeed stand for the letter 'F' and is symbolic for fertility and harvest. It also stands for livestock, abundance, success, wealth, and security."

Ah, he had missed out some of the meanings. He wrote them down and then circled the security part and added a note: Could be useful for warding?

The rest of the lesson passed quickly as they were made to write the rune out some more before handing in their parchment to mark.

Harry didn't wait for Hermione as he needed to take his potions before dinner which was where he was going to be heading to next. He ducked into the nearest alcove and downed the two potions that he was supposed to, feeling rather pleased that he remembered without having to be reminded before joining the rest of his classmates in the trek to the Great Hall.

Someone knocked into him as he walked, and he was about to scowl at them when he felt paper being shoved into his hand before the person walked off. He spotted the glowing blond hair of Malfoy ahead of him now. He looked at the paper, it was a message:

Meet where the writing was on the wall after dinner to fulfil your part of the deal.

Harry wanted to groan. It would seem that his day wasn't over yet. Malfoy wanted to see the chamber of secrets after dinner. Oh well, at least Ron would be with him.

Chapter 10

When Harry and Ron arrived to meet Malfoy at the wall that once held the writing in blood, neither had expected for half of Slytherin house to be there.

“What the hell, Malfoy?” Ron exclaimed as he counted the number of students lying in wait for them. Twelve, there were twelve bloody snakes waiting for them.

“They all wanted to see this fabled chamber.” Malfoy shrugged nonchalantly.

“Ever heard of a thing called discretion, Malfoy?” Harry sighed, feeling annoyed. “I was at most expecting five people.”

“Should have made sure that Malfoy could keep his mouth shut then.” An older year smirked. “The kid was crowing about it in the common room after your class with the Oaf.”

“Okay,” Harry held up his hand and scowled. “I made the deal with Malfoy and Malfoy alone. Tell me why I should take you with us.”

“I’d like to see you try and leave us behind.” The same older Slytherin replied and flexed his arms across his chest showing his rather impressive muscles, though they weren’t as impressive as Finn’s.

“We’ll have to do this some other night then, Malfoy.” Harry shrugged. “I’ll send you an owl.” And with that Harry and Ron turned to leave. They had no obligation to the rest of these snakes to show them the chamber. He may be a Gryffindor but he was almost a Slytherin. He wasn’t going to show just anyone the chamber without there being something in it for him.

“Wait!”

“What?” Harry turned to see the older Slytherin step forward with a scowl on his face.

“What do you want in exchange?”

Harry shared a look with Ron who seemed as surprised as he wasn’t expecting them to give in so easily. But what should they trade?

‘Hagrid?’ Ron mouthed to Harry, he nodded. Yeah they might as well offer the same deal as they had to Malfoy. He couldn’t think of anything else he wanted, really.

“Alright.” Harry turned to face them fully. “The deal is that if we show you the chamber of secrets, those that take Care of Magical creatures will treat Hagrid with respect while he is teaching. That means no messing around, talking back etc during his lessons.”

“And for those who don’t take Care of Magical Creatures, you have to keep Lupin away from Harry.” Ron added covering the Slytherins that didn’t fall into Harry’s deal.

“Why?” A blond girl asked. “I mean we understand the 'being nice to Hagrid' thing.” She waved that nonchalantly. “But what’s your issue with Lupin?”

“It seems that he likes to rub the fact that he knew my parents for longer than I did.” Harry scowled at the memory.

“Not to mention he said that your parents would be ashamed of you for sneezing when using the floo and accidentally coming out of the wrong fireplace.” Ron all but snarled. “He’s not someone I want near Harry.”

Harry and Ron missed the dark looks exchanged between the Slytherins. Everyone knows that Harry’s parents were off limits. Even Malfoy didn’t touch them after that incident in first year which he still refuses to talk about and seeing as Malfoy usually had no issue with crowing ‘My father will hear about this’. It must have been extreme. In reality all Harry had done was look at Malfoy with sad ‘you just kicked a puppy’ eyes and walked off while Ron, his loyal friend had all but foamed at the mouth with rage.

“So, do we have a deal?” Harry demanded to know. “We are wasting time.” He didn’t want to be caught out after curfew and he didn’t know how long this little trip would take.

“You have yourself a deal, Potter.” The older Slytherin that seemed to be their spokesperson stepped forward and held out his hand to shake on it.

Harry shook his hand and then stepped back. “Let’s get this show on the road then.” He quipped before setting off towards Moaning Myrtle’s toilet.

“What does that mean?” He heard of the Slytherin’s hiss to their friend but he just ignored them and stopped when they arrived at the toilets.

“Is this some kind of joke?” Malfoy spat.

“Oh calm down, Malfoy.” Ron rolled his eyes.

“The entrance is in here.”

“In the girl’s toilets?” The older Slytherin asked drily and Harry really needed to learn his name as he couldn’t just keep calling him the ‘older Slytherin’ in his head.

“Yep.” Harry pushed open the door and stepped inside. He was relieved to see that Myrtle wasn’t around.

“If we get in trouble for this, I am so throwing you under the Knightbus.” Malfoy muttered as he followed Harry and Ron into the toilets.

It took a few moments to get everyone into the toilets but once everyone was in the room and the door was shut, Harry turned to the taps in the centre of the room. He broke from the group and approached the tap that had the little snake on it.

“*Open* .” He hissed in Parseltongue. He ignored the sharp inhales from his audience and stepped back as the sink sank into the floor and revealed the hole in the ground. On a whim,

because he didn't fancy getting his uniform so dirty again, especially as it was of a better quality this time round, he hissed at the hole. "*Stairs* ." There was a grating sound but low and behold stairs started forming leading down beneath the school.

"So, what do you think?" Harry turned to face the stunned Slytherins. "Still think I'm a liar, Malfoy?" Malfoy didn't answer, he just stared at the hole where the sink used to be.

"I think this is the quietest that he's ever been." Ron smirked.

"Agreed." Harry laughed a little before casting Tempus. "We have just under two hours before curfew. Are you guys still interested in going down or do you want to come back another day?"

"There is no way that I am returning to the dorm without stepping foot in the chamber first." The older Slytherin declared stepping forward. "Lead on."

"I'll take the rear." Ron volunteered.

"Thanks," Harry shot him a smile before casting lumos and starting down the stairs, the older Slytherin was the first to follow him after lighting his own wand. "Last time we went down here," He explained, raising his voice slightly so that everyone could hear him. "I didn't think to ask for stairs."

"How did you get down then?"

"It was a giant slide."

"Wicked."

"Yeah but it literally threw you across the room when you left it." Harry focused on the stone stairs beneath his foot. They were in surprisingly good nick. "Anyway, what's your name?" He finally asked.

"Adrian Pucey." The older Slytherin told him. "I'm not surprised that you didn't know it as I'm not on the quidditch team."

"As much as I would like to deny that, you're right." Harry didn't really pay much attention to people outside of his year unless they were on their house's quidditch teams.

"It's fine." Pucey shrugged off his apology. "Anyway, what can we expect to see down here?"

"Immediately? It's dark and gross and there's a little bit of a cave in but Ron managed to clear most of that so we should be able to get through." Harry tried to remember what it all looked like, but he was rather distracted at the time due to, you know, the life and death situation.

"And when we get through the cave in?" He continued to press for details.

"You'll just have to wait and see." Harry decided not to ruin the surprise for him. After all the sight of a decaying giant snake was certainly something he doubted the Slytherin had ever seen before.

Harry could have sworn that the older boy muttered ‘Spoil sport.’ but he said it too quietly for him to be sure.

Eventually they arrived at the bottom of the stairs and walked away to give everyone else space to stand. It took longer than Harry would have liked for everyone to come down the stairs but finally Ron stepped down the last step.

“This is disgusting.” Malfoy instantly complained, he was surprisingly the last but one down and Harry wondered how he and Ron managed not to kill each other during that time. He was staring down at the discarded animal bones littering the floor. The light of dozens of ‘lumos’ lit up the dark dingy tunnel. The walls were black with grime and pleased the meaner side of Harry that this was probably the dirtiest place that Malfoy had ever been.

“Yep.” Harry grinned. “It gets worse.” He promised them and then continued down the tunnel. “As I told Pucey on the way down, there was a small cave in, but Ron managed to clear most of it. So, it’ll be a little bit of a tight squeeze so single file!”

There was some grumbling, but they all complied after all they were almost at the Chamber of Secrets, Salazar Slytherin’s fabled room.

“We must be miles under the school,” Another Slytherin said, his voice echoing in the tunnel. “Under the lake, even!”

“Probably.” Ron agreed seeing as that was what he had said when they first came down here in their second year.

“I wonder what it’ll be like,” Someone else tried to whisper to their friend but their voice carried due to the echoey nature of the tunnel.

“Not far now,” Harry called back as they passed the discarded snakeskin which was where he and Ron got separated last time. Several of the students shrieked at the sight.

“WHAT IS THAT?!” Malfoy’s scream was the loudest.

“Oh, calm down.” Harry could practically hear Ron rolling his eyes as he explained. “It’s just a discarded snakeskin. Anyway, this is where the cave-in is, so like Harry said single file now.”

They squeezed through the hole that Ron had made the last time they were down here. Some of the large students needed more help to slip through but eventually everyone was on the other side. The tunnel turned and turned again and then finally after going around one last corner they arrived at a solid wall on which two entwined serpents were carved, their eyes set with great, glinting emeralds.

“And this, is the real entrance to the chamber.” Harry announced as everyone crowded around the wall, staring with awe at the carving.

“Neat.” Pucey exhaled as he reached out a shaky hand to touch the snakes. Harry stopped him.

“Uh, maybe don’t touch anything.” He commented. “I don’t know if anything is cursed.”

“Then how do we get in?” Malfoy asked as he pushed his way to the front.

“Like this.” Harry turned back to the carving and hissed. “ *Open* .” The serpents parted as the wall cracked open, the halves slid smoothly out of sight. “Welcome to the Chamber of Secrets.” Harry gestured to the chamber and stepped over the threshold.

“Holy shit!” Was exclaimed by several of the students as they took in the rather large dead basilisk that drew their attention away from the chamber itself.

“Huh, I’m surprised it doesn’t smell.” Harry approached the dead snake thoughtfully.

“M-mate?” Ron stuttered as he took in the sheer size of the beast. “When you said you killed a snake at the end of last term, you neglected to say that it was gigantic.”

“It didn’t really seem important at the time to mention it.” Harry shrugged as he looked closely at the dead snake. “I still can’t believe that the thing didn’t kill me to be honest.”

“Y-you were telling the truth?” Malfoy cried as he saw the snake. “And this thing bit you, and you survived?”

“Yep.” Now Harry was just being a brat and made sure to pop the ‘p’ at the end of the word. “Oh, don’t touch any of the teeth as they are filled with venom.”

“Boy who lived.” Was muttered by a few of the Slytherins but Harry ignored them and walked over to the spot where he almost died. There was a puddle of ink and venom from where he stabbed the evil diary. The tooth that he had pulled out of his arm still lay there.

“Mate?” Ron came up to him. “Is there where...?” He trailed off.

“I almost died.” Harry’s voice was quiet, but he didn’t realise that the sound travelled easily in the chamber like it did the tunnels so naturally everyone could hear what he was saying. He just thought he was having a quiet talk with his best friend. “If Fawks hadn’t cried into the wound, I would have died.”

“Merlin.” Ron swore and wrapped an arm around Harry’s shoulder, pulling him close like his brothers would do to him when he was upset.

“I thought that if I was going to die then I want to at least bring that evil diary with me.” Harry continued as if Ron hadn’t spoken, the story falling from his lips in a rush now that he was finally talking about it properly. “So, I pulled the fang out of my arm and stabbed the evil thing. He, no it screamed and bled as if it was a real person and not a book that was possessing your sister.”

“You saved her life, Harry.” Ron reminded him. “You saved my sister and lived to tell the tale regardless how impossible it was.”

“Yeah,” Harry blinked rapidly to clear the tears that were starting to form and cleared his throat. He patted Ron’s shoulder and moved away, turning to face the crowd of Slytherins.

“So, this is the chamber, is it everything you dreamt it to be?”

“Do you realise how much that snake is worth Potter?” Malfoy gestured towards the beast as if there was anyone that didn’t know what snake he was speaking about. “Billions of galleons!” He continued when Harry made no indication that he was going to reply. “As right of conquest you own the beast and can do whatever you want with it!”

“And how exactly would I get it out of here?” Harry asked amused but did make a mental note about the potential income.

Malfoy was silent.

“That's what I thought.” He sighed and cast tempus. “It's going to be curfew soon; we should head back up.”

“What? No!”

“But I want to look around more!”

“We haven’t explored much!”

There were several complaints at the suggestion.

“If you want to come back down, you’ll have to think of a different deal.” Harry smirked. “But for now, we really need to head back up.”

“You heard him!” Pucey stepped up as the eldest. “Come on you lot unless you want to explain to Snape why you were out after curfew.”

There were more grumbles, but everyone did start to file out. This time Ron was leading the way as Harry needed to go last to close everything up.

Harry and Ron made it back to their common room with ten minutes to spare only to be confronted by a livid Hermione as soon as they had cleared the portrait.

“Where have you been?” She all but shrieked, reminding Harry of the time when the twins and Ron broke him out of Durzkan and Mrs Weasley had been lying in wait for them.

“We got in time for curfew, why are you so upset?” Ron demands as her tone of voice instantly had him bristling.

“It's the first day of lessons and already you two are up to no good.”

“Hey!” Ron and Harry exclaimed at the same time.

“That's not fair.” Harry continued. “For all you know we could have been in the library.” Though they obviously weren’t seeing as he could see that Ron had cobwebs in his hair.

Hermione gave them an unimpressed look.

“Anyway, even if we were up ‘no good’.” Harry made quotation marks in the air. “You’re not our mother, so please stop acting like it.” He then noticed the alarmingly pale colour of her skin and seeing as she had brown skin, it was rather scary to see her looking so pale. “Are you alright Hermione?” He asked.

“Yes, I am perfectly fine.” She huffed and lifted her chin. “Now I’m going to bed before you try and rope me into whatever it is you are up to.” And with that she flounced off.

“I’m worried about her, mate.” Harry turned to Ron. “Do you think we should say something to McGonagall?”

“She shouldn’t be so stressed already.” Ron agreed. “Maybe we should speak to Percy first? Before we bring it up with McGonagall. He might be able to get through to her and maybe help her calm down.”

“Right you are lil’ bro.” George swept in out of nowhere draping an arm across Ron’s shoulder.

“I remember Perce being the same at the start of his third year.” Fred continued mirroring his brother but on Harry’s shoulder. “Bill was in his last year and had to sort him out.”

“We’ll ask him at breakfast, then.” Harry decided. “I know Hermione can be a little high strung but she’s just been...” He had no words to describe what she had been like really.

“An absolute nightmare?” Ron suggested with a guilty smile.

“Perce will sort her out.” George promised.

“But until then, isn’t it time for ickle little third years to be in bed?”

“That’s where we were heading when she pounced on us.” Ron complained.

“Yeah.” Harry nodded and then remembered the prank that the twins had pulled on Lupin. “By the way, I loved the green hair.”

“High praise,” Fred beamed and ruffled Harry’s hair.

“High praise indeed!” George ruffled Ron’s hair so it looked as messy as Harry’s on a good day. “And we’ve only just got started.”

The four of them wore matching evil grins that startled a passing seventh year.

Harry and Ron went down to breakfast the next morning after Harry had taken his potions. They spotted Percy and sat across from him.

“Good morning.” He greeted the two of them as he clutched a cup of coffee in his hands. Coffee was unfortunately restricted to fifth years and up so Harry would have to wait another two years before he could try the stuff but it did smell nice.

“Morning.” Harry replied as he chose a bowl of porridge and started to doctor it to his taste.

“Hey, Perce.” Ron filled his plate with sausage and eggs. “Me and Harry were wondering if you could have a word with Hermione.”

“Why? What’s wrong?” He put his mug down and gave them his full attention.

“She’s just...” Harry dithered on how to put it.

“She’s acting like you did in your third year.” Ron had no such problem. “George said that Bill had to sort you out and we were hoping that you would do the same with her?”

“She’s that bad already?” He frowned with concern.

“Yeah,” Ron nodded and stuffed some food in his mouth.

“She even talked back to a teacher on her first day.” Harry reported. “It was kind of scary actually.”

“I’ll see what I can do.” He promised.

“Thanks, Percy.”

“Thanks, Perce.” Ron said through a mouthful of food.

“Ron, please don’t talk with your mouthful.” Percy sighed.

Before Ron could retort, the owlpost arrived.

Hedwig soared down and landed in front of Harry, carrying several parcels and letters.

“Hey, you’re popular this morning.” Ron teased good naturedly. He had really mellowed since the two of them had started to meditate regularly.

“Harry, would you mind if I run some quick scans?” Percy asked while wiping his hands on a napkin. “It’s just what with Sirius Black around and everything I want to make sure you don’t get any nasty surprises in your mail.”

Harry was about to agree as he didn’t see how it would hurt when a nondescript owl carried a smoking red letter into the hall. Someone was going to receive a Howler. At the sight of it everyone fell silent, waiting with baited breath to see who it was aimed at. He watched with hidden glee as it approached Lupin at the staff table.

“No way, a teacher?” Came the hushed murmuring from the students in the hall.

Lupin carefully took the letter from the owl which then hightailed it out of there. He had barely touched the red letter before it opened and let out a deafening snarl. Lupin paled and looked like he was going to faint. Harry darted a quick look to the twins who looked amazed but also disappointed that they hadn’t thought of the prank so it wasn’t from them.

The snarling seemed to go on for ages before it finally trailed off. Then just when everyone thought that was it, a piercing howl filled the air.

Lupin fainted and fell from his chair with a dull thud.

Harry fought back a smirk, as it wasn't really polite to mock a man that just fainted even if he was a right bastard and instead turned back to his mail as the other Professors, bar Snape, rushed to his aid.

"Blimey," Ron exclaimed once the noise level in the hall rose to its usual hum. "Who d'you reckon sent that then?"

"No idea." Harry lied. He had a feeling that it was no coincidence that he received letters the same morning that Lupin got that howler. "Anyway, I haven't asked, but how is Scabbers liking his new cage?"

"He seems to be settling in well." Ron shrugged. "He's less stressed at least now that there's no chance of being attacked by other people's beasts." He shot Hermione a dark look, a look she missed as she had her head in a book.

"Here, Harry." Percy handed him back his post. "They've all come up clean so they should be safe to open." He then got up and stretched. "I'll go have a chat with Hermione before your first class." He headed down the table to where their bushy haired friend sat.

"Thanks Percy!" Harry called after him, before opening the first letter. Ron refocused on his breakfast to give Harry some privacy as he read.

Dear Harry,

It sounds like you've had quite the eventful few days! Fenrir, Finn and I had to be held back by Ken and a couple of the regulars to be stopped from storming the castle to take you home with us. Dementors at Hogwarts? Seriously? That is one of the dumbest ideas that I've ever heard and I am married to a man who doesn't always think things through.

As for that Professor, Fenrir plans to send him a literal howler, you'll have to tell us how he reacts to it. Finn has his own idea of vengeance but refused to share what it is. Don't let Lupin get you down but if he does say those horrid things again then let us know. I am glad that you have such wonderful friends that are willing to stand up for you, you will have to tell us what other pranks they pull on Lupin. We look forward to hearing about them. I'm glad that you are getting along with your Professor Snape and that you can go to him if Lupin gets worse.

I am very happy that your friend Ron is joining you in your meditation and that he reminds you about your potions, though I hope that you will start to remember to take them by yourself.

Also I have sent you a care package and don't worry nothing has any strawberry in it. Let me know which of the treats are your favourites and I shall send you some more.

Lots of love,

Trent

P.s. We are getting a room ready for you for the summer, so what colour would you like the walls to be painted.

So it was Fenrir that sent the Howler then, like Harry had suspected. He decided that he would think about the more emotional side of the letter later out of fear that he would start crying like a baby if he dwelled on it at that very moment. Instead he opened the parcel that came with the letter and uncovered the treats that Trent had alluded too.

“Oh yum!” He couldn’t help but exclaim at the sight of the flaky pastries. “Here, Ron.” He put one on his friend’s plate. “They look too nice to not share.” He took a bit out of one, himself and struggled not to make weird noises because it tasted so good. It was so flaky but had a gooey chocolate centre, it was delicious!

“Thanks mate!” Ron’s eyes lit up at the sight of the pastry. He bit into it and groaned at the taste. “Its so good!”

“Mhmm!” Harry agreed and happily chomped through the rest of the pastry before noticing that there was more than baked goods in the box. He reached in and pulled out an incredibly soft, blood red scarf. It shimmered slightly in the light and felt really nice against his skin.

“Oh! That’s pretty.” Lavender cooed at the sight of the scarf. “Who’s it from?”

“A friend.” Harry smiled softly and wrapped the scarf around his neck even though he would have to take it off before his first lesson of the day.

“Lucky.” She looked jealous but also happy for him.

“Yeah.” He grinned and put the box with the rest of the pastries in his bag carefully.

“Not to rush you mate but we have class soon.” Ron pointed out as he licked his fingers clean. “You might want to hurry up with reading your mail or save it for later.”

“I’ll read one more, and then we can head out.” Harry decided seeing the truth in Ron’s words.

“Okay.” He put the letter that was clearly from the Goblins and the letter from Fenrir in his bag to read later and instead opened the one from Finn. Two rings fell out of the envelope, one a lot smaller than the other.

Harry,

The two rings I sent are enchanted. One is for you and the other for your owl. The one for your owl has spells woven into it for protection and a strong notice-me-not which will help protect her and your mail from tampering due to her rather distinctive colouring. I hope she likes it as she seems to be a lady of refined taste.

The ring for yourself also has spells woven into it for your protection. It will warm if the food you hold it above has been tampered with, either with potions or poisons. Unfortunately it doesn't discriminate between the two but if you weren't aware of any potions in your food and drink then you should be alarmed if it warms anyway. It also has a shield charm that should protect you from simple hexes when your back is turned. And if I have done it correctly it should also provide you with some mental protection. I would recommend that you continue with occlumency studies all the same.

Both rings are made with pure silver and platinum so be careful when touching creatures that have allergies to silver as it will at least sting them and at worse burn them.

Keep an eye on Lupin when the post comes this coming week.

Finn.

p.s. Lupin is a varulv.

Harry put down the letter and picked up the larger of the rings and examined it. It looked like a feather had been wrapped around itself. The runes were carved on the inside of the ring so that they would be hidden against his skin. The small ring was similar but was open rather than closed like his was. He guessed it was made like that so it would be easier to put on Hedwig's leg. He put his ring on the ring finger of his right hand. It shrunk to fit and it felt like he was wearing a warm hug. He loved it.

"Who sent you that, mate?" Ron asked as he peered at the ring that Harry now wore.

"Here," Harry passed him the letter. He didn't think that there was anything in the letter that he needed to keep from his friend.

"What's a varulv?" Ron asked as he passed the letter back.

"Not sure, I'll have to look it up later." Harry put the letter away carefully and put the ring back in the envelope as well. He would put it on Hedwig later, she had flown off at the sound of the Howler. "We have potions, first right?"

"Ugh, potions." Ron groaned but climbed to his feet. "Hopefully Snape will be in a good mood due to Lupin fainting."

"Here's hoping." Harry laughed.

Snape was in a good mood. It was weird.

“Today, we will be reviewing a potion from your first year.” Snape drawled as he stalked into the classroom. He flicked his wand and writing appeared on the chalkboard at the front of the room: Boil Cure. “If any of you fail to get an acceptable, I will be most...displeased.” He gave them a stern look. “Get started.” He barked.

Harry and Ron pulled out their cauldrons and ingredients from their bag and started on the potion. They were careful in their preparation of the ingredients and due to the lack of Snape looming over them and the fact that they had done the potion once before, they both managed to create more than passable potions.

“Your best work yet.” Snape commented as he examined the vials.

Harry and Ron exchanged gobsmacked looks. Was Snape actually complimenting them?

“Then again, this is only a first-year potion.” Snape continued turning the compliment into a backhanded one. “I would be disappointed if you hadn’t done this well.” He moved on to Neville. “Not bad, Longbottom.” He eyed the vial. “I may not use your toad as a test subject when we are creating antidotes.”

“T-thank you.” Neville stuttered but Snape was already moving down the line to access the rest of the classes' potions.

Yeah, Snape in a good mood was really weird. Nice, but bloody weird.

After that frankly bazaar potion lesson they had defence, a class that Harry was not looking forward to. If they ignored the statistics of the DADA teachers attempting to harm him which was already two for two, the fact that Lupin was such a jerk made him dread the class.

“It’ll be alright, mate.” Ron tried to console him. “If he gets you mad, just remember that you got an EE in potions.”

“Which he only got because it was a first-year potion.” Hermione appeared from nowhere to bring down Harry’s mood further.

“Gee, thanks Hermione.” He scowled.

“Well, it's the truth.” She said with her nose in the air. “And anyway, I know Professor Lupin and you may have gotten off on the wrong foot but remember that he is a teacher.”

“Says the girl that had a go at Professor Trelawney.” Ron shot back putting himself between her and Harry, once more that he was a brilliant friend.

“The woman is a fraud.”

“So was Lockhart.”

“He still taught us more than that woman ever will.”

“If you feel that way, then why don’t you drop the class?” Harry butted into their argument. He hated how much of a hypocrite she was being. “Seriously, if you think it’s a load of nonsense, why haven’t you dropped it?”

“That’s none of your business.” She huffed. “And I don’t appreciate you setting Percy on me.”

“We didn’t set him on you-”

“I am coping with the number of classes just fine.” She cut Ron off. “Not that you would understand the idea of working hard.”

“Hey!” Harry glared at her. “That was uncalled for.”

“He’s only taking the bare minimum of classes!”

“So?” Who cared how many classes Ron took? “If we can’t worry about how many classes you are taking, you cannot worry or belittle how many we are taking.”

“Odd that you’re talking about hard work, Granger” Malfoy slowed down so he was walking with them. “Seeing as Snape gave you the lowest mark on today’s potion.”

“What?”

“Seriously?” Harry and Ron spoke over each other. They hadn’t noticed Snape giving her her mark and wondered what they had missed.

“Yes.” Malfoy leaned in closer as he shared the gossip with them, ignoring the bristling Hermione. “Apparently, Granger here thought she was too good for the instructions on the board and experimented to make the potion better.”

“Did you really?” Harry asked the girl as she looked to be on the verge of tears. “That was brave.” It was but it was also a stupid thing to do. They were third years and if forgetting to take the potion off the heat before you add the porcupine quills could cause the cauldron to melt, she was lucky that she didn’t explode hers! “You could have caused an explosion.”

“Well, I didn’t, did I?” She trembled. “My potion looked the same as everyone else’s so I don’t see why he should have docked my mark.”

“He docked your mark because and I quote:” Malfoy paused, cleared his throat and then did a surprisingly good impression of Snape. “Miss Granger, while this may have the colour of a boil cure, it has the viscosity of honey and the smell of burnt sage. It is completely unusable.”

“What does viscosity mean?” Ron whispered to Harry.

“I don’t know.” Harry shrugged.

“It means the thickness.” Hermione said in her usual know it all tone. “Since when were you so friendly with Malfoy?”

All three boys blinked in surprise as they realised that they had actually been having a fairly pleasant conversation with each other, if you ignore the fact that they were technically roasting Hermione.

Before anything else could be said, they reached the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom. They filed in and took their seats. There was no sign of Lupin yet and unlike Hermione, Ron and Harry sat near the back while she sat at the front. Malfoy surprisingly sat in front of Harry. It would seem that he was taking the ‘keep Lupin away from Harry’ thing rather seriously. It was weird that the boy who had been so antagonistic towards them was being so nice.

All the students had filed in and had their books, quills, and parchment out and were chatting about whether he would turn up for class when Lupin finally walked into the room. He smiled vaguely at the class but looked a little flustered as he placed his tatty old briefcase on the teacher’s desk.

“Good morning.” He said as he scanned the class. “Would you please put all your books back in your bags? Today’s lesson will be a practical one. You will only need your wands.”

Harry exchanged a worried look with Ron. They hadn’t had a practical lesson in DADA before unless you counted that memorable lesson last year with the pixies.

“It’ll be fine.” Ron whispered to him as they put their things away and drew his wand. Harry made a mental note to give the twins enough money to buy Ron a wand holder for Christmas.

“Right then,” Professor Lupin said when everyone was ready. “If you’d follow me.”

Curiously, all the Slytherins in the class made sure that they were between Harry and the Professor. The Gryffindors shot them odd looks before they seemed to remember the rumours that had spread about Lupin being an arse to Harry and quickly formed a barrier around Harry as well. Harry felt rather warm and fuzzy at the care his classmates were showing him. It was rather sweet and a complete change to their attitude from last year.

Lupin led them along the deserted corridor and around a corner, where the first thing they saw was Peeves the Poltergeist, who was floating upside down in mid-air and stuffing the nearest keyhole with chewing gum. Peeves didn’t look up until Professor Lupin was two feet away.

“Loony, loopy Lupin,” Peeves sang as soon as he spotted the professor. “Loony, loopy Lupin, loony, loopy Lupin!” Which was odd because as rude and unmanageable as he was, Peeves usually showed some respect to the teachers.

Everyone looked quickly at Professor Lupin to see how he would take this but to their surprise the man was smiling.

"I'd take that gum out of the keyhole if I were you, Peeves," he said pleasantly. "Mr. Filch won't be able to get into his brooms."

However, Peeves paid no attention to Professor Lupin's words, except to blow a loud wet raspberry.

Professor Lupin gave a small sigh and took out his wand. "This is a useful little spell," he told the class over his shoulder. "Please watch closely." He raised the wand to shoulder height, said, "Waddiwasi!" and pointed it at Peeves. With the force of a bullet, the wad of chewing gum shot out of the keyhole and straight down Peeves' left nostril. The Poltergeist whirled upright and zoomed away, cursing creatively. Harry made a mental note to translate them into Norwegian later so he could swear without anyone in school realising that he was.

"Cool, sir!" Dean Thomas exclaimed in amazement. It was a cool spell but what did it do exactly? Did it just un-lodge things? If so, that would be a fairly useful healing spell to learn in case someone was choking. Harry would have to look that up later as well.

"Thank you, Dean," Professor Lupin put his wand away. "Shall we proceed?" It was weird that he called students by their first name.

They set off again and he led them down a second corridor and stopped, right outside the staffroom door.

"Inside, please," said Professor Lupin, opening it and standing back.

The staffroom was a long, panelled room with mismatched armchairs and a large armoire that seemed out of place at the far end of the room.

"Now, then," said Professor Lupin, beckoning the class toward the end of the room towards the armoire. As Professor Lupin went to stand next to it, the wardrobe gave a sudden wobble, banging off the wall. "Nothing to worry about," said Professor Lupin calmly because a few people had jumped backward in alarm, Harry being one of them. "There's a Boggart in there."

Most people seemed to feel that this was something to worry about. Neville gave Professor Lupin a look of pure terror, Seamus Finnigan eyed the now rattling doorknob apprehensively, and even Malfoy looked a little hesitant.

"Boggarts like dark, enclosed spaces," said Professor Lupin. "Wardrobes, the gap beneath beds, the cupboards under sinks." He paced a little as he lectured. "I've even met one that had lodged itself in a grandfather clock. This one moved in yesterday afternoon, and I asked the headmaster if the staff would leave it to give every year some practice. So, the first question we must ask ourselves is, what is a Boggart?"

Hermione put up her hand and spoke without being called upon. "It's a shape-shifter," she said. "It can take the shape of whatever it thinks will frighten us most."

"Couldn't have put it better myself," Professor Lupin praised her and Hermione glowed. "So, the Boggart sitting in the darkness within has not yet assumed a form. He does not yet know

what will frighten the person on the other side of the door. Nobody knows what a Boggart looks like when he is alone, but when I let him out, he will immediately become whatever each of us most fears. This means,” Professor Lupin continued, ignoring Neville’s small sputter of terror. “That we have a huge advantage over the Boggart before we begin.”

Harry raised his hand.

“Yes Harry?”

“Do we have to?”

“Do you have to what?” The professor looked confused.

“Do we have to face the boggart?” He asked. He did not want his greatest fear to be announced to half of his year group who would undoubtedly spread it around and then everyone would know. Not that even he knew what that fear would be, but he didn’t want to find out in this setting.

“Yes.”

“But what if we don’t want to.” Harry continued. He could tell that he wasn’t the only one not wanting to take part. Poor Neville looked close to fainting and Crabbe and Goyle had closed ranks around Malfoy. “Surely we have the right to decline?”

“Don’t be silly, Harry.” Lupin shook his head and a strange smile pulled at his lips. “Your parents wouldn’t have cowered from this.”

There was a sharp inhale from the students at that comment and Harry flinched as if he had been slapped. Damn that man and his incessant need to bring up Harry’s parents in a way that always put him down. Clearly, he had recovered from the Howler this morning.

“Well, it’s a good thing I’m not my parents then.” He clutched the strap of his school bag and made a show of putting his wand away. He could have put it back in its holster, but he thought it would make more of an impact if he put it in his school bag. “I refuse to have my biggest fear thrown in my face.”

“I’m sure no one here would be so callous.” Lupin continued to try and cajole Harry into staying.

“Just like no one here would be so callous as to keep shoving my dead parents in my face?” Harry shot back, his cold voice chilled the room further.

Lupin flinched before bristling and pulling himself up to his full height. “Ten points from Gryffindor, for your lack of respect.”

“Take all the points you want.” Harry shrugged, trying not to show how much this was affecting him, how his hands were trembling where they clutched at his school bag. “I am not going to take part.”

“Detention!”

“Goodbye Professor.” Harry turned to leave the staff room.

“If you go through that door, young man you will not like the consequences!” Lupin shouted.

Harry just waved over his shoulder and left the room. He was quickly followed by Ron and to his surprise, all the Slytherins in the class and Neville.

“Now what Potter?” Malfoy asked as they continued to walk through the hallway.

“Excuse me,” Harry snagged a passing Hufflepuff.

“Yes?”

“Did you ever have to face a bogart in your third year defence class?” Harry asked them. He had a feeling that a bogart was way above their level and if so Lupin was cruel to try and force them to face one.

“No,” The Hufflepuff looked at them with concern. “It's a six year topic. Did Lupin...?”

“He tried.” Ron said from where he was stuck like glue to Harry's side.

“You should tell your head of house...” They trailed off and then corrected themselves.

“Well, one of your heads of house.”

“Thanks.” Harry smiled weakly at them before turning to the small group of students behind him. “Who should we go to?”

“Not McGonagall.” Ron's answer got some raised eyebrows. “She's way too busy and even if we did tell her she would likely just dismiss it.” Harry agreed, thinking back to their first year when they tried to tell her that the stone was in danger.

“And Snape already hates Lupin so he probably wouldn't be taken seriously.” Nott added. He was one of the quieter Slytherins but seemed to be a decent bloke.

“So who do we tell?” Harry ran a hand through his hair in frustration.

“F-Flitwick.” Neville suggested with a stutter.

“He's a former dueller, and notorious for being unbiased.” Ron agreed.

“That's good enough for me.” Harry smiled at his friends. “All agreed?”

The Slytherins nodded.

“Alright, now does anyone know where his office is?”

“I-I do.” Neville shakily put his hand up.

“Then could you lead us to him, please Nev?” Harry gave the nervous boy an encouraging smile.

“Yes.” Neville seemed to stand taller at the request.

They made it to Flitwick’s office with no interruptions although curiously the Hufflepuff that Harry had snagged to ask the question decided to tag along. He was prefect so maybe he felt that he had to follow them to make sure that they weren’t up to no good.

“H-here we are.” Neville stopped in front of an unremarkable door.

“Thanks, Nev.” Harry beamed at his friend and patted his shoulder. That was how you were supposed to show someone that you appreciated their efforts, right? Neville blushed deeply and stepped back to allow Harry to take the lead again. Harry took a deep breath and knocked on the door.

“Come in!” The high pitched voice of the Ravenclaw Head and Charms Master came from the other side of the door. Oh good he was in. Harry hadn’t even considered the fact that he may have been out of his office and teaching instead. Oh well, it was irrelevant now at least.

Harry pushed open the door and stepped inside, the rest of his classmates and the Hufflepuff that were following him crowded in the doorway.

“Oh my.” Flitwick was stunned by the amount of students that had come to see him. “What can I do for you?”

“Um.” Harry suddenly found that all the words that he wanted to say were gone. He couldn’t stop a quick look back at the friends and students that were trusting him to go through with this, to ask for help. He took a deep breath and tried again. “We have a complaint about Professor Lupin.” He made sure to use the man’s title because he was sure that Flitwick wouldn’t appreciate the lack of respect.

“Are you all alright?” His face was filled with concern which honestly won him points with all them.

“He...” Ah How does he say it?

“Oh move over, I’ll tell it.” Malfoy elbowed his way to the front. “Professor decided that it would be a good idea to have us face a Bogart.”

“What?!” Flitwick and the Hufflepuff exclaimed at the same time. Harry turned to the Hufflepuff confused.

“Sorry, I misunderstood and thought you were objecting to him lecturing about them.” The Hufflepuff turned pink.

“Concentrate, please boys.” Flitwick brought their attention back to him. “Pardon me, and girls.” He corrected himself as he spotted Greengrass and Davis.”

“Professor Lupin wanted us to face a Bogart but when I asked whether it was compulsory...” Harry took up the story again and explained how the man had said that he was basically a coward for not wanting to take part.

“Tell it properly.” Malfoy scowled and cut Harry off. “Lupin decided that the best way to get Potter to take part was to tell him that his parents wouldn’t have cowered from it.”

Flitwick hissed out a sharp breath. “No.”

“Then he went on to have the nerve to say that no one would be callous enough to share what people’s fears would be to which Potter replied ‘What like no one has been so callous as to keep shoving my dead parents in my face.’” Malfoy looked gleeful as he told the Professor what happened. “Lupin then took points and then gave him a detention when Ha-Potter still refused to take part.”

“That’s when I left, sir.” Harry finished.

“And we left as well.” Ron touched Harry’s shoulder trying to be reassuring. “I didn’t want to face a bogart either.”

“None of us do.” Nott added. “But if he wouldn’t let Potter sit out then why would he let us?”

“I can’t approve of you walking out of the classroom,” Flitwick began and Harry’s heart started to sink but then the man continued. “However, I am proud of you sticking up for each other and coming to me with this.” Harry let out the breath he hadn’t realised he was holding. “As Mr Diggory might have told you, bogarts are a sixth year subject.” Oh was that the Hufflepuff’s name? “Leave this matter with me, I’ll get it sorted and do not worry about the detention, Mr Potter or any of you actually. If Professor Lupin pushes for it I will negate it with my power as a head of house.”

“Thank you, Professor.” Harry smiled with relief.

“You should also know, Professor.” Ron suddenly spoke up from where he was half behind Harry. “Professor Lupin has made several comments to Harry about his parents.” He looked apologetically at him but Harry nodded to give him permission to continue. “When Harry went to get his wand the other day he sneezed when going through the floo and ended up at the wrong destination.”

“Are you alright, Mr Potter?” Flitwick stood and checked him over before he caught himself.

“Yeah, luckily the floo I came through belonged to someone I knew.” Harry reassured him.

“But Lupin,” Ron continued as if he hadn’t been interrupted. “Told Harry that his parents would be ashamed of him for wasting their sacrifice.” He scowled. “As if it was his fault that he sneezed when saying the destination.”

“Has he said anything else to you, Mr Potter?”

“We argued after I got my wand, and I told him that he didn’t have the right to talk about my parents to which he said that he had more right than me because he had known them for longer.” Harry lowered his eyes to the floor as he told him. It still burned him to remember that. Just how cruel could a man be?!

“With your permission, Mr Potter, I would like to bring this matter up at the next staff meeting.” Flitwick asked. “Professor Lupin’s behaviour is completely unacceptable.”

“Sure.” Harry shrugged. He didn’t think anything would come from it and he had every intention to send another letter to Trent and Fenrir about today’s events.

“Thank you.” Flitwick wrote something on a piece of parchment. “Here, this is a permission slip to allow you to spend the rest of your Defence Against the Dark Arts lesson in the library today.” He handed the slip to Harry. “Mr Diggory could you take them there for me? Just in case Irma, sorry Madame Pince has any objections.”

“Of course.” Diggory agreed easily. “I was actually heading there myself when I ran into this lot.”

“Right off you go then,” Flitwick shooed them. “Leave this matter to me.”

“Thank you, sir.” They all chorused as they shuffled from the room, following Diggory like little ducklings.

Harry and his friends, could he count the Slytherins as his friends now? Settled into the library with their textbooks while Diggory explained things to Madame Pince. Most of them seemed to have decided to get some of their homework from other classes out of the way, including Ron who was scowling at his Transfiguration essay. Harry on the other hand, took out the rest of his letters that he didn’t have time to read that morning.

Pup,

If that prick, Lupin bothers you again let me know. I hope you enjoyed his reaction to the Howler, and you’ll have to tell me all about it when I next see you. I’m glad that you have such good friends and again, you’ll have to tell me all about what they get up to!

Lupin has the same affliction as me but without even half the amount of control I have. Do not leave your dorm on certain nights. I would ask you not to leave your dorm at all during the night, but I know you, so I won’t ask that. Just be careful.

I expect at least weekly letters from you and just because you’re at school now doesn’t mean that our lessons will be stopping. I’ll give you a few weeks to settle in before sending you ‘homework’.

I’ve been helping Trent get your bedroom ready, but he wants to know what your favourite colour is to paint the walls. The sooner you get back to him the better as there are only so many times that I can rearrange furniture when I know that it’ll need to be removed to paint the walls. Its adorable how much he’s enjoying getting things ready for you. I’m looking forward to having you under our roof as well, pup.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Love Fenrir.

Lupin was a werewolf?! Harry stared with disbelief at the letter. Didn't Fenrir say that werewolves were marginalised and were usually kept from getting jobs like oh, he didn't know, teachers?! How on earth had Lupin managed to get accepted as the Defence Against the Dark Arts professor?! Harry folded and put that letter away, he would have to figure out a way to spread the news without letting it be known that one of his friends was a werewolf as well...wait. Didn't Finn leave a postscript saying that Lupin was something? It was in Norwegian but maybe it said 'werewolf'? He would have to wait until later as he had left his Norwegian dictionary in his trunk.

"You, okay?" Ron whispered next to him.

"Yeah," Harry smiled reassuringly at him before turning to his last letter: The one from Gringotts.

Dear Harry Potter,

Here is the list of requested solicitors that we feel would be best suited to your needs. They would be able to act in your stead in all legal matters.

Sue Yerpanzov

Saul Goodman

Mel Practiss

Gil T. Azelle

Lee T. Geishon

Once you have chosen a solicitor, we at Gringotts are more than happy to act as the intermediary between yourself and your chosen solicitor. Please find the additional form allowing us to act in your stead.

May your Vault never empty,

Master Gornuk,

Account Manager at Gringotts Bank

Fortius Quo Fidelius

Harry immediately noticed that one of the names listed was in a different font and knew that that was the one that Gornuk thought would be able to help or at least work best with Harry. Harry pulled out the form that basically said that Harry would allow Gringotts to speak to his solicitor on Harry's behalf and hire them for him. It all seemed fine so pulled out his parchment and writing things and started to write his replies to all his letters. He still had about half an hour left before lunch.

Dear Trent,

Thank you for your letter, treats and scarf. The treats were delicious, and the scarf is so soft, I love it!

I wish I could tell you that things had settled down since my last letter. They haven't, not really. While Ron has been a brilliant friend, Hermione hasn't. I'm not sure what has gotten into her, but she's been really, really, hypocritical and has been acting like an overbearing mother. She's not my mother and so she doesn't have the right to scold me. Not that I did anything wrong! I arrived back in the common room before curfew.

What was I doing out so late? I made a deal with Malfoy. If he promised to behave during Hagrid's lesson, then I would show him the Chamber of Secrets which had been opened last year. (I'm pretty sure I told you about the events surrounding that) but he turned up with basically half of the Slytherin house. In the end I agreed to show them all the chamber so long as they would either A) behave during Care of Magical Creatures if they were in that class or B) Keep Lupin away from me.

They agreed and have so far kept their word. Even going so far as to walking out of Lupin's lesson with me. Which, I may or may not get in trouble for walking out of his lesson. But! He wanted us to face a bogart, and that wasn't something I was prepared to do. I asked politely if I could sit out but in return, he told me that my parents wouldn't be as cowardly to sit out. So, I left. We went to Flitwick, the Head of Ravenclaw and he said he would sort it all out. Apparently bogarts is a sixth-year subject.

You want me to stay with you? I would love that! Any colour on the walls would be fine so long as it isn't too bright. Maybe a calming sea blue/green?

I have been taking my potions without being prompted.

Love,

Harry.

P.S. Lupin fainted when he got the howler.

Harry was pretty sure he had covered everything in that letter, so he moved onto the one for Finn. Finn who had given him the enchanted rings for both him and Hedwig.

Dear Finn,

Thank you, thank you, thank you! The rings are beautiful, and I put mine on straight away. Hedwig will have hers when I visit her to send off this letter. I would have given it to her when she lingered after delivering the post but a certain someone got a literal Howler that caused her to fly off. It didn't even occur to me that potions etc could be put into my food and drink! But now that I have your ring, it's good to know that I will be aware if any of them are contaminated. Thank you for Hedwig's ring, it has always been a secret worry for me. She is so recognisable and as she was my first friend, I am happy that she will now be protected.

I will make sure not to high five Fenrir with the hand wearing the ring, but I may end up brushing up against Lupin.

You will be happy to know that Lupin fainted. It was brilliant but unfortunately, he recovered quickly, in time for our first lesson with him. He wanted us to face a bogart, and that wasn't something I was prepared to do. I asked politely if I could sit out but in return, he told me that my parents wouldn't be as cowardly to sit out. So, I left. Ron, my best friend, and all of the Slytherins in the class as well as Neville who is also a Gryffindor, left with me. We went to Flitwick, the Head of Ravenclaw and he said he would sort it all out. Apparently bogarts is a sixth-year subject. So hopefully we won't get in trouble for it. So please do not storm Hogwarts.

Oh yeah, I made a deal with the Slytherins. Well, with Malfoy originally. If he promised to behave during Hagrid's lesson, then I would show him the Chamber of Secrets which had been opened last year. (I'm pretty sure I told you about the events surrounding that) but he turned up with basically half of the Slytherin house. In the end I agreed to show them all the chamber so long as they would either A) behave during Care of Magical Creatures if they were in that class or B) Keep Lupin away from me. They agreed and have so far kept their word.

I'm curious, have you made anything else other than the horseshoes for hippogriffs and mine and Hedwig's rings recently? I want to know more about your work.

Harry.

"Harry," Ron hissed, getting his attention.

"Yeah?"

"Lunch." He made a point of gathering up his things and it was only then that Harry noticed that the Slytherins and Neville were packing up as well.

"Already?" Huh. Time certainly passed when you were doing pleasant things. "Okay." He spelled his letter's dry. He would have to finish writing them later. He paused to pull out his potions and to take them quickly. He didn't notice the eyes watching him. "Alright." He sighed once he had taken his potions and had packed everything else away. "Let's go eat."

As they walked towards the Great Hall, Neville trailing them a thought suddenly occurred to him.

"Oh Merlin, Hermione is going to be a nightmare."

"Oh no." Ron paled, his freckles stood out starkly. "We're doomed."

"Ha, sucks to be you." Malfoy taunted as he sauntered past them. "I'll make sure to read a nice poem at your funerals."

"How kind." Harry felt amused despite the ticking bomb he, Ron and Neville were walking towards.

Chapter 11

As soon as Harry, Ron and Neville sat at the Gryffindor table in the Great Hall the rest of their year group closed ranks around them. Minus Hermione.

“Hermione’s on the warpath.” Seamus told them in a low voice from next to Ron.

“Yeah, she kept repeating how disappointed she was that you were so rude to Lupin.” Dean continued.

“As if she didn’t do a similar thing to Professor Trelawney.” Lavender huffed. “It’s one rule for her and one for everyone else.”

“I wish I had followed you out.” Parvati admitted. “Lupin still made us face the boggart and it was awful.” She shuddered. Lavender wrapped a consoling arm around her friend. “Where did you go after you left?”

“We went to Flitwick.” Harry told them. “He said that he would take care of it.”

“So, you’re not in trouble?” Dean asked but before any of them could reply, Hermione interrupted him.

“You should be.” She loomed over Harry as she stood behind him.

He flinched and ducked on instinct. “Heeey, Hermione.”

“I can’t believe that you would treat the professor with such disrespect.” She continued to scold him, and continued to stand over him, trapping him in his seat. Harry hated her in that moment, but he had no way to escape her.

“Enough!” Neville shouted, interrupting her, and gaining everyone’s appreciated if surprised looks. He blushed at the attention but soldiered on, proving that the hat had put him in the right house. “Enough, you cannot talk to Harry like that. It’s not fair and please step away, you have trapped him against the table.”

Harry felt her huff before stepping away. He immediately felt relieved and sent Neville a grateful look.

“It still doesn’t mean that he can be so disrespectful to a professor!” Hermione continued as if she hadn’t just been scolded by Neville. She stood slightly to the side, so she was no longer directly behind Harry.

“You mean like you were to Trelawney?” Harry shot back, unable to help himself. He twisted in his seat so he could face her. She looked frazzled but the stubborn look on her face proved that she wasn’t going to let this go. “You talk about my disrespect but what about yours?”

“I-”

“I don’t know what has gotten into you Hermione, but ever since we got off the train,” If you ignore the fact that Harry was likely carried off the train. “You’ve been acting weird.”

“I have not.” She stomped her foot.

“You have, you’ve been acting as if your word is law and if we don’t act like you or do as you say then we are in the wrong even when we aren’t.” Harry continued ignoring her interruption. “It’s one rule for you and another for everyone else. And honestly, I’ve had enough.” He ruffled his hair roughly. He hated that he had to do this, especially with so many people watching but she was driving him mad, and he hated how she had been treating him and Ron. “Until you sort yourself out, I don’t want to be friends with you.”

There was a sharp inhale from the surrounding students that were drawn to the argument.

“You don’t mean that.” Hermione insisted but she also raised her fists as if she was going to hit him.

“I do.”

SLAP.

Harry’s whole head turned from the force of her slap. His cheek stung. It wasn’t the worst pain that he had ever experienced, the exploding wand for instance being more painful, but the fact that it was Hermione that had dared raise her hand against him...He sat there frozen as chaos spiralled around him.

“HERMIONE!” Several people yelled.

“How could you?!”

“How dare you hit him?”

Then Ron stood, he towered over Harry but unlike when Hermione did, it felt protective rather than confining or threatening. Everyone hushed as they waited to see what he would do.

“Consider our friendship with you over.” And then Ron, perfectly calm, sat back down and gently turned Harry so he was facing him. “Let me see.” He tutted. “After dinner we’ll have to go to Madame Pomfrey to have a look.”

Harry had to take several deep breaths so he wouldn’t cry. One of his first friendships had just ended with a snap, or rather a slap. There was no way that he would take her back as his friend after that. He would never trust her again to not raise a hand against him.

“Detention,” Snape drawled, appearing at their table. “Two weeks should do it.”

“But-”

“Do not try and get out of it.” He cut her off. “You just struck another student.”

“But he-”

“There is no excuse that you could come up with that would condone your actions.” He interrupted her again. “You are lucky that I am not making it three weeks for causing such a fuss in the great hall.” Then he plucked up a glass of water from the table and froze it with a muttered spell. “Keep this pressed against your face until you see Madame Pomfrey after dinner.”

“Never mind that.” Pomfrey bustled over to them from her place at the Professors Table, drawing everyone’s attention to the fact that it was almost filled with all the professors. That they must have just sat and watched it all unfold. That Snape was the first to come to Harry Potter’s aid despite his legendary dislike of him. “I’m here now.”

“Very well.” Snape stood back but did not return to his seat.

“Let me see.” Harry stood and climbed off the bench so that she could see his face more easily. He was flushed both from the assault and from the embarrassment of all this taking place in the great hall. He could feel everyone’s eyes on him.

“You’ll need some bruise balm but otherwise you should be alright.” She tsked. “Luckily, Ms. Granger doesn’t wear a ring otherwise she would have cut your face with the strength she put behind her slap.”

Harry wanted to cry.

“Here.” Snape pulled out a small container of bruise balm. Did he always keep an entire apothecary of potions on him?

“Thank you.” Harry whispered as he accepted the vial. Pomfrey took it off him and applied the balm to his face for him. Already he could feel the sting seeping from his skin.

“Apply some more before you go to bed tonight and it should be fine by the morning.” She told him and passed back the container that was still mostly full.

“Now that the theatrics are over, let’s start dinner.” Snape drawled before heading back to his seat at the head of the hall.

“That man.” Pomfrey tutted but she had a fond smile pulling at her lips. “If you have any problems, then come and see me.” She gently patted his shoulder before following Snape’s lead and returning to her seat.

The rest of dinner passed without incident. Harry kept his gaze focused on his plate and didn’t even look up when he was spoken to by his friends. When the food was cleared, Harry was prepared to just go straight up to his dorm to finish writing his letters so he could send them off in the morning but Dumbledore stood. Harry looked up from the table as the man called for their attention.

“Now that we are all fed and watered, I have a few announcements.” He cleared his throat and glanced at Flitwick before continuing. “It has come to my attention that due to a few

crossed wands, that this year's Defence Against the Dark Arts' curriculum is incorrect."

Lupin sat with a grimace on his face as if he was being forced to smell something foul.

"Therefore no student will be forced to face a boggart and it has also been decided that no one under fifth year will be given the option to do so." Dumbledore continued. "Furthermore, all the students that bravely refused to do so, today will not be facing detention and all points lost are restored with an extra five points apiece for standing up for themselves."

The hall filled with cheers and Harry let out a relieved sigh. Flitwick kept his promise. He made a mental note that if he needed help at any point in the year from this moment onwards, he would go to Flitwick first.

Dear Fenrir,

Harry started on his next letter after they had finally been excused from dinner. His dorm mates had closed ranks around him to make sure that Hermione couldn't get close to him. Thankfully once he was in their dorm, they all gave him some space. Ron settled on his bed next to Harry's and started on his meditation, something that Harry planned to do after he had gotten his letters done.

I hope that the rest of the week will be more peaceful but today has been just as eventful as the days before I sent my first letter to you. In fact more things have happened in the few hours between writing Trent and Finn's letters and writing yours now. I will let Trent fill you in on what happened in my DADA class to save repeating myself and instead tell you what has happened since.

I'm not sure if I told you but I had two best friends at Hogwarts, Ron and Hermione. Ron is still an amazing friend and I honestly don't know what I would do without him but Hermione... Hermione is no longer my friend. She had been acting weird since we had arrived at Hogwarts this year, being hypocritical and as if she was my mother but she took things too far at dinner. As you will know from Trent's letter I walked out of my DADA class, well Hermione had a go at me for 'disrespecting' Lupin despite the fact that she was awful to Trelawney. Well, I told her off for being a hypocrite and for being so bossy really and well... She slapped me.

Hermione Granger, a girl who I had fought a troll for, who I slayed a basilisk for while she was petrified, slapped me. The last thread of our friendship snapped in it that moment.

I'm okay, Pomfrey and Snape had a look at my face and I only need some bruise balm, which I was given. I'll be right as rain by morning. She got two weeks detention and told off for making a scene at dinner.

Then after dinner, Dumbledore made an announcement. This will only make sense if you read Trent's letter but I'll tell you anyway. He said that due to 'crossed wands' the DADA curriculum was wrong and that only students in fifth year and above would face a boggart but they would only be given the choice and not be forced like Lupin tried to do to us. He also

went on to say that students who left/refused to do so wouldn't be punished. He then returned the points lost and gave points for 'standing up for yourselves'.

I now know that I can trust Professor Flitwick to help if needed. He kept his promise to us and did indeed sort things out.

Oh! That Howler you sent? Pure gold! Lupin actually fainted in the great hall when he received it. It was brilliant!

As to the revenge that Finn is going to do? I have no idea but he did send me and Hedwig a set of rings to keep us safe. They're beautiful! I will have to borrow a classmate's camera to take a photo to show you otherwise you will have to wait until the summer to see mine. Hedwig should be wearing hers when she delivers this letter.

I'm not sure what I am going to do with the information you gave me yet but I will let you know what I do, when I do.

I've told Trent that I would like soft colours on the bedroom walls such as sea blue/green but I honestly don't have a preference. I've never had to choose the colours of a bedroom wall before or the colours of any walls really.

I'm looking forward to your future lessons,

Love Harry.

P.s. Don't tell Trent that I almost cried when I read that you two wanted me to stay with you. I am so happy!

Harry knew that Trent was likely going to see that last line but he kept it in anyway. He dried the letter and folded, and placed it in the same envelope as Trent's letter. It would be easier for Hedwig to deliver that way. Next he needed to write to the Goblins.

Dear Gornuk,

Firstly, I would like to employ the services of Saul Goodman and I have signed the contract that you sent permitting you to act as my intermediary. The first job I have for my new solicitor would be to pull the trial transcripts of Sirius Black's trial. I wish to know what he had to say about the crimes he allegedly committed against my family.

Secondly, I have recently discovered that the Basilisk that I slayed during my second year at Hogwarts, is worth a rather lot of money. However, I have no way to remove it from where it lies. For the record, it is over sixty feet in length and lies in what is known as the Chamber of Secrets. Would Gringotts be willing to negotiate a contract in the sale of such a beast? Unfortunately, the beast's eyes were destroyed in the battle and I am unsure of the state of its brain/mouth as I killed it by shoving a sword through its mouth up into its brain.

May your vaults never empty,

Harry Potter.

There, that would do. Harry dried the ink, added the separate document and sealed the envelope. He set aside all three letters to be sent off in the morning. He also placed Hedwig's ring next to them so that he would remember to give them to her. He then took his evening potions before getting ready for bed and then settling in to do his meditation before sleep would undoubtedly take over.

Harry woke to the sound of nails on glass. Confused, he sat up in bed and fumbled for his glasses. Once he had them on his face, he pulled back the curtains of his bed and found Crookshanks on top of Scabbers' cage clawing at the door of it.

"Hey!" Harry leapt from his bed as Scabbers cowered from the large cat. "No," He grabbed the cat by the scruff of his neck like Mrs Figg had shown him. "What are you doing here? Leave Scabbers alone." He strode from the room, still clad in his pyjamas, and a cat held out in front of him.

In the common room Hermione was already up. She was curled up into a tight ball on the settee in front of the fire. He really had hoped that he wouldn't have to have anything to do with the girl for at least a few days after she had slapped him yesterday at dinner but thanks to her bloody cat he was forced to confront her.

"Keep your cat out of our dorm." He dumped Crookshanks onto the settee next to her. "He was having a go at Scabbers again."

"Crookshanks doesn't understand it's wrong." She scowled up at Harry as she scooped her cat into her arms. "It's completely natural for a cat to go after a rat."

"Just keep him out of our dorm." Harry sighed and walked away. He did not have the strength to argue with her this morning.

He returned to the dorm to see Ron sat up in bed.

"What's up?" He slurred, his voice still thick with sleep.

"Granger's cat tried to have a go at Scabbers." Harry climbed back onto his bed. It was still early enough that he should have time to meditate for a bit.

"That damn cat." He muttered darkly. "I don't know why she bought that beast. You weren't there but before we entered the store the thing ran out and attacked Scabbers."

"She bought him after he had attacked your pet?" Harry raised an eyebrow, he was surprised. He hadn't thought Hermione could be so callous, then again after yesterday he was starting to wonder if he knew anything about Hermione at all. He wouldn't have thought she would ever raise a hand against him but she had.

"Yeah." Ron's face looked like a thunder cloud.

Not wanting his friend to start off the day in a bad mood Harry suggested, "Hey, isn't your brother a curse breaker? Do you think he would know any wards to keep out specific

animals?”

“He might.” His face cleared up and he looked thoughtful rather than wrathful. “I’ll send him a letter.” He decided and ruffled his bedraggled red hair. “What time is it?”

“Tempus.” Harry cast and the time appeared in the air. “Half past six.”

“Ugh.”

“I’m going to meditate for a bit before getting up.” Harry told him.

“Good idea.” Ron stretched before settling down to do the same.

Harry managed to send off his letters before breakfast. Ron joined him in the owlery to send a letter to Bill.

“Hedwig.” Harry cooed at his owl. “Good morning,” He gently stroked her breast feathers. “Look what our favourite blacksmith made you.” He held up the adjustable ring that had the same feather design as Harry’s ring. “He made one for me, too. See they match!” He held up his right hand to show her.

Hedwig wiggled happily on her perch and held out her leg for Harry to attach the ring. Harry grinned and did just that. Ron chuckled from where he stood to the side stroking Rory, the eagle owl that Harry had gifted the Weasleys.

“It’s enchanted too, to help keep you safe.” He told her, ignoring Ron for the moment. “I know you would never let anyone steal my mail but someone might try to hurt you to get it.” He explained before she could get mad. “Do you like it?”

Hedwig examined her leg for a moment before bobbing her head and making that barking sound that snowy owls seemed to make instead of a chirp.

“I’m glad!” Harry grinned. “I also have some letters for you to take.” He attached them to her legs. “This one is for Trent and Fenrir, you can give it to either of them.” He pointed to each letter as he said who they were for. “This one is for Finn, and that one is for Gringotts.”

Hedwig barked again and briefly groomed his hair before taking off with the letters.

“Mate, I will never get over how well you can communicate with Hedwig.” Ron commented as he joined him at the opening in the owlery to watch their owls fly away. “I won’t ask about who those people are that you mentioned, not even the blacksmith. My occlumency isn’t far enough along yet. But I am glad that you have more people that you can trust.” He patted Harry’s shoulder. “Come on, let’s have breakfast.”

“Thanks, Ron.” Harry felt the words didn’t do justice to how much he appreciated his best friend but he didn’t know how else to express himself. The Dursleys showed their love through expensive gifts and their hatred through the lack of stuff, but he knew that Ron wouldn’t appreciate that. Maybe he should ask the twins what he could do to show Ron how

much he appreciated him? For now though he needed breakfast, his potions were in his bag, ready for him to take them before he ate. He had a full day of classes ahead of him and needed to get fuelled up for it.

The rest of the week passed without incident. Hermione kept her distance but seemed to get more and more stressed by the hour. Harry thought that her class load on top of the detentions from Snape were getting to her but he found that he didn't feel bad for her. She had hit him, shattered whatever trust he had in her.

He had his first Arithmancy lesson, it was really interesting, not as interesting as Runes but still good. When he had first walked into the classroom, he sat in the second row, knowing that Hermione would want to sit in the first. He didn't want to be anywhere near her. Nott and Greengrass had the same class and sat on either side of him. He smiled thankfully at them before getting out his parchment and writing stuff. Hermione appeared in the doorway looking flustered and all but fell into the chair closest to the door.

Nott and Zabini filled the seats on either side of him in his Runes class, preventing Hermione from sitting next to him in that class as well.

In Divination, the rest of their Gryffindor classmates, Davis and Bulstrode acted as a barrier. Trelawney seemed content to ignore Hermione as well, even going out of her way not to call upon the girl when she had her hand up. It was pretty great actually.

It was the same in his core classes if you ignored the disappointed looks that McGonagall and Lupin would give him when he ignored Hermione. He knew that both of them had been in the hall when she slapped him, so he didn't understand why they thought that he should just forgive and forget it. Well, he didn't really care about what Lupin thought. The man was rather subdued in his lessons since he had been told to change his curriculum. He still kept trying to get Harry to interact with him but the Slytherins were keeping to their side of the deal and they intercepted when they could.

As Harry was settling down in his class, the teachers had their start of year staff meeting.

Severus found a seat next to Flitwick and sneered as Lupin slunk into the room. He hated these meetings. It was basically an opportunity for teachers to brag and gossip about the students, it had gotten even worse after Potter started to attend. The room quickly filled and settled as Albus arrived, last as usual.

"Happy start of the new school year!" He beamed through his beard. It was the same opening he used every year. "Let's start with the first years as we do every year, Pomona?" He looked at the Hufflepuff head of house. "Would you like to start us off?"

And so it went. Pomona Sprout's Hufflepuffs were generally fine, there were a few snivelling brats that were homesick already but otherwise they were adapting well to being in a boarding school. Flitwick's first years were the same although some had complained about

the number of stairs they had to climb to reach their dorm. Minerva merely stated that no one had come to her with any issues.

“And you Severus?” Albus called attention to him. “How are your first years?”

“They’re fine.” He crossed his arms. He preferred for any Slytherin problems to stay in Slytherin. He dealt with the problems in house.

“As they are every year.” Minerva rolled her eyes. “Let’s move on, my second years are fine also.”

“Including Miss Weasley?” Pamina asked. “After last year’s events, how is she dealing with being back in school?”

“She’s being looked after closely by her brothers.”

And so it went the same until they reached the third years. Flitwick spoke up before anyone else could continue.

“I would like to bring something up before we discuss our third years.”

“Go on,” Albus smiled and gestured for the Ravenclaw head to speak.

“I have received a complaint from one of the third years about the conduct of our new Defence Against the Dark Arts Professor.”

Said Professor rolled his eyes.

“I’m sure it’s just a misunderstanding.” Albus tried to halt the issue before it could be fully discussed.

“So the student misunderstood what Remus meant when he told him that his parents wouldn’t have cowered from the boggyart?”

“This student wouldn’t happen to be Mr Potter would it?” Severus decided to share what he knew about the issues Potter was having with the mutt. The boy may irritate him but he was happy to get one over the mutt at any chance he got. “Because he flooed into my office quite distressed after getting his new wand.” He leant forward and rested his hands on the table. “Apparently Lupin decided to yell at Mr Potter due him sneezing when flooing and ending up in the wrong floo. Lupin told him that his parents would be disappointed with him for wasting their sacrifice.”

Pamina gasped and covered her mouth in shock.

“Now, now-” Albus started but Remus cut him off.

“He is nothing like his parents.” Remus scowled. “They would be-”

“ENOUGH.” Filius roared. “I have received complaints from other students about Remus’ behaviour towards Mr Potter.” He glared at the wolf. “It is completely inappropriate

behaviour and it will stop now.”

“Filius is right, Remus.” Minerva sighed. “We cannot compare our students to their parents. I was very fond of Lily and James but we must focus on helping Harry grow into his own person.”

“Fine.” He grunted and slumped in his chair.

The rest of the meeting passed without incident.

Harry had received answers to his letters at the end of the week.

Dear Mr Harry Potter,

Mr Saul Goodman has accepted the placement as your solicitor and is working on finding out information on Sirius Black as we speak.

As for the second matter you mentioned in your letter, we at Gringotts would be most pleased to help you in the sale of the basilisk that you mention. We have attached a contract that states that we would receive 10% of the profits which we feel is more than reasonable. We will however slowly sell the basilisk to avoid flooding the market and reducing the value.

Once you have signed the contract a portkey will be sent to you. Merely attach the portkey to the beast and activate it using the words that will be provided. The beast will be transported to an area within Gringotts.

We hope that you find this agreeable.

May your Vault never empty,

Master Gornuk,

Account Manager at Gringotts Bank

Fortius Quo Fidelius

Dear Harry,

Fenrir shared his letter with me like you asked him to. I hate that your schooling has been less than smooth sailing. I hate that your former friend hit you, and trust me we are furious that she laid her hand on you in anger.

And no, you did not tell us about how or why you encountered a BASILISK IN HOGWARTS! I have half a mind to pull you from that school and enrol you in Beauxbatons! Unfortunately Ken reminded me that despite how much we see you as part of our family, we don't actually

have any legal claim over you. Which sucks because as far as Fenrir and I are concerned you are our pup.

I have painted your room in teal, I can't wait until you get to see it.

We are so proud of you for standing up for yourself against Lupin! And you went to a teacher who you now know you can trust. Please go to Flitwick if you need any future help. I wish we could be there with you. I know that Fenrir hopes that your former friend will end up under the claws of lupin on a night of the full moon.

Well done on making allies in the house of snakes. From what Finn has mentioned from his school days, having allies in that house should help you immensely.

Lupin fainted? I will have to procure a pensive so that you can show us the memory! Keep an eye out for future howlers, Fenrir was cackling in the back room and a non-descript owl left with a smoking red envelope.

Finn gave you a ring? Please do borrow that camera from your house mate, I would love to see it. I saw Hedwig's and it is very pretty. It was rather thoughtful of him to make them for the two of you.

I'm glad you liked the scarf and enjoyed the treats. Was there a particular treat that you liked best? Let me know so I can send you more.

I'm sorry that this letter is a little all over the place, I kept having to take a break to stop myself from marching to Hogwarts and stringing that girl and Lupin from the ceiling by their toes. I am glad that you're okay and that some of your teachers reacted so quickly to check on your wellbeing.

Good job on taking your potions, keep it up.

Lots of love,

Trent.

P.S. You'll have to bring your friend Ron and his twin brothers over to meet us. They sound like fantastic friends.

Harry had barely finished reading the letter from Trent when an owl carrying two smoking envelopes flew into the room. One was dropped onto Hermione's bushy hair and the other on Lupin's plate. Hermione's opened and let out an ear piercing scream that cut off suddenly only for Lupin's to start with a bone chilling cackling.

Harry didn't realise that Fenrir could make such a high pitch noise and the cackling that Trent mentioned in his letter suddenly made sense. He went back to his letters while Herm- no, she was Granger now, made a fuss about her howler and Lupin looked incredibly pale but unfortunately did not faint again.

Pup,

We need to give Ken a raise, or fire him. He once again stopped Trent and I from storming Hogwarts or from withdrawing you from that terrible school. I won't repeat the same stuff that Trent has likely written, you know about how proud we are of you but also a basilisk?! What in Morgana's name is going on in that school, pup?

I was going to wait a few weeks before giving you 'homework' but clearly your school is a death trap. I want you to learn, practice and perfect the 'Protego' charm. Its the basic shielding charm and I would like you to be able to cast it on instinct. I want you to be able to protect yourself. I know that the ring Finn made will warn you against poisons/potions in your drink and it does have a shielding charm on it but I spoke with him and apparently it only protects you from magic rather than physical attacks. A strong protego charm will protect you from some physical attacks but it will take a lot of practice.

I believe in you pup.

Also Finn gave you a ring?! I know I have teased you about your crush on him but please remember that he is a grown man and that his actions are platonic. At least until you are of age! Don't think too much on it, enjoy the gift and remember to send us a photo! We don't often get to see more of his delicate pieces.

Love, Fenrir.

Harry's face was fire truck red by the time he finished the letter. He felt warm from the care that Fenrir clearly had for him but did he seriously have to mention his crush on Finn? Though a small part of him relished in the fact that someone cared enough to gently tease him about his crush and a large part hoped that Fenrir was right and that Finn did return his feelings. Obviously nothing could ever happen before Harry was of age. He believed that Fenrir was completely serious in his threat and would carry it out.

"You okay mate?" Ron asked, having noticed the colour of Harry's face turning red.

"Yep." He squeaked and quickly folded his letter. "I'll tell you later." He promised. He would share his not so secret crush with Ron, so long as he left out names it should be fine and it would be nice to be able to confide something in him.

"Okay." Ron went back to his food.

Harry moved onto his last letter.

Harry,

I'm glad you and Hedwig liked the rings.

You were smart to get the Slytherins on your side. I want to know more about this Basilisk. Trent almost had a heart attack when he read your letter.

I've had a few commissions but mostly I make horse shoes, and elaborate candle holdings.

Get your friends, the ones that turned Lupin's hair green, to destroy/prank the girl who hit you because Ken won't let me send poison through the mail.

Take care,

Finn.

Harry was amused at how short and concise the letter was. He would also need to send Ken a nice thank you letter for keeping all three men out of trouble and out of prison by the sounds of it.

After breakfast, Harry dragged Ron back up to the dorm. It was Saturday so they didn't have any classes or anywhere to be.

"What's up?" Ron asked once they were sitting on Harry's bed.

"Okay, so..." Harry took a deep breath as he realised that he was coming out of the closet to his best friend. "I'm gay." He blurted it out quickly like taking off a plaster.

"Okay." Ron accepted easily. "Thanks for telling me, mate." He then paused. "Do you have a crush? Is that why you were bright red when reading your letter?" A slow grin stretched over his face.

Harry turned pink again.

"Aww, little Harrikins is all grown up." Ron teased and ruffled Harry's hair.

"Gerooff!" Harry protested and grabbed his pillow. He hit Ron with it. They both froze for a moment before Harry tentatively tapped him with the pillow again. This was the start of what people called a 'pillow fight' right?

"Right, it's war!" Ron declared and leapt across to his own bed to get his pillow.

Harry grinned and charged at his friend, wielding the pillow. He managed to get in a few good hits before Ron overpowered him and got him several times with his own pillow.

"I give! I give!" Harry laughed under the soft assault. He should have known better than to try and beat the bloke with several brothers.

"Ronald Weasley, is the champion of the first ever pillow fight!" Ron said dramatically, holding the pillow above his head in victory.

"Woohoo!" Harry cheered between laughing. They laid down where they were to catch their breaths for a moment before Harry turned to face his friend again. "I do have a crush." He confessed. "But it's on a fully grown man and I know nothing can come of it."

"You can still look though," Ron said supportively. "Tell me about him?"

So, Harry did. “He’s the blacksmith.” He raised his hand with the ring on it. “He’s tall and broad and his muscles have muscles, and he is absolutely covered in tattoos or at least his arms and hands are.” Harry gushed. “He doesn’t say a lot, he’s a bit gruff but he’s really nice!”

“He sounds like it.” Ron smiled fondly.

“Oh!” Harry suddenly sat up. The world spun for a moment before he quickly shook it off before climbing off Ron’s bed. “He also made me a statue of Hedwig!” He opened his trunk and pulled out the statue from his miscellaneous compartment. “Look.”

“Whoa.”

“Yeah, Hedwig adores it.” Harry told him as he stroked the metal work. “I commissioned the piece originally as an excuse to spend more time around him.” He admitted. “But look at it.” He gestured to the art piece. “It’s gorgeous! Almost as pretty as the real Hedwig.”

“He’s talented.” Ron agreed. “I’m glad you told me.” He nudged his shoulder gently. “I don’t have a crush but if and when I do, you’ll be the first I tell.”

“Thanks Ron.” Harry beamed at him. What did he do to have such an amazing friend? “Oh, before I forget, did you hear back from Bill?”

“Yeah, he gave me a list of spells that could work but suggested that I get the twins to help cast them.” He grimaced. “They’re going to make me be their toad for their pranks, I know it.”

“It’ll be worth it though.” Harry consoled him. “And if it will help lessen the number of pranks on you, you can say that I volunteer as well?”

“Nah mate,” Ron waved his suggestion away. “You don’t want to be their toad. Trust me on this. But feel free to stand behind me with those large puppy eyes.”

“Puppy eyes?”

“Yeah, you look at them with wide, sad eyes and they cave to you every time.”

“They do?”

“Yeah.”

“Huh.” Harry didn’t know what to say to that, but he did make a mental note to practice the look in the mirror. It would be a good look to unleash when he really wanted something.

“Anyway, while I remember as well, Gringotts got back to me.” Harry changed the subject.

“They sent a contract about selling the basilisk and said if I agree they will send a portkey to attach to the thing and they will receive it that way.”

“You know, if you agree to that you’ll have to take Malfoy with you to do it.” Ron pointed out. “It was his idea after all.”

“Only if you come too.”

“Of course, I will, we may be getting on better with the prat but that doesn’t mean I’ll leave you alone with him!”

“Thanks Ron, you’re the best.”

“And don’t you forget it.” Ron huffed dramatically with his nose pointed in the air but his cheeks were pink which proved how affected he was by the praise.

He and Ron spent the rest of the morning doing their homework in the library, a place that Hermione would never think of looking for them and then playing chess in the afternoon or rather Ron spent the rest of the day beating Harry at chess. Harry spent some time after dinner writing his letters.

Dear Gornuk,

Please find attached the signed contract.

May your vaults never empty,

Harry Potter.

Dear Ken,

Thank you for keeping Trent, Fenrir, and Finn out of trouble. I don’t have anything that would accurately show much I am grateful to you, so I drew you a picture of Hedwig because there is nothing more beautiful than her.

Thank you,

Love Evan.

Harry tried his best at drawing Hedwig but none of his attempts were good enough. He growled to himself and crumpled up another piece of parchment. Why couldn’t he draw her right?!

“ You alright Harry?” Dean asked, ducking the ball of parchment that Harry had thrown over his shoulder.

“ Oh sorry, Dean.” Harry cringed. “I’ll try to keep it down.”

“ Never mind that.” He waved the apology away. “What’s up?”

“ I’m trying to draw Hedwig, as a thank you to someone but I just can’t get her right!” He huffed.

“Well, if it's a thank you to someone, maybe they will just appreciate the effort you put into the drawing?” Dean said tentatively. He then must have noticed that Harry was doing his drawing with a quill and ink. “Wait here a sec.”

Harry watched as his dorm mate dug through his own trunk before returning with a pencil case.

“Here, you can borrow these.” He opened them to reveal pencils. “You grew up muggle too, right?”

“ Yeah. Are you sure?” Harry took them gently from the other boy.

“ Yeah, I trust you to take care of them.” Dean grinned. “Just show me the drawing of Hedwig before you send it off and I’ll call us equal.”

“ You’re brilliant, thank you Dean.” Harry beamed at him before starting on his drawing again. He took his time in outlining Hedwig’s form in pencil and Dean was right, it was so much easier to use a pencil!

He finished his drawing and reverently placed the pencils back into their pencil case before going to look for Dean to return the pencils and to show him his drawing.

“ Not bad, Harry.” Dean commented as he examined the picture. “But you forgot one thing.”

“ What? What did I forget?” Harry peaked over his shoulder to try and see what he missed.

“ You forgot to sign it.” Dean smiled. “An artist must always sign his work.” He handed him a pencil. “Go on.”

Harry paused, the pencil hovering over the corner of the drawing. He couldn’t really sign it as Harry, he couldn’t remember whether Ken was aware of his real identity but just in case...He signed it: Evan.

Dean didn’t comment on the name that he chose to sign it with, he just smiled at him and accepted the pencil back. “Now it's perfect.”

“Thanks, Dean.”

“ No problem, mate.”

“ Hey, what's that?” Ron asked as he got ready for bed.

“ I drew Hedwig!” Harry flashed him the drawing. “Dean leant me his pencils.”

“ That’s pretty good, well-done mate!” Ron grinned at Harry who smiled back before gently folding the picture to put it in the envelope. While Harry was busy, Ron mouthed ‘thank you’ to Dean who just winked back. Harry missed this interaction and by the time he had finished his last touches on his letters, both boys were in their pyjamas and were climbing into bed.

“Night guys,” Harry called out to them as he got his bathroom stuff. He wanted a shower before heading to bed.

“Night Harry.” They chorused back.

Harry grinned as he got ready for bed, happy that he had such good friends.

Harry didn’t know it but Ken stuck the picture to the mirror behind the bar so everyone could see it.

The next two weeks passed quickly. With them came a quick trip to the chamber of secrets. Harry, Ron, and Malfoy had crept down at ridiculous o'clock in the morning on the Monday after Harry had sent off his letter to the Goblins. They had sent a reply to him the same day he had sent it, so Harry assumed that they were rather eager to get their hands on the beast. It was a simple and quick trip, although it felt like it took longer because Malfoy kept boasting that it was his idea, and that Harry should be grateful. Although, for all that crowing, Harry did notice that he did not once demand anything from Harry in return. Harry would have to bring him down to the chamber again sometime as thanks.

Unfortunately, not everything during those two weeks was as fun. They were also filled with longing, sad looks from both Lupin and Hermione. Harry was also then called into the Headmaster’s office.

“Ah, Harry.” Dumbledore beamed as Harry lifted his fist to knock on the door. “Come in, come in.”

“Good day, Headmaster.” Harry greeted him as he stepped into the rather eccentric office. There were all kinds of gadgets twirling and one was even letting out little puffs of light purple smoke. “You wanted to see me?” He had no idea what the Headmaster wanted with him. Surely, he couldn’t have – Harry cut that thought off before he could finish it and made sure not to meet the man’s eyes.

“Lemon drop?” He offered the small tin of sweets.

Out of curiosity and wanting to test his ring, Harry accepted. “Thank you.” He picked up a single sweet and his ring warmed rapidly. There was a potion in or on the sweet. Harry put it in his pocket. “I’ll save it for later.” He told the headmaster.

“Very well.” The man folded his hands on his desk. “Now, as to why I asked you here.” He looked down at Harry over his half-moon glasses. “I’ve been visited by a very distraught Ms. Granger. She tells me that you and Ronald have ‘shut her out’.”

“She slapped me.” Harry reminded the headmaster. “And she has been horrible to Ron about Scabbers.” He explained. “She’s been treating us like toddlers as well.”

"Surely, your friendship is repairable?" Dumbledore tried again. Harry had to worry why he was so insistent on Harry being friends with her.

"We gave her several chances, sir." Harry frowned. "She hasn't even apologised for hitting me."

"But if she did, would you be friends with her again?"

"Honestly, Headmaster? I don't think so." Harry told him truthfully. "She broke my trust." He made a mental note to pay close attention to his new ring when he ate/drink anything. After all, Dumbledore had potioned him once before, what was to stop him from doing it again?

"I see." It was the Headmaster's turn to frown before his face cleared. "I've also noticed that you don't seem to get along with Professor Lupin, did you know that he was a friend of your parents."

"I know, he keeps rubbing it in my face." Harry's eyes stung with angry tears, but he refused to let them fall. Why was Dumbledore insisting that he 'makeup' with people that had clearly done him wrong?! Did it have anything to do with the fact that he was paying himself out of Harry's money? Bound his core? Or potioned him up to the gills?

"I'm sure it's just a misunderstanding." Dumbledore tried to reason.

"He told me my parents would be ashamed of me." Harry told him blankly. "All I did was sneeze on the floo." Dumbledore baulked and seemed to flounder for words so Harry continued. "So, I hope you understand that I'm not really in a rush to spend time with him." He forced an apologetic smile on his face. "Which sucks because I would have loved to learn more about my parents." That wasn't a lie but he wouldn't trust a word that came from Lupin's mouth.

Harry was able to escape the headmaster's office shortly after that. He went straight to the owlery and shoved the lemon sherbet into an envelope along with a short letter explaining why he wanted it tested to Trent. He would write to him and the others properly later.

Harry received a reply a lot faster than he thought he would have.

Harry,

I'm glad Finn gave you that ring. The lemon drop is infused with a very strong calming draught, one that would have you so calm that you would be susceptible to suggestion. It is, unfortunately, legal even if it is frowned upon. It was smart of you to send it to me for testing. I'm proud of you.

Keep thinking smart and stay safe,

Love,

Trent.

He would need to tell Ron and the others not to take any sweets from Dumbledore. In fact he did as soon as they were getting ready for bed.

“Hey, Ron?”

“Yeah?”

“Uh this is going to sound weird, but if you ever get called to the headmaster’s office, don’t take any of the sweets he offers you.”

“Another thing I can’t ask you about yet?” Ron asked before continuing on, not giving Harry a chance to reply. “It’s okay. I promise I won’t.” He couldn’t wait until Ron mastered occlumancy so he could tell him everything.

“Thanks, you’re the best.”

“I know.”

Harry continued to ignore both Lupin and Granger and instead focused on his school work and new budding friendship with the Slytherins.

Ron and Harry were sat with Lavender and Parvati in the library doing their divination homework. Harry hadn't even had to convince Ron to take it seriously, he seemed to have come into his own this year and was genuinely trying his hardest in all his lessons. Harry was proud of him. Their current homework was a dream diary which they would then have to try and find out what they meant.

“What does dreaming about the sun mean again?” Ron asked as he squinted at his own handwriting.

“...To see the sun in your dream symbolizes peace of mind, enlightenment, tranquillity, fortune, goodwill, and insight. It also represents radiant energy and divine power. Generally, the sun is a good omen, especially if the sun is shining in your dream ...” Harry recited from the text book. “Unless the sun is clouded?”

“No, It was nice and bright.” Ron shook his head. “It was really nice.”

“That’s so cool.” Lavender smiled at him. “I wish my dream had been a good omen.”

“Why? What did you dream of?” Ron asked in concern.

“I was icing a cake and then I ate it.”

“That doesn’t sound so bad.”

“Um.” Harry flipped through the textbook. “... To put icing on a cake or pastry indicates that you are behaving superficially. Something may look good on the exterior, but prove empty or unsubstantial on the inside. In other words, looks can be deceiving. Alternatively, the dream

represents the finishing touches in your life that brings about fulfilment and completion... ”
He frowned. “... *To see or eat icing in your dream suggests that what may seem good in the beginning, will ultimately be unsatisfying and unfulfilling ...”*

“Okay, so maybe it isn’t great.” Ron conceded. “But now you know so maybe you could adjust your behaviour?” He suggested tentatively.

“Yeah, you don’t need to pretend to be someone you’re not.” Harry smiled gently at the girl. “We’d like you no matter what.”

“They’re right.” Parvati agreed and hugged her friend as much as she could while they were still sitting down.

“I-I’ll try.” She promised her eyes wet.

“Isn’t this sweet?” Malfoy drawled as he slid into the empty seat next to Ron.

“Malfoy?” Harry raised an eyebrow at the boy’s surprise appearance. “How can we help you this fine day?”

The blond eyed the other Gryffindors at the table before deciding to ignore them. “Have you been back to the chamber since you sent the thing to the goblins?” He asked.

“No, why?”

“Well, don’t you want to explore it?”

“Not really.” Harry admitted.

The girls at that point started to pack their things away. “We’re going to go back to the common room.” Parvati told them.

“You don’t have to leave.” Ron insisted.

“It’s alright, Ron.” Lavender smiled sweetly. “I want to talk to Parvati in private anyway.”

“Okay, see you later?” Huh, maybe Ron was getting a crush on Lavender? They would be cute together.

“Yeah.”

“Adorable.” Malfoy commented dryly. “Now back to business.”

“Malfoy-” Ron started but the blond interrupted him.

“No, think about. Its called the chamber of secrets for a reason right?”

“Yeah because of the great big ugly snake.” Ron shot back.

“Puh-lease, as if that was all Slytherin kept down there.” Malfoy sighed dramatically.

“Surely, you are at least a little bit curious?”

Maybe a little, Harry admitted to himself. He exchanged a look with Ron before giving in. "Yeah, okay."

"Excellent!" Malfoy looked like the cat that got the cream. "Shall we get going then?"

"Who else are you planning on taking with us?" Ron asked, not making a move to put his things away. Harry copied him.

"Just Theo and Pucey."

Harry pursed his lips before nodding. "Alright."

"Yeah?" Ron checked with him.

"Yeah, that gives him one friend and us an older student if things go weird."

"What's this?" Fred was suddenly standing behind Ron

"A snake?" George continued from behind Harry.

"With our little brothers?" They loomed protectively over Harry and Ron.

"How do you two feel about seeing the fabled Chamber of Secrets?" Harry asked slyly.

Fred and George grinned.

An unlikely group of four Gryffindors and three Slytherins, crept through the halls. After a quick check to make sure they weren't being followed, they entered the Moaning Myrtle's bathroom. The ghost was thankfully not there.

"*Open* ." Harry hissed at the sink. The sink sunk into the ground leaving the gaping hole that would lead down to the chamber. "*Stairs* ." He hissed again and there was a grating sound as the stone wall manifested a staircase.

"Cool." Fred whispered in awe as he followed Harry down the stairs. He was closely followed by George, Theo, Pucey and then Malfoy and Ron taking up the rear again. Ron it turned out, was able to mimic parsletongue quite well and so he was in charge of closing the entrance behind them. He couldn't understand what he was saying but his pronunciation was on point.

Harry cast 'lumos' and the others were quick to copy him. Without the spell they would be in complete darkness which wasn't exactly safe when going down stone stairs.

It didn't take them long to reach the chamber. Harry ignored the twin's exclamations at the sight and instead surveyed the area where the basilisk used to lie. It was almost as if it had never been there. The floor was slightly flooded like last time and other than the dryer area where Harry had stabbed the diary, there was no sign of the fight taking place at all. It was weird.

“You alright, mate?” Ron asked pulling him out of his thoughts.

“Hmm. Yeah I’m fine.” He tried to give him a reassuring smile but felt like he didn’t quite pull it off. “Anyway! Let’s get exploring.”

Harry headed straight towards the open mouth of the statue that the Basilisk originally came out of. He was distantly aware that at least one if not more of his friends were following him. He carefully climbed up so he could shine his lumos into the cavernous mouth.

“Ah hah!” He shouted victoriously as he spotted a door.

“What is it?” Malfoy was at his side fastest.

“You okay, mate?” Ron was second fastest.

“I found a door!”

“Nice!” Fred grinned and all the others gathered around as well.

“*Open.*” Harry hissed on a whim. The door groaned as it opened, but it didn’t open like a conventional door but like a drawbridge. It fell, covering the drop that spanned between the door and the edge of the mouth. “Well that beats trying to climb over there.” He commented as he tentatively stood on the new drawbridge.

“Careful, now.” Pucey piped up for the first time since they were down there. “It’s old, so we’ll have to go one at a time just in case.”

Harry went first. He was the smallest, the lightest and the sole parselmouth in the group. He was also already on the drawbridge.

“George next,” Harry called out. “Best to go young, old young old.”

“Hey! Who are you calling old.” Harry assumed it was George or Fred that cried out but as he wasn’t looking he couldn’t tell.

“Is that a wrinkle, I can see?” He heard Theo Nott of all people tease.

“What?!” The twin squeaked.

Harry laughed, shaking his head and continued across the drawbridge. He reached the doorway and tried out a thing he had only ever seen Flitwick do: he detached his lumos from his wand tip and sent it into the room ahead. He did it by kind of flicking his wand and imagining what he wanted to happen and then willing it to happen. It worked on the first try.

The lumos soared from his wand and lit up the room in an eerie blue.

“Whoa.”

Chapter 12

Trent kept the manic grin that was threatening to spill across his face from showing as he handed over his wand at the Ministry check point. His connections in the Ministry had been fruitful and he was now aware of at least two individuals that had been involved in illegally grounding their pup: Head Auror Amelia Bones and Auror Shacklebolt.

“Holly with a Dragon heartstring core, 14 ¼" and a Rigid flexibility.” The wizard at the checkpoint droned.

“Correct.” Trent accepted his wand back once the man had made a note. It was a spare wand, the one he got from Olivander when he was eleven. His proper one was Rowan with Rougarou hair core, 14 ¼" and rather springy. It was of course bought from Jimmy Kiddell's Wonderful Wands, the same shop that Fenrir had taken Evan to get his second wand.

“Enjoy your visit.”

“Thanks.” Trent walked towards the lifts. He had a folder filled with legal papers, and he planned to make use of a little something his younger brother had made before he was thrown in Azkaban. A curse that had no counter.

Trent wasn't always called Trent Greyback. Before he was married to his gorgeous hunk of a werewolf, he had a different name and a family that were historically light until he and his brother came along. He was the heir but unlike most pureblood families, they kept the heir at home to be schooled and sent the spare to Hogwarts.

Unfortunately for their parents, they hadn't banked on their little heir being kidnapped from Diagon by a business associate that planned to use him as leverage to get a better deal. The man had hired some werewolves to act as his ‘muscle’ but they took exception to the bloke torturing a kid. And so Trent was rescued from his kidnapper by the werewolf that would later become his husband. Of course the werewolf had no idea that the little brat that he had rescued would fall head over heels in love with him and would spend the next twelve years trying to prove it. Trent had been nine when he was kidnapped and saved. He was twenty one when his werewolf said yes and were married and mated a month later.

His father had been a right bastard and had disowned him when he was seventeen when Trent had declared that he didn't want to be the heir, that he was in love with a werewolf. His mother had cried and begged for his father to change his mind, but the man refused and back handed her. The family magic (from his father's side) had already been ripped from him, he had lain there on the floor panting in pain when he watched the man that had been his father strike his mother.

By sunset, his younger brother was Lord Augustus Rookwood at sixteen and their father's body was cooling on the floor.

Trent was brought out of his memories when the lift arrived at his floor. He stepped out of the lift and had to duck the paper bird memos that flew past to get into the lift before it left to go

to the next floor. He walked confidently towards the Auror department, he had temporarily transfigured his features so that he wouldn't be recognised, his brother was rather infamous after all. He approached a tall black man, Auror Shacklebolt according to his connections, the man who had given his pup false hope. He cleared his throat and waited for the Auror to acknowledge him.

"Yes?" His voice was gruff but he focused his calm eyes on Trent.

"You've been served." Trent said with satisfaction as he passed the man some papers. He had own lawyers draw up some papers as what the ministry had done was illegal but it also worked as a distraction so that Trent could slip the tiny rock that was imbued with the curse his brother had made during his time with the Unspeakables into an open draw of the Aurors desk.

He technically didn't have the right to sue them on Harry's behalf but seeing as the young man was essentially without Guardians, if the Ministry were able to claim they were his then he didn't have any, then there was nothing that anyone could do to stop him from doing it either. As far as anyone else knew, the Law firm had heard of Harry's plight and took up the case on their own, pro bono. They were actually being paid rather well by Trent.

"What?" The Auror took the papers with a bewildered look on his face.

Trent didn't bother answering and instead turned to make his way to Head Auror Amelia Bone's office. He must have really shocked Shacklebolt as he made no attempt to follow him.

Trent entered the Head Auror's office without knocking. Amelia Bones was a square-jawed witch with close-cropped grey hair and a monocle and she looked up with a glare as her office door opened with her consent.

"What-"

"You've been served." Trent cut her off and handed her the same papers that he had given Shacklebolt.

"You have got to be joking." She exclaimed as she flipped through the pages. Once more Trent took advantage of her distracted state and placed the tiny cursed rock on her desk where she was sure to touch it.

"No joke." Trent shook his head. "Perhaps you shouldn't tell a minor that you are breaking the law while you are doing it." He watched her pale as she took in his words and what was written on the papers. "Have a good day, Ma'am." His smile was a little more smug than was polite but Bones didn't notice, she was too busy burying her head in her hands.

He left her office and walked back to the lifts. He ignored the commotion his actions had caused and waited patiently for the lift to arrive. He felt rather pleased with himself. The Head Auror and her little sidekick were being sued and would be too distracted to notice the small rock in/on their desks...a little rock that would leech all the energy from the person that touched it, Trent was wearing demiguise gloves, expensive but warm and invisible so it didn't look like he was wearing any gloves at all. The curse wasn't lethal, unfortunately, it

would just make the recipient lethargic all the time, too tired to fight the lawsuit even. It was slow acting to make it unnoticeable.

He left the Ministry with a smile and made a mental note to send a letter to Harry to let him know that he was suing the Aurors. The pup didn't need to know about the curse.

Harry gazed around this hidden room in the Chamber of Secrets with amazement. It was as if he had stepped back in time. The room he was in was clearly a receiving room to, judging by the doors further in the room, an apartment of some kind. The air was stale, stagnant but clean if that made sense? There must have been a spell to keep the place dust free because it honestly looked like the owner, Slytherin himself? Had literally just stepped out and would be back at any moment.

"Neat!" George crowded in behind him.

"It looks like Slytherin might have lived down here at one point." Harry commented as he stepped further into the room. The ceiling looked to be as high as the one in the great hall but carved from the rock rather than from wood. The stone floor was covered in large rugs that if Harry took his shoes and socks off, he was sure they would feel incredibly soft underneath his feet. The furniture in the room was solid wood, softened by padded cushions and animal skins. It was pretty cool.

"Bloody hell." Ron exclaimed as he followed George into the room.

"It's like stepping back in time." Malfoy said as he entered.

"I want to see what's behind those doors!" Fred begged Harry as he all but vibrated on the spot.

Theo and Pucey were speechless.

They spent the next few hours exploring the series of rooms that they had discovered. The doors led to:

A kitchen/dining area.

"Hey, the cooling cupboard still works!"

"Seriously?"

"That's some impressive spell work."

A bedchamber.

"Oh Merlin, Salazar Slytherin probably slept in this very bed!"

"Do you need a minute alone with it?"

“Piss off, Weasley.”

A privy/toilet room.

“Hey, Malfoy, why not sit where your glorious Salazar Slytherin once rested his arse?”

“Oh, piss off.”

A potions lab.

“These ingredients are perfectly preserved, Gred!”

“Imagine what we could make with them.”

“No, I am not teaching you how to say open in parseltongue just so you can disappear down here to blow yourselves up.”

“Spoil sport.”

“Meanie.”

And lastly, a library/office.

“Salazar’s personal library!”

“It’s all in squiggles.”

“I can read it fine.”

“It’s probably parseltongue then.”

“Huh, I didn’t know there was a written version of the language.”

After they had investigated all the rooms, they reconvened in the reception/ante chamber and just grinned at each other before Pucey checked the time and blanched.

“It’s half way through lunch.”

“We should head back up then.” Harry frowned, disappointed. He had been having fun. Sure, he was impressed by the rooms, but he was just loving everyone else’s reactions more. It was just hilarious how Ron kept teasing Malfoy and he couldn’t help but wonder if there was something he didn’t know about going on between them. He would wait for Ron to come to him about it though, his best friend deserved his patience and silent support just like Ron had given it to him.

They headed back up to the school, Harry going last so that he could command everything to shut and lock up. They managed to leave Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom without being caught and then split up. The twins went in one direction, the Slytherins in another, and Harry and Ron headed to the Great Hall to catch the end of lunch.

“Where have you been?” Granger demanded to know as they sat down at the table. Luckily they were far enough away from her that they could ignore her easily while they helped themselves to sandwiches. It was a Saturday so they didn’t have classes but they still had some homework that they needed to complete.

“Answer me!” Granger demanded.

“Look, Granger.” Ron spoke through a mouthful of a ham and cheese sandwich. Harry was pretty sure he did it because he knew that it irritated her. “We’re not friends anymore and even if we were, which we’re not, we don’t have to tell you anything.”

“Leave us alone.” Harry added before wrapping two sandwiches in a napkin. Ron copied him and then they stood.

“Don’t walk away from me.” She called after them but they didn’t stop. “Petrificus Totalus!”

“Expelliarmus!” A squeaky voice bellowed causing Hermione’s spell to miss them. Harry and Ron whipped round and saw Professor Flitwick marching down the aisle. “Detention, Miss Granger.”

“But-”

“You tried to hex your classmate while their back was turned.” He fumed, stopping in front of her. “I’m not sure what has gotten into you this year, young lady but you will report to Professor Snape for detention for another week.”

“Yes, sir.” She grumbled, shooting Harry and Ron a dark look.

“Perhaps, Minerva was wrong to allow you to take on so many classes.” He mused aloud.

“No!” She paled dramatically. “I can cope with it.”

“I need to see a marked improvement in your behaviour otherwise I will have to speak Minerva about revoking your privilege.”

Harry wasn’t sure what he meant by ‘privilege’ but if threatening that made Granger back off then he was all for it. He missed his friend but the girl she had become this year just wasn’t someone he wanted to know.

That Sunday Trent sent him an interesting letter informing him that he was suing the Head Auror Amelia Bones and Auror Shacklebolt on his behalf.

Evan,

Please do not be mad at me. I have a few connection at the Ministry and uncovered two of the people that were involved in your illegal grounding and with that information I employed the services of Dodge, E. and Dodge, E.R. Law firm to sue them. As far as everyone knows, they are doing it pro bono when they over heard your plight in the Leaky Cauldron. It would help massively if you could send me a copy of the letter that told you about the grounding.

I hope you forgive me for over stepping, but I couldn't allow the Ministry to get away with this injustice.

Love Trent.

Harry didn't know whether to be upset that Trent had gone behind his back to sue these people for him or pleased that he cared enough to do it. So he showed the letter to Ron.

"Good." The red haired handed the letter back with a pleased look on his face. "I'm glad you have someone looking out for you."

"So I shouldn't get mad about it?" Harry asked.

"What's there to be mad about? My parents would have done the same for me if I was in your shoes and they could afford it."

Dear Trent,

I forgive you. After speaking with my best friend I understand that you did what any parent would have done. The letter from Undersecretary Umbridge about the grounding is in this envelope, I hope it helps. Let me know how it goes.

Thank you.

Love Evan.

And that was that.

The rest of September passed quietly. Flitwick's chat with Hermione seemed to have done its job and she left Harry and Ron alone.

Harry continued to exchange letters with Fenrir, Trent, Finn and occasionally Ken who would regale Harry with tales of how he had to stop the other three from storming the castle or sending poisons through the mail and a thank you note for the drawing of Hedwig which included a photo of it pinned to the mirror above the bar. He felt all warm and fuzzy and wondered if this is what Dudley felt like when Aunt Petunia pinned a drawing of his to the fridge.

Harry and his new Slytherin friends, along with the twins and Ron usually spent most of their Saturdays down in the chamber chilling in their new hideout. They played games of exploding snap or just studied together. Harry was happy to announce that his Potion's grade had improved massively.

They were half way into October when Fred and George dropped a bombshell on them.

"So, Why does this Peter bloke never leave your dorm?" Fred asked as he sat on the floor, leaning up against the mediaeval wooden settee in the reception room of their new hideout.

“Who?” Harry asked, looking up from Ancient Runes homework.

“Peter, the kid in the bed next to Ron.”

“First of all, how do you know who is in the bed next to mine?” Ron narrowed his eyes on his brothers. “And secondly, I don’t think there is a kid called Peter in our year at all.”

George eyed the Slytherins in the room that were deliberately not making eye contact before sighing and pulling out a scrappy old piece of parchment. “What happens in the hideout, stays in the hideout, right?”

“Right.” Everyone chorused including the Slytherins that no longer pretended to not be listening. Harry wasn’t sure when or how that became their unofficial motto but it had and so far, they all had followed it.

“I solemnly swear that I am up to no good.” George tapped the paper with a wand. Harry was close enough to see ink suddenly spread across the parchment and had for one sickening moment a flash back to his second year with the diary that wrote back.

“We found this in our third year.” Fred explained. “It’s a map of the school, it shows everyone, everywhere.”

George spread it over the low table in the room and they all crowded round. “See, you can see Dumbledore pacing in his office.”

“He does it a lot.” Fred continued. “But look here, this is what we were talking about.” He unfolded it further to show the third year boy’s dorm. There was only one name in there. *Peter Pettigrew* .

“Uh.” Pucey looked pale. “I hate to break it to you guys, but...” He trailed off and bit his lip nervously as six pairs of eyes turned on him. “Peter Pettigrew is the name of the bloke that Black supposedly killed.”

“And there isn’t anyone called Peter in our year.” Harry repeated, a feeling of dread coming over him. “So why is there a Peter in our dorm?”

“And why does he have the name of a dead man?” Ron added looking rather pale now as well.

“Well, there is only one way to find out.” Malfoy broke the uneasy silence that had fallen over the group. “You’ll have to go to the dorm and check it out.”

“Let us know how it goes.” Theo commented. “We would go with you but I don’t think that the rest of the lions would be too happy to have some snakes in their den.”

Harry met Ron’s eye and knew that they would have to check this out. He knew that he personally would not be able to sleep tonight if they didn’t get to the bottom of the mystery sixth person that seemed to never leave their dorm.

"Let's go do it now." Harry decided for them. "The sooner we get it over and done with, the sooner the mystery will be solved."

"Fine." Ron grudgingly agreed. "But you two are coming with us." He pointed to his brothers. "If this does end up being a man that is supposed to be dead lurking in our room, I trust that you will back us up."

The twins sat up straighter at that declaration and nodded solemnly. "You have our wands."

"Then let's get this train on its tracks." Ron sighed.

They reached the dorm and with the map still activated and in hand, they entered. The room was empty apart from them.

"I don't see anyone." Ron announced as he went to his bed.

"Let's see the map again." Harry pulled Fred closer so he could have a look. The map showed the dorm and everyone in it. "Well, it's got us..." Harry and Fred's names were close together as they were standing close, George was near the door and Ron was next to his bed. Peter Pettigrew was next to Ron. "Weird, it still says that he's there."

"Check under your bed," George suggested.

"Well that will give me nightmares." Ron sighed before falling to the floor to have a look under the bed. "Nope! Nothing there." He stood back up. "Seriously, it's only us and Scabbers in his cage..." Ron paled and looked at his rat. "Where exactly on the map is he said to be, again?"

"Right next to you." Harry approached him slowly.

"Um," Ron looked at Scabbers and then at his brother who was holding the map. "Let me try something." He picked up the cage with his pet rat inside and moved it across the room.

"Bloody hell." Fred exclaimed. "The name is moving with you, Ron."

"Why would Scabbers show up on your map as Peter Pettigrew?" He asked, staring at his pet with growing horror. "Have I been sleeping with a man on my pillow for years?"

"I don't know, but maybe we should take this to Flitwick." Harry suggested as he gently took the cage from Ron who was looking rather faint. "Maybe there's something wrong with the map?"

Fred and George looked grim. They likely knew that in bringing this to a professor's attention that they were going to lose the map but if there was a slim chance that this was a grown man pretending to be their brother's pet rat? They needed to know the truth.

"Let's go get this sorted." George crossed the room in a few quick strides and wrapped an arm around Ron's shoulders.

“Come on.” Fred led the way, Harry next with the caged rat and George and Ron taking the rear.

Thankfully they didn’t meet anyone on their way to Flitwick’s office and Fred knocked firmly on the door.

“Come in!” Came the squeaky voice of the Charms professor. They entered the room and shut the door firmly behind them. “Oh? How can I help you lads, today?” The diminutive man turned in his chair to give them his full attention.

“Um.” Harry didn’t know where to start but simply placed the cage with the rat on the professor’s desk. “Can you check if this is an animagus?” He asked. He was pretty sure that was the term for a person that turns into an animal. McGonagall was one as she demonstrated in her first lesson of the year.

“I can’t see why you would want me to do so, but I also cannot see any reason to not do it.” Flitwick said, pulling out his wand. He stunned the rat before taking him carefully out of the cage and set him on the desk. “If this does indeed turn out to be a person, then you might want to stand back a little.”

Harry took a step back and was bemused but heartened by the fact that Fred and George moved to stand in front of Harry and Ron protectively. Harry hoped for Ron’s sake that Scabbers was just a rat and the map was wrong. He didn’t like to think about the fact that they may have been sharing a room with a fully grown man.

“Very well.” Flitwick stood on his chair and muttered a spell under his breath. A blue light shot out his wand and struck the stunned rat.

It was like watching a speeded-up film of a growing tree. A head was shooting upwards from the ground; limbs were sprouting; next moment, a man was lying where Scabbers had been.

“Bloody hell.” Ron whimpered before fainting. Harry lunged to catch his friend, Fred and George were quick to do the same. The twins managed to catch him before he hit the floor. They lowered him into a soft chair that was in the professor’s office and perched on the arms of the chair, sandwiching Ron between them.

“Oh, dear.” Flitwick said faintly, staring at the man now lying on his desk. He shot another stunning spell at the man before jumping from his chair and heading to the fireplace. He threw in some floo powder and called out: “Auror Office.”

A moment later, a tired looking Kingsley and an Auror that Harry didn’t recognise stepped out of the fire. They spelled away the soot that stuck to their clothes and then took in the scene before them.

“How did you discover this?” Kingsley asked as his colleague slipped some cuffs onto the unconscious man lying on Flitwick’s desk.

“I thought it was weird that the rat had lived so long.” Harry spoke up quickly, a lie coming to him easily. He did not want the map taken from the twins and he was still pissed at

Kingsley too. “And Professor McGonagall showed us that she was an animagus at the beginning of the year. It took a little while for me to put the two together.”

“You jumped to the conclusion that the rat was an animagus?” He asked sceptically.

“Not straight away.” Harry shrugged. “Weird things happen around me so I figured that it would be best if we at least checked.” He paused and looked at Ron who was slowly coming around. “I had hoped I was wrong.” And he had hoped that he had been wrong.

“Right, well. We’ll get him back to the Ministry to process him.” Kingsley sighed and turned to Flitwick. “You’ll want to get in touch with these young men’s guardians as we will need to interview them properly.”

“Of course.” Flitwick nodded.

Harry watched them levitate the unconscious man into the floo and wondered if the man really was Peter Pettigrew and if so, was Sirius Black truly innocent? He would have to send a letter to his solicitor about it all. He also made a mental note to check in with Trent about how the suing of Kingsley and Bones was coming along.

Then the Aurors were gone and the office fell quiet.

Flitwick sighed. “How about I get us all some hot chocolate and then you boys can tell me how you really found him, hmm?”

Harry smiled sheepishly at the man but agreed.

“...And then we came to you because, well, you’ve already proven that you’ll listen.” Harry finished telling the professor everything apart from their hideout in the chamber of secrets.

Ron had calmed down by the time Harry had finished speaking. He was clutching the mug of hot chocolate a little too tightly but was otherwise okay. “Oh Merlin, someone needs to tell Percy.” He looked green again.

“Bagsy not it!” Both Fred and George shouted together.

“I’ll send a note for him and have him come here.” Flitwick settled the argument before it could really start. He scribbled out a note and then spelled it into a bird. The paper bird took flight and fled the room. “Now, we wait.”

Percy took the news as well as Ron had, meaning he fainted. The twins didn’t make fun of him though, they understood how awful and serious the situation was.

“Hey, it’ll be okay, Perce.” George tried to console his brother as he came too.

“What if he did...” Percy trailed off still looking green.

“Ah.” Flitwick suddenly looked uncomfortable. “I hadn’t thought of that. Let’s go see Madame Pomfrey, shall we?”

“Hadn’t thought of what?” Harry didn’t know what they were on about.

“You had the talk this summer, right?” Fred draped himself over Harry.

“Yeah..” Wait. “You don’t mean?” Harry didn’t even want to think the word.

“That’s why we’re taking you all to get checked out by Madame Pomfrey.” Flitwick tried to calm them but Harry felt sick at the very idea of it and he clung to Fred.

The check up was quick and thankfully none of the boys showed any signs of well, *that* . They were then dismissed to dinner and told not to discuss anything with anyone until Flitwick heard back from the Aurors.

They got the rest of the two dorms checked over by Madame Pomfrey. Thankfully, there was no sign of ‘that’ or any evidence of obliviates. All the boys were relieved but were told to keep the reason why they were needed in the hospital wing quiet for now because it was now an ongoing case. To the rest of the school, it was a little weird how the boys in those two year groups plus the twins, were suddenly a lot closer at dinner.

Harry sent off some letters before heading to bed, exhausted by from exhaustive day.

Ken,

Warning, you will need to sit on Trent, Fenrir, and Finn again. Turns out that my friend’s pet rat was an Animagus. He’s been arrested but don’t worry! We were all checked over by the Medi Witch and found that there was nothing wrong with any of us. He hadn’t done anything to us. I’m fine.

Love,

Evan.

P.S. did you like the drawing of Hedwig in the last letter I sent?

Dear Trent, Fenrir, and Finn,

Don’t freak out. I’m fine, everyone is fine.

I’m writing to you so that you should hopefully find out from me rather than the Daily Prophet about an incident at the school. You know how I have mentioned that my friend Ron has a pet rat? And that rat hadn’t been doing so well recently? Well, turns out he’s an Animagus and apparently a man who has been dead for the past twelve years: Peter Pettigrew.

Don’t worry, all the boys have been checked out by the Medi Witch to make sure that the rat hadn’t done anything to us. We are all fine, there is no evidence that he had done anything

and no sign of memory tampering either. I'm safe.

This does however call into question the apparent crimes of Sirius Black who had apparently murdered Pettigrew. I'm going to be writing another letter to Gringotts and my Solicitor next.

Please do not storm Hogwarts,

Love Harry.

P.s. Trent, how is the law suit against Bones and Kingsley going?

Dear Gornuk,

Please find attached a letter that I would like passed onto my Solicitor.

Gringotts should also be made aware that Peter Pettigrew was found alive today. He was posing as a rat for the past twelve years.

How is the selling of the basilisk parts going?

May your vaults never empty,

Harry Potter

Dear Saul Goodman,

I would first like to thank you for agreeing to become my solicitor and secondly, I have some new information that might help you in your investigation into Sirius Black. Peter Pettigrew was found alive today. He was posing as a rat for the past twelve years. He has been handed over to the Aurors.

Hope this helps and thank you for your services,

H.

The White Wyvern trembled as if there was an earth quake. The other patrons in Knockturn Alley paused what they were doing before scurrying away. Everyone knew that the establishment was owned by the notorious Greyback couple, even ignoring the bullshit rumours put out by the Ministry, they were a dangerous duo to get on the wrong side of.

Inside the pub it was chaos.

“LET ME GO!” Fenrir snarled. He was pinned down by three vampires, a goblin and a wizard. All were regular patrons and were just as upset by the letter that Trent had read aloud

a moment ago but they were not about to let the werewolf get himself executed by doing something reckless.

“Darling,” Trent cupped Fenrir’s face. He was furious too but he knew that there was nothing they could do at that moment. “He said he was okay.” He tried to reassure his husband and himself at the same time. “They were all checked out, they’re fine. He’s safe.”

“The Ministry may have Pettigrew in a cell but they can’t keep their eyes on him all the time.” Finn’s voice was glacially cold. “As soon as they so much as blink, he’s dead.”

“Whatever you have planned, I want in.” Fenrir growled lowly in his throat as he finally stopped fighting against the people that were holding him back.

“We all do.” Trent’s grin was almost as feral as his husband’s.

“Count us in.” Leopold, one of the vampires chimed in. “Little ‘Evan’.” His lips twitched with a smile, by this point it was an open secret to who Evan was, the Greybacks and Rowle hadn’t exactly been discrete. “Is one of us.”

“Do you know if the tyke has told his Goblins yet?” Gnarlog asked. “If not, I can run over there now.”

“He didn’t say.” Ken answered as Trent, Fenrir, Finn and Leopold were already crowded around a table and were planning their attack on Pettigrew.

“I’ll head there now.” Gnarlog stood. “I’ll also start spreading the word that Pettigrew is person non grata down here.”

“Good.” Ken’s smile would have made the hardest of Goblins tremble. He then turned to the group that was plotting. “I would also like to know how a man in his animagus form was able to go unnoticed by Hogwarts’ wards.”

Trent frowned. “I too would like the answer to that.”

“What happened?” Malfoy hissed at Harry and Ron in library a few days later. He looked around to make sure no one was paying them any attention. “You go in search of this Peter person in your dorm, and you come back all weird.”

Harry was bemused to notice that Malfoy had aimed the question at Ron rather than the both of them.

“In the chamber.” Harry cut Ron off before he could say anything. Just because they couldn’t see anyone listening in doesn’t mean that they weren’t.

“Fine.” Malfoy pouted.

After dinner, Harry, Ron, the twins, and Malfoy met up in the Chamber. Pucey was studying for a test and Nott had fallen behind on his Herbology homework so neither bloke could come with them. Malfoy was going to fill them in afterwards.

“Tell me everything!” Malfoy demanded as soon as they stepped foot into the reception room of the chamber.

“Well...” Harry exchanged a look with the other Gryffindors.

“Turns out that the Peter on the map, was in fact my rat, Scabbers.” Ron said quickly. He looked green just thinking about it. They all knew that the man hadn’t done anything to any of them but the very idea of a grown man sleeping in the same bed as teenage kids? It was gross!

“Oh Merlin.” Malfoy turned green.

“We’re all okay.” Harry told them before their imaginations could spiral. “All the boys in the two dorms that Scabbers spent time in, were checked out.”

“Thank Merlin.” Malfoy sagged in his seat. “That’s just-” He wrinkled his nose. “The idea of a-”

“Yeah, it’s awful.” Fred cut him off.

“But trust us, anything you’ve just thought of, we’ve already thought of.” George continued. Neither were in the mood to have what could have happened spoken about again.

"So, what's going on, what happened exactly?" Malfoy dug for details.

"We handed the rat to Flitwick, he cast the spell and when a grown man appeared where there once was a rat, he called the Aurors. Now we just wait." Harry summarised and slumped back in his seat. He wondered how the whole situation was going to be dealt with.

Evan,

Some patrons had to hold Fenrir down so he wouldn't do anything stupid. Trent and Finn and I were all foaming at the mouth at the very idea of what could have happened. We are glad that you and your schoolmates are safe and healthy. I hope it stays that way.

Love Ken.

Harry,

WE ARE ONE MORE INCIDENT AWAY FROM STORMING YOUR SCHOOL.

We are so glad that you and your dorm mates are all right, but we are incredibly concerned that the Hogwarts' wards did not pick up the Animagus, surely Dumbledore should be aware of all the animagi in his school?!

I know you have a lot of friends in your school...but are you opposed to going to another school next year? It's not even Yule and so much has happened! We just want you safe and so far, what you have told us of this year and some of your previous years and what you discovered over the summer...you are not safe at Hogwarts.

Please think about it.

Lots of love,

Trent.

P.s. Bone and Kingsley are trying to settle outside of court and Dodge, E. and Dodge, E.R have opened a new suit against Umbridge for arranging the grounding in the first place. I'll keep you posted.

Pup,

You don't know how pleased I am to hear that you and your friends are unharmed. I'm sure you have already gotten my darling's letter begging you to move schools. I find that I am in agreement with him a hundred percent. You are just thirteen years old; my little pup and I hate the idea that you have already gone through so much hardship in a place that you are meant to be safe.

I want to remind you how free you felt this summer with the aid of the Goblins and think about using their help to feel like that permanently.

Love,

Fenrir.

Harry,

Perhaps I should have enchanted your ring to be a good luck charm seeing as you seemed to be getting into so much trouble.

Stay safe,

Finn.

Harry felt warmed by their concern but didn't really think about their request...at least he hadn't until he read the newspapers that week and received a letter from his solicitor.

Pettigrew Found Alive.

Posthumously Awarded Order Of Merlin holder Peter Pettigrew Found Alive and Living as a Rat.

Pettigrew Trial

Peter Pettigrew to go on trial to discover just why he had faked his own death.

Pettigrew Guilty

In an astounding turn of events, Peter Pettigrew has been found guilty of terrorism. Pettigrew was found to have the Dark Mark on his arm branding him as a follower of You-Know-Who.

Sirius Black Innocent?

During Pettigrew's trial he confessed to being the Secret Keeper of Potters and the murderer of several muggles that had previously been attributed to Black.

Pettigrew and Black to be Kissed

Pettigrew has been transferred to holding cells on Azkaban Island while waiting to face the Kiss. Black, despite his supposed innocence of his original charges will still face the Kiss when he is caught. Unfair? Perhaps, but by law any escapees from Azkaban must be Kissed.

Mr Potter,

I must apologise but there is nothing I can do to help Mr Sirius Black. The law is clear: All escapees from Azkaban must be Kissed or executed via other means on sight. There is no loophole pertaining to the innocence of said escapee.

I will refund the money that was paid to me for my services due to my inability to help you,

Sincerely,

Saul Goodman.

Harry crumbled the letter in his hand and was disgusted at the law system and this solicitor that the Goblins had recommended wasn't much good. Maybe he should give moving and

becoming Evan Fleamont permanently some thought. He was torn though; he had such good friends here. He looked at Ron who was looking back at him with concern. What should he do? He didn't want to leave Hogwarts but Trent and Fenrir had a good point. He bit his lip and reread the letters before he got an idea.

He quickly pulled out a piece of scrap parchment and wrote a note for Trent.

Trent,

How do you think Dodge, E. and Dodge, E.R. feel about suing the Ministry on a whole for false imprisonment?

Harry .

He had just given the letter to Hedwig, who had lingered after delivering the letter from his solicitor when the doors to the Great Hall slammed open.

“ALBUS DUMBLEDORE!” A furious Mrs Weasley stormed into the hall. At her heels were her husband and her two eldest sons. All the Weasleys shared an alarmed look and started to clamber to their feet. It had to be something really extreme for their mother to have brought in their two brothers away from their jobs abroad.

“Molly.” The Headmaster stood from his seat at the top of the hall. “What do we owe the pleasure of your visit?”

“I want to know why we had to find out that our children's pet was an animagus from the daily prophet and not from a member of your staff.” She demanded to know. The news shocked the students in the hall. The papers after all had not said where or with whom the rat was hiding with, but Mrs Weasley had just told them all that it was with her sons.

“The Aurors were supposed to have told you.” Percy spoke up trying to not calm her but at least divert her anger.

“We checked with them.” Mr Weasley told his son as Mrs Weasley refused to take her glare off Dumbledore. “Apparently they had been told that the Headmaster wanted to tell us personally.”

“Perhaps we should take this to my office?” Dumbledore walked towards them.

“We have lodged a complaint with the Aurors, that Merlin forbade, if anything like this ever happens again, they are to inform us directly.” She blazed with fury and Harry wished at that moment that she was his mother. “There is nothing more to discuss.”

“Then why don't I walk you out?” He smiled genially but the expression didn't soften the Weasley matriarch at all.

“I would like to speak to my children.” She dismissed him and turned to her children that were still half out of their seats. “Come along,” She gestured for them to come to her.

Harry nudged Ron to get moving. He was jealous of them, but he tried not to show it. He knew that if they could Trent and Fenrir and even Finn would have stormed the castle ages ago.

“You too, Harry dear.” Mrs Weasley smiled softly at him. “You may not be a redhead, but you’re one of mine.”

Harry’s smile was brighter than any lumos that the students had ever seen. He scrambled from his seat and rushed over to join them.

“Ah hem.” Dumbledore cleared his throat. “Mr Potter should-”

“Go with you,” Flitwick interrupted him. “You may use my office or my classroom if you like.”

“Thank you.” Mrs Weasley smiled at him before ushering the whole brood plus Harry out of the Great Hall. She gathered Percy close to her as they walked, and Ron draped an arm over Harry’s shoulder to keep him close too. The twins bracketed Ginny and the two eldest brothers took up the rear guard. Mr Weasley walked next to Mrs Weasley.

They reached the charms classroom and filed in. They each took a seat, so they were all clustered together.

“Are you alright?” Mrs Weasley asked as soon as they were settled.

“Been better.” Ron admitted. “I try not to think about it.”

“We were all checked out by Madame Pomfrey.” Percy tried to reassure his parents. “He never touched us.”

“And I thank all the Gods and Goddess above for that.” Mrs Weasley patted his hand. “But it’s not just your physical health we’ve been worried about.”

It was a surprise when it was George that burst in to tears. “I wish we had noticed earlier!” He cried.

“Oh, baby.” Mrs Weasley stood and pulled him into a tight hug.

“It’s not your fault.” Percy stood and joined their hug. “I’m older than you, if anyone should have noticed it was me!”

“Hey, it’s not any of your faults!” Harry refused to let any of them feel bad about this. “It was Pettigrew’s fault.”

“Harry is right.” Bill, or at least Harry thought his name was Bill, they hadn’t actually met before. “It is not the fault of anyone in this room. So stop that thinking now.”

After that there were more tears and hugs but they all left feeling a lot better.

Chapter 13

Once the Weasley's had left it was after breakfast so Harry, Ron and the twins headed down to the chamber to meet with Malfoy. It was the weekend so it wouldn't be noticed that they were missing.

Harry paced the room, his mind whirling. He was feeling a little raw from the heart to heart he had witnessed but he also could acknowledge that it made everyone feel a lot better. So maybe he should confide in his friends? About his summer activities and newfound family? About how he was considering leaving like Trent and Fenrir wanted him to? And don't get him started on Black! How was he supposed to feel about him? He was innocent of crimes and was technically his father as well as his godfather, and he was going to be Kissed despite being innocent.

"Harry, mate." Ron approached him with his hands in plain view. "Want to tell us what has gotten you so wound up?"

"They're going to have Sirius Black kissed." Harry told him.

"I know, its awful." He agreed. "But you don't know the man."

"He's my father!" Harry shouted before he could stop himself.

"What?!" Everyone stared at him dumbfounded.

"I thought James Potter was your father." Malfoy commented. "Snape is always going on about how you're just like him."

"James Potter is also my father, and before you ask Lily Potter is also my mother." Harry continued on before any of them could interrupt. He focused on Ron. "I didn't tell you and Granger everything that happened this summer."

"I know." Ron gave him an understanding smile. "You explained why."

"I know, but I think I need to tell you now." He paused and looked at the twins who were watching pensively and Malfoy who had somehow become a friend of his. "I think I need to tell all of you."

"Alright, let's sit down then, yeah?" Fred led him to a chair.

"Right." Harry took a deep breath as he sat. "I guess I should start from the beginning just to make sure everyone is on the same page." He glanced at Malfoy who knew the least about the situation. "I live with muggles and-"

"Muggles?!" Malfoy exclaimed, almost leaping from his chair. "Dumbledore made it known that you were with a loving magical family!"

"My family is not magical and they are certainly not loving." Harry said darkly. "Let's just say that I am treated no better than a house elf."

"No." Malfoy shook his head. He was pale and looked shaken by that information.

"Look Malfoy." Ron stood in front of Harry, blocking, protecting him from Malfoy. "If you keep interrupting, Harry is never going to finish telling us everything. I can however confirm that his muggle relatives are monsters and if you want more details and if Harry gives me permission, I'll tell you more about it later."

"Yeah, fine. Ron can tell you." Harry gave his permission. He didn't care if Malfoy knew, he had come a long way since the end of last year. He knew what his relatives did to him was wrong, how they treated him was wrong and now that he had Fenrir and Trent he knew what it was like to be in a good family. So yeah Ron could tell Malfoy about his stupid muggle relatives. He figured that the boy wouldn't spread it around and that they had become good enough friends that he wouldn't use it against him.

"Okay, fine." Malfoy sat back down and crossed his arms. He looked like he was fighting the urge to sulk. Ron returned to his own seat next to Harry and gave him an encouraging look.

"Okay, so like I said my relatives are awful and this summer my Uncle's sister, my Aunt Marge, through marriage." Thank Merlin he wasn't actually related to that cow. "Came to visit. She's a horrible woman and she was bad mouthing my parents. I lost control and accidentally inflated her like a giant balloon."

"Wicked." Fred and George grinned.

"Yeah that was pretty cool, but I thought my uncle was going to murder me." Harry shivered as he remembered the look in his Uncle's beady eyes. "So I ran away. I caught the Knightbus and arrived at the Leaky Cauldron." Harry went on to explain that the Minister of Magic himself met him there and said that he wouldn't get in trouble for the accidental magic and it had all been sorted. That his stay in the Leaky Cauldron was paid for and he had to stay there until school. How when he tried to pay for his breakfast the next day he found out from Tom the barman that all meals and the stay was paid for in full from Harry's account.

"Wait but you just that the Minister told you that it was all paid for." Fred interrupted.

"So how come the money came from your account?" George asked.

"Dumbledore had sent over a bank draft that I had apparently signed." Harry scowled.

"That makes no sense!"

"How did he get your signature?"

"I thought it was weird." Harry continued as if they hadn't asked any questions. "And planned to go to Gringotts to get more information about my accounts but I didn't want to be hounded every time I went out. After some trial and error I realised that I could change the colour of my hair."

"Wait, you're a metamorphmagus?!" Malfoy explained.

"I don't know what that is." Harry waved the comment away and kept talking so he wouldn't be asked any more questions. He explained that he had gone to Gringotts and after a blood test found that he technically had three parents, Sirius Black had blood adopted him. That Dumbledore was his magical guardian and was in charge of his money, or at least the Potter accounts. That Black was in charge of the Black accounts despite being incarcerated. How Harry had set up a new account under a new name with his new hair/look.

"What name?" George asked.

"I'd rather not say yet, if it's all the same to you." Harry bit his lip nervously. He felt bad about not telling them but-

"This way, if anyone asks about that name we can genuinely say that we don't who that is." Ron explained. He had up to that point be quiet. "It makes sense and its safer for Harry."

"Ah, that makes sense." Fred nodded. "Sorry."

"It's okay." Harry smiled weakly and took a deep breath and continued. He ignored the interruptions best that he could.

"Knockturn Alley, really Potter?"

"A werewolf? Cool!"

"Wait, isn't Fenrir Greyback that evil child eating guy?" Fred asked.

"It's a lie." Harry broke from his story to defend his friend. "He's only ever bitten young children to save them from life threatening injuries or diseases."

"But the Ministry doesn't see it like that." George sighed. "That makes sense."

And on it went.

"Wait, they trapped you in a room that you were paying for?"

"An Undersecretary doesn't have that kind of power!"

"I thought Madame Bones was supposed to be a decent Auror?"

"I never thought I would say this but I love the Goblins."

"They sound like pretty brilliant people, Harry."

"Your magic was blocked?!"

"Was it Dumbledore? I bet it was Dumbledore."

"Yes and no." Harry sighed, pausing his story to reply to Malfoy. "Apparently one of the blocks was placed by my parents because my magic was too active to be safe when I was a

baby. And then because they died, it was never removed.”

“Or, Dumbledore made sure it was never removed.” One of the twins muttered but as Harry hadn’t been looking, he wasn’t sure which one said it.

“You said yes and no.” Ron pointed out.

“There was another block but the magical signature was too degraded to read.” Harry sighed. “However, the test also flagged that I had some potions in my system that shouldn’t have been there. Loyalty potions keyed to Albus Dumbledore which started to be administrated to me around the same time that the block was placed...”

“So it’s high likely that Dumbledore was the one behind it.” Malfoy concluded.

“Bugger.” The three Weasleys exclaimed at the same time.

“Anyway, my magic was unblocked, the potions were purged from my system and I practised using magic with my wand that didn’t have a trace on it.”

“Wait, where did you get a wand that didn’t have a trace?”

“Knockturn, obviously Weasley.”

“Ah.”

Harry rolled his eyes and continued. “It’s a good thing I did decide to practice too, as I almost blinded myself when I casted *lumos* .”

“Then why did your other wand explode on the train?”

“I don’t know.” Harry shrugged. “But you guys are basically up to date now. Nothing much else happened. I got some birthday presents under my assumed name and then met up with the Weasleys. Oh and Trent managed to enlist Dodge, E. and Dodge, E. R. to sue Bones, Kingsley and Umbridge.”

“I’m liking Trent more and more.” George grinned.

“And then your wand exploded on the train, Lupin was a pratt, Granger was a pratt, we discovered that Scabbers was actually a fully grown wizard and that your blood father is innocent but the Ministry is still going to get him killed.” Ron finished the summary of events.

“Yeah and Trent and Fenrir want me to change schools.” Harry sighed and sunk back into his chair. “I don’t know what to do.”

“Well, do you want to leave Hogwarts?” George asked.

“No, yes, maybe?” Harry huffed, annoyed at his own indecision. “I don’t know!”

“Until you decide, we could shake things up a little.” Malfoy suggested.

“What do you mean?”

“Do you still have your copies of the Daily Prophet declaring your godfather innocent and that they were going to kiss him anyway?”

“Yeah.”

“Then this is what we’re going to do.” He grinned mischievously.

“Are you sure this is going to work?” Harry asked as he handed the thick letter over to Hedwig.

“If it doesn’t there is always plan B.” Ron shrugged as he gave his own letter to Rory.

“We have a plan B?”

“Well, plan D is you leaving so we have to have a plan B, and C.”

“Never change, Ron.” Harry said fondly as he looked at his best friend.

“Enough yapping, more mailing.” Malfoy snapped as he tied several letters to numerous owls. “The more letters we get sent out the higher chance we have of this working.” He shot a glare over at Harry. “And of course it’s going to work, I thought of it.”

The British’s Disregard for the Law.

*An anonymous letter was sent to the International Confederation of Wix (ICW) earlier this morning with the distressing news of a grave injustice. **Sirius Black** -known internationally as a mass killer in the wake of the British second’s Blood War (BSBW), having blown up a muggle street and killing fellow Wix, Peter Pettigrew- is **INNOCENT**. And yet he was sent to prison. I hear you ask how this could be? Apparently, the esteemed members of the British Law Enforcement did not see the point in giving the man a trial seeing as ‘everyone knew that he was guilty.’*

*How did his innocence finally come to light? **Peter Pettigrew was not as dead as formally believed.** He was found posing as a child’s pet rat due to his animagus form. For the record, all children involved or around the animagus have been examined and none have been harmed. During Pettigrew’s trial it came to light that he was the man that caused the explosion that led to the death of no less than 12 muggles. He had cut off his finger and escaped through the sewers as a rat. The man is slated to be given the Dementor’s Kiss this coming week.*

You would think that on the discovery of Sirius Black’s innocence, the ‘Kiss On Sight’ order that had been issued when the man had escaped Azkaban, the British Wixen prison, would have been rescinded. This has not been the case. According to the British Paper, ‘The Daily Prophet’ it is the law that all escapees are to be given the Dementor’s Kiss regardless of the original crime/s that landed said prisoner in Azkaban or in this case, regardless of whether or not said prisoner had committed a crime at all.

Sirius Black, falsely accused, falsely imprisoned has been sentenced to death by his government without a trial.

*“The international community is disgusted by this lack of justice.” Babajide Akingbad, a member of ICW declared when asked about what the ICW thought. “The British Ministry has obviously been left alone to govern without consequences for too long. We understand that twelve or so years ago, they were in a civil war, but they have had over ten years of peace to get themselves together. There is no reason why justice cannot be served and served well. Sirius Black was an innocent man, yes he escaped Azkaban but he did so with the understanding that his Godson was in danger. **He deserves to have a fair trial.** ”*

Babajide Akingbad went on to tell us that Albus Dumbledore has been removed from his seat of Supreme Mugwump due to his complacency in this tragic abuse of justice. A new Supreme Mugwump will be voted in later this week.

-Oliver Masucci, Wix International News

Pas de justice au Royaume-Uni

Sirius Black, faussement accusé, faussement emprisonné a été condamné à mort par son gouvernement sans procès...

-Pierre Bonaccord III, Le Cri de la Gargouille

Dødens kys for britisk retfærdighed

Sirius Black, falsk anklaget, falsk fængslet er blevet dømt til døden af sin regering uden en retssag...

-Harfang Munter, Den Nordiske Trolldmands Avis

Wo ist die Gerechtigkeit?

Sirius Black, zu Unrecht angeklagt, zu Unrecht inhaftiert, wurde von seiner Regierung ohne Gerichtsverfahren zum Tode verurteilt...

-Bruno Schmidt, Magische Neuigkeiten

“And you were worried that it wouldn’t work.” Malfoy smirked as he threw the pile of newspapers down onto the table in the Chamber of Secrets. It had only been one day since they had sent out the owls with letters containing copies of the Daily Prophet that declared Sirius’ innocence and the one that condemned him to death. Each envelope also included an edited version of the letter that Harry’s solicitor had sent him. They had blanked out names but otherwise kept everything the same. The twins knew the copying charm and they had applied it liberally to the letters. They sent an envelope containing all of that to each major newspaper in Europe, to several in the USA and one to the ICW.

“Now we just have to wait to see what the Ministry does in response.” Ron crossed his arms. “I say that if they don’t react by the end of the week, we send new letters and send copies of these articles.” He gestured to the international newspapers on the table. “To the Quibbler.”

“The Quibbler is rubbish.” Malfoy scoffed.

“Hey! Our neighbour is the editor of that paper.” Fred scowled.

“It doesn’t matter how reputable the paper is,” Ron ended the argument before it could really start. “All that matters is that people do read it.”

“Do it anyway.” Harry decided. “Send copies to the Quibbler today.”

“Alright.” George reached for the papers. “Fred and I will do that today.”

“We’ll drop Luna a note about it first.” Fred added. “She’s the daughter of the editor.”

“She might want to send a letter to her dad and we could add it to ours.” George continued.

“That and she could put in a good word for you with her Father.” Malfoy nodded. “Smart thinking.”

“Oh my,” Fred staggered back with his hand over his heart. “Did Malfoy just-”

“- compliment us?” George finished. “Yes, I think he did!”

“Oh hush you two.” Malfoy rolled his eyes. “Go do your job.”

“Yessir!” They both saluted with lazy grins.

Harry smiled at his friends, they were a bit of an odd group. Three Weasleys, a Potter and a Malfoy. Pucey and Nott were too busy studying to hang out much with them so they weren’t actually in the know. Which kind of sucked, as they seemed like pretty cool people but Harry did understand, their studies came first which was more than fair.

“Thank you.” Harry told them all earnestly before they left the chamber. “You guys are seriously the best.”

“I know.” Malfoy smirked.

“Aw thanks, mate.” Ron beamed at him.

“ We live to serve.” Both twins bowed dramatically.

Stubby Boardman to be Kissed?!

*As mentioned in a previous article by Doris Purkiss, **Stubby Boardman** , lead singer of the popular singing group *The Hobgoblins*, sometimes goes by the name *Sirius Black*. Boardman is slated to be Kissed by Dementors despite being **innocent of his alleged crimes** . We at the *Quibbler* are outraged by this and we are not alone. The international community of Wix are up in arms about this injustice. See pages 2,3,4 and 5 for copies of the international articles pertaining to *Sirius Black aka Stubby Boardman*.*

-Xenophilius Lovegood, The Quibbler.

Harry and Ron had just sat down for breakfast on Tuesday morning, the day after the Quibbler’s article on Sirius Black when the post owls soared into the hall. Hedwig landed in front of him with a letter. He cooed at her and gently took it from her. She fled the hall before he could treat her with a bit of bacon as suddenly hundreds of owls filled the air and dropped off copies of the Daily Prophet. Its headline stood out in sharp relief:

Ministry SUED

Harry picked up his copy after paying the owl, put his own letter in his pocket to read later, and with Ron reading over his shoulder, he couldn’t stop the satisfied look from crossing his face. Apparently, he didn’t need to get Trent to stick his lawyers on the Ministry, someone else had beat him to it.

Ministry SUED

*Yes, dear readers you have read the headline correctly. Our Ministry of Magic is being sued! By whom? I hear you ask. The suit is being **filed on behalf of Sirius Black** himself! With the aid of his cousin, Narcissa Malfoy who is outraged by the false imprisonment of her cousin. The Black family have highlighted that it is **unlawful for the Ministry to continue to hunt Mr Black** with their primary objective being his execution . Lady Malfoy had this to say: “ My poor cousin has been through more than enough. He was only twenty-one when he was falsely accused and given no trial before being sent to Azkaban, and now the Ministry wishes to see him executed even though he has been proven innocent of his alleged crimes. ”*

To which Amelia Bones replied: “ It is indeed horrible what has happened, but the law is the law. All escapees from Azkaban must be given the Kiss . ”

This journalist tried to investigate the specifics of this law but was refused entry to the archives. How can we, the public, trust the laws if they are not able to have access to them? Is this even a real law? This journalist will not rest until she finds out the answer!

In the meantime, the Ministry is busy facing the lawsuit from the Black family with the backing of the Malfoy family, which is not surprising seeing as Narcissa Malfoy was a Black before she married Lucius Malfoy...

-Rita Skeeta, The Daily Prophet

“Huh,” Ron leant closer. “I wasn’t expecting that.”

“Do you think Malfoy wrote home about everything?” Harry asked him.

“Probably not everything. Maybe about how you two are friends, and how you’re upset about Black being hunted.” Ron scratched his cheek sheepishly. “I saw him write it.”

“It’s fine.” He was quick to reassure his friend. Harry truly wasn’t upset about Malfoy writing to parents about this. “This could really help.”

“Yeah.” He smiled relieved before pointing out the next article. “Look, it says something about the international response, too.”

International Outrage

As you all know, we are part of the International Confederation of Wix (ICW), an international governing body that keeps the member countries to a certain standing. Albus Dumbledore is our representation and the Supreme Mugwump at least he was until Monday morning when he was asked to step down. Due to the controversy over Sirius Black’s false imprisonment, his escape, and the call for him to be given the Kiss, the international community is up in arms. Mr Dumbledore was asked to step down due to his inaction as the Chief Warlock. The general consensus is that he should have demanded a trial for Mr Black despite ‘everyone knowing that he was guilty’.

People across the globe are demanding to know how this had happened and why the current government body is doing nothing to fix the mess that their predecessors created by ignoring the right for everyone to have a fair trial. The interim Supreme Mugwump Babajide Akingbad had this to say: “It is clear that we have left the British community without guidance for too long. The ICW will be auditing the past twenty years of trials held or in the case of Mr Black, not held. We desperately hope that Mr Black’s incarceration with a trial is a one off, however we will be diligent in our duty to ensure that all members of the British public can trust their justice system once more.”

Akingbad went on to reassure that their first point of call would be to examine the law that calls for any escapees of Azkaban to be Kissed on sight. This reporter has a feeling that said law will be repealed or at the very least edited with a clause for the wrongly accused in light of the Sirius Black situation.

- R. Almeidus, The Daily Prophet.

“Look at Dumbledore.” Fred hissed from across the table.

“He looks furious.” George added and nodded to the front of the room where the teachers were sat having their own breakfast.

Harry turned and saw that Dumbledore was indeed furious. His knuckles were white where they were clenched around his spoon and the hand that held the paper kept twitching as if he wanted to crumple it up and throw it away.

“Well, he did just lose his position on the ICW.” Ron pointed out. Not giving away that they already knew that he had from the foreign newspapers that Malfoy had specially delivered.

“That reminds me.” Harry picked up a piece of toast. “What exactly is the ICW? I read briefly about them during the summer, but the chapter was more focused on the statute of secrecy.”

“Well, it was formed in response to the growing dangers that we faced from Muggles.” Percy started in full lecture mode. Harry liked that he didn’t ask them about why they were so pleased that Dumbledore had lost his position with the ICW. “Basically, each magical governing body across the globe sent forward a person to represent their country in a council to discuss the global issue of the danger that Muggles posed to us.” He explained. “After the statute was decided on and enforced, they kept the ICW going because it was an effective way of sharing problems with other countries that may be facing similar issues.”

“So why didn’t they help with the War?” Harry asked. He noticed that they had gained a lot of attention from the nearby students that were eavesdropping including Hermione. He hoped that she didn’t decide to but in.

“The history books say that they refused to help.” Percy shrugged. “But I know that our previous Minister of Magic Millicent Bagnold was asked to explain the country’s action when there were several breaches to the statute of secrecy following the fall of You-Know-Who.”

“I remember reading about that!” Lee Jordan interrupted. “It was in one of my history books. Apparently old Bagnold responded with,” He cleared his throat and then continued in a higher pitched voice. “‘I assert our inalienable right to party’,” He grinned. “She’s infamous for it.”

“Indeed.” Percy chuckled before becoming serious again. “So, they must have known that something was going on in Britain.” He shrugged. “But I honestly don’t know.”

“Huh.” Harry was kind of disappointed that Percy didn’t know the answer. “Is there like a public face of the ICW?” He asked. “Like somewhere we could send a letter asking about it?” After all Harry Potter wouldn’t know this, no one outside of the group that regularly hangs out in the Chamber of Secrets could know that they were the ones that sent off the information about Sirius Black.

“Yes, there is.” Percy perked up at the fact that he did have information that he could reliably share with them. “Do you have a spare piece of parchment?”

Harry searched his bag and pulled out his first draft of his potions essay. He had already rewritten it, so this was essentially rubbish and he meant to get rid of it but kept forgetting. “Here,” He passed it over to Percy.

Percy scribbled something onto the back of the old essay before handing it back. "I'll write it up neater and stick it on our message board in the common room later."

"Thanks, Percy!" Harry cast a drying charm on the parchment before folding it and put it in the same robe pocket as his letter, so it wouldn't get confused with his real potions essay despite his essay being held flat inside his potion textbook. He would send the ICW a letter personally later. He wanted to know more about the world he was living in.

"Ugh, we better get moving, we have potions first thing." Ron sighed dramatically and snatched up one last sausage to munch on.

"He's been weirdly nice." Harry commented.

"Yeah, but who knows how long that's going to last." He pointed out.

"Okay fair." Harry conceded and stood up. "Best not be late then."

Ron and Harry took their seats in the potion's classroom, as far away from Granger as they could. Neville, and Dean, who had drawn the short straw to pair with the potion disaster that was Neville Longbottom, sat on the table next to them. The rest of the Gryffindors, minus Hermione, filled in the seats around them sort of like a guard, keeping Hermione away, making her sit at the back of the classroom, her least favourite place to sit.

"Today," Snape started speaking as soon as he flounced into the room wordlessly summoning their homework essays from their desk, "We will be attempting to brew the potion known as the Antidote to Common Poisons, also known as ACP for short." He waved his wand towards the blackboard and a piece of chalk floated up and wrote the potion name on the board. "Can anyone tell me what the potion does?" He drawled sarcastically.

Harry didn't have to be looking to know that Hermione was probably halfway out of her seat with her hand in the air, desperate to be picked to answer. Harry had actually read about this potion, he was unfortunately a celebrity and so he had spent a lot of time last year behind his bed curtains learning about poisons and their antidotes and so out of spite, he put his hand up. Snape predictably homed in on him.

"Potter." He called on him.

"It's both a potion and antidote which is used to counteract ordinary poisons, such as creature bites and stings." Then he added with a small smirk "Its ingredients include bezoars." He remembered rather clearly Snape asking about bezoars in his first year.

"It also contains ground unicorn horn and mistletoe berries." Snape nodded slightly at Harry which was the closest he was probably going to get to approval. Snape may be acting nicer but that clearly didn't mean that he was going to be giving Harry house points. "It is a simple potion so you will be working individually." He then smirked. "We will be testing the potions on your table partner."

Most of the class paled. Harry exchanged a worried look with Ron.

“Well, what are you waiting for? Get started!” Snape barked and everyone hurried to obey.

Harry set up his cauldron and grabbed a mortar and pestle. He went to the cupboard to gather his ingredients before returning to his station and got started. He carefully read through the instructions, the ones listed on the board and in his book. He noticed that there was an inconsistency between the two recipes. He raised his hand.

“Yes Mr Potter?”

“Which recipe do we follow? The one in our textbook or the one on the board?” He nervously asked as the dark eyes of the Potion Master narrowed on him.

“The one on the board, unless you want a subpar potion and a grade to match it.” He drawled before sweeping off to loom over another student.

Harry was rather grateful to his past self for getting new glasses otherwise he wouldn't be able to read the board like he hadn't for the first two years at Hogwarts. He had never realised before that the instructions were different to what was in the book. He quickly jotted the recipe down so he would have a chance to investigate the changes later, he wanted to understand why Snape had made those changes. He had after all made a promise to himself that he would do better this year, and that meant in all his classes. With that decided Harry got to work.

Harry left the classroom with a smile on his face. His potion had been the right colour and consistency AND Snape had given him an EE on it!

“Mate, how did you get such a good grade?” Dean asked as they left. Ron was strutting just as proudly next to Harry; he also got an EE on this potion.

“I followed the instructions on the board, and it helped that the Slytherins weren't trying to sabotage us.” Harry shrugged.

“That you crushed the bezoar to dust.” Ron commented. “I noticed that you were grinding it for longer than most people, so I copied you.” He added sheepishly.

“I wanted it to be a fine powder.”

“Maybe I should fight Ron to be your desk partner?” Dean nudged him with a grin.

"No chance!" Ron snorted and wrapped an arm over Harry's shoulders and messed up his hair with the other.

"Get off." Harry laughed, it felt great to joke around with his friends. He pushed Ron's hand away from his hair. His heart warmed at the action though because he had seen the twins and even Percy do it to Ron before now, he relished in the brotherly act.

"Oi, Gryffindorks." Malfoy called out to them.

"Yeah?" Ron turned to look at him without removing his arm from Harry's shoulders.

"We've got Runes," Malfoy caught up to them. "So, stop with whatever this is." He gestured to Ron and Harry. "And let's go Potter."

"Ah," Whoops he had almost forgotten that Potions wasn't his only class today. "I'll see you guys later." He told Ron and Dean before ducking under Ron's arm and walking faster.

"Later, mate!" Ron waved him off as he sped walked alongside Malfoy.

As he left though he overheard Dean say to Ron: "Since when were we friendly with Malfoy?"

Cornelius Fudge was at a loss. How had things gone so wrong? The Ministry as a whole was being sued by Narcissa Malfoy nee Black for the false imprisonment of her cousin and the refusal to life the 'Kiss on Sight' order. And on top of that a few members of the Ministry were personally being sued by the bloody Boy-Who Lived!

"Tell me again why you thought it was prudent to ground a child that was not under your guardianship." He asked Dolores Umbridge. They were sat in one of the larger meeting rooms and were joined by the Head Auror Amelia Bones, the Auror Kingsley, Barty Crouch Snr., Solicitor Thomas Beven, and their media liaison Clare Hollingworth.

"Dumbledore brought it to my attention that he was going against your request that he was not to wander about." She simpered. "I was merely disciplining the boy."

"You are not his guardian." He groaned and resisted the urge to bury his face in his hands. "If Dumbledore had an issue with the boy's behaviour then he should have dealt with it personally rather than bringing the Ministry into it. He is as far as I know, the boy's magical guardian. He could have easily 'grounded' him without involving us!"

"As it was requested by his magical guardian, doesn't that mean that we were in the right and the boy can't sue us?" Umbridge suggested.

"No." Beven was the one to answer. "The so called grounding was implemented by the Ministry with no mention in form of writing of permission from Albus Dumbledore. And therefore was illegal."

"Bugger." Amelia cursed. "What can we do then?"

Auror Kingsley was silent and just clenched his fists. From the reports, the man had told the boy that he would try and fix it only to return with Amelia to place the ward personally on the boy's door. Cornelius wasn't sure if that made him worse than Amelia or better, either way he was being sued too.

"I suggest that you try and settle this out of court. The last thing the Ministry needs is for the media to catch wind of it being sued by the Boy-Who-Lived on top of Lady Malfoy." Bevan shot Hollingworth a look.

"They won't hear it from me." She promised. "So long as it doesn't go to court."

“Agreed.” Cornelius sighed. He flipped through his copy of the lawsuit against Umbridge. “Apparently, Dumbledore felt that the need to forge young Harry’s signature on a check and forced him to pay for his lodgings despite the fact that I had told the boy myself that we would be covering it.”

“Well, that is hardly our fault.” Dolores blustered.

“And as soon as the man deigns to arrive, I will have words with him about it.” He rubbed his temples trying to stave off a headache. “However, I am not about to let that man make me a liar. We will be repaying young Harry for the stay at the cauldron and his meals.”

“Hem hem, Minister are-” Dolores started but he cut her off.

“I’m sure.” He said firmly. “At the very least it will move some of the boy’s ire to Dumbledore and away from us.”

“I will agree to pay restitutions for the grief my actions gave Mr Potter.” Auror Kingsley announced to the room. “I will not fight the lawsuit and so it won’t need to go to court.”

“Good.” Cornelius was pleased that at least one of the three had a brain in their head! “Amelia? Dolores?”

“I will do the same.” Amelia sighed and rubbed her forehead. She looked rather drawn and exhausted, it had been a very busy few weeks for her.

“Dolores?” Cornelius prompted the woman in pink when she said silent.

“Very well.” She said primly, her nose in the air. “But I want it noted that I was merely doing what I thought the boy’s magical guardian wanted me to.”

“So noted.” Bevan did in fact make a note of that.

“Now, on to the lawsuit from Lady Malfoy.” Cornelius moved them onto the second reason they were meeting.

“The law is the law.” Dolores simpered. “All escapees from Azkaban prison must be kissed on sight.”

“Maybe so, but the issue that Lady Malfoy has is that her cousin never received a trial and therefore was unlawfully imprisoned for twelve years.” Bevan summerised.

“Which was done by the previous administration.” Cornelius pointed out looking at Barty Crouch. “Weren’t you the one over seeing the trials of suspected Death Eaters.”

“Yes, isn’t it odd that your own son got a trial but Mr Black did not?” Hollingworth’s quill was posed above a clean piece of parchment.

“Dumbledore assured me that he had been the secret keeper of the Potters.” Barty said stiffly. “We were over run and under staffed. It was complete chaos, I merely decided to trust the

Chief Warlock, signed the paperwork for his trial and transfer to Azkaban. Then I moved onto the next case.”

“Oh Merlin.” Amelia groaned and rubbed her eyes, her monocle placed carefully on the table in front of her. “Kingsley, if you would?” She gestured towards Barty.

“Yes, Ma’am.” Kingsley climbed to his feet and rounded the table. “Bartemius Crouch senior, you are under arrest for falsifying legal documents and the false imprisonment of one Sirius Orion Black the third. Other charges may be added over the course of the investigation. You do not have to say anything-”

“You have got to be kidding me!” Barty snarled as he hoisted from his chair.

“-but it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court.” Kingsley continued. “Anything you do say may be given in evidence...” His voice trailed off as the door shut behind them.

“Well, now we know who we can blame.” Cornelius dabbed his sweaty forehead. “I want all of our best lawyers looking at the law because if we do not find a way to pardon Sirius Black then all of our jobs will be on the line.”

“Yes, Minister.” Was chorused around the table.

“Give Mr Bevan a copy of your article before it you print it so he can approve it.” He ordered Hollingworth.

“Yes, Minister.” And with that the meeting ended.

None of them noticed the small beetle on the wall that flew off once the meeting ended.

Later after classes had finished for the day and dinner had been eaten, Harry, Ron, the twins and Malfoy could be found in the Chamber of Secrets.

“Have you seen the glares Granger has been sending you?” Malfoy asked as soon as Harry and Ron entered their sitting area.

“No...?” Harry and Ron shook their heads.

“I’ve been avoiding her to be honest.” Harry admitted.

“Well, she looks like she wants to set you on fire and then dance on your ashes.” He was draped across his seat, his shoes kicked off and his feet on the table. Harry bet that he would never be allowed to sit like that at home.

“We should practice our shield charms then.” Harry sighed. “She’s already proven that she is more than happy to curse us.”

“We can-” Fred started.

“Teach you some spells.” George finished.

“Really?” Harry sat up straight.

“Sure,” Fred shrugged. “We’re older and despite how ‘talented’” He made quotation marks over the word ‘talented’. “Granger is-”

“We know more spells than she does.” George continued.

“And will you let me take part in these lessons?” Malfoy asked, sitting up, taking his feet off the coffee table.

“As if we would ever leave our-”

“Favourite snake, defenceless.” They scoffed.

“Let’s get started then!” Harry beamed. He had missed his lessons with Fenrir over the summer now that he was back in school.

They moved back into the main chamber where the dead basilisk lay, so that they wouldn’t damage the cool rooms that they liked to hang out in. Harry bounced on the balls of his feet as he waited impatiently for the twins to start.

“Okay, so first thing first, ickle little students.” Fred started standing before them with his wand held loosely in his hand. “Shielding.”

“The most common shield that you’ll be taught is ‘Protego’.” George explained. “It’s not actually taught until sixth year which in our opinion is-”

“Stupid.” Fred rolled his eyes. “Surely a shield charm should be one of the first spells taught?”

Wasn’t that the spell that Fenrir had wanted him to learn? Harry hadn’t actually had a chance to even look it up! He was kind of surprised that the werewolf hadn’t sent him a letter asking about his progress on it.

“Isn’t that spell supposed to be really hard?” Malfoy commented.

“Unfortunately most adults aren’t able to perform it.” George admitted.

“But that’s probably because they are too lazy to put the effort into learning it.”

“It can’t hurt to give it a go.” Ron sighed and raised his wand. “What was the incantation again?”

“That’s the spirit!” The twins send in unison.

“It’s pro-TAY-go.” George over exaggerated the pronunciation. “The wand movement is a sharp jab in a downward motion.”

“If successful, a thin, invisible shield will form.” Fred finished explaining. “Like so, Protego!” He jabbed his wand down and a shimmery virtually invisible shield appeared in the air in front of him. “The more power you pour into the spell the more visible it becomes.”

Unable to help himself, Harry fired off a spell towards the shield to test it. “Expelliarmus.” The shield glowed brightly where the spell hit but didn’t break.

“Sneaky sneaky.” Fred snarked and cancelled the spell.

“Now it’s your turn!” George clapped his hands. “For now just focus on getting the spell, we’ll test the shield once you lot are able to produce them reliably.”

Harry was eager to start so he took a few steps away from the others and held out his wand. He took a deep breath and focused. “Protego.” His magic surged and a very weak shield appeared for a moment before shattering.

“Show off!” Ron shouted but he wore a teasing smile so Harry knew that he wasn’t really upset.

“Protego!” Malfoy cast and a similar flickering shield appeared before it vanished. “It’s not so hard.”

“Come on, Ron. You can do it.” Harry cheered his friend on as he was the last to try it.

“Protego!” Ron yelled the spell and much to everyone’s amazement the shield that formed was rather visible meaning that he had put a lot of magic into it.

“Well done!” Harry grinned at him. He was glad that Ron had done so well.

“Nice!” The twins swarmed their brother and ruffled his hair almost violently. “Now do it again.” They ordered the three of them in sync.

“Yes sirs!” Harry playfully saluted. He felt buoyant at their success after just one casting all three of them had managed to get a shield even if it was a weak shield! He dodged a stinging hex that George sent his way for his cheek.

“No dodging!” Fred called out. “Shield charms only!” and followed that statement with another hex.

“Ow!” Ron yelped as the hex shattered his shielding charm.

“Don’t worry, Fred knows healing spells.” Fred continued to fire off hexes at the three of them. “He’ll heal you all at the end of the lesson.”

“You are evil-ah!” Malfoy scowled only to wince as a stinging hex hit him.

“Protego!” Harry cast and to his amazement it was strong enough to deflect one hex before breaking.

“Well done, Harry!” George brought the evil Fred’s attention to him.

“But can you do it again?” Fred aimed his wand at him with an unholy gleam in his eye.

Oh merlin, he regretted letting the twins teach them! He winced as his next shield charm broke, letting through the hex.

By the time they had called the lesson to an end, Harry, Ron and Malfoy were groaning in pain from all the stinging hexes that Fred had managed to land.

“Not bad,” Fred commented as George approached Ron to heal him. “You did a lot better than I expected any of you to do.”

“Next time could you use a colour changing charm instead?” Malfoy complained.

“Nah, you’ll learn the charm faster this way.” Fred refused.

“Did you have to put so much power behind the hexes?” Harry rubbed at a partially sore spot on his arm.

“Sorry.” He frowned and approached to look at the welt on Harry’s arm. He winced.

“I think I speak for all of us when I say that we would appreciate that.” Harry sighed in relief as George came over and muttered some spells under his breath. The pain immediately faded. “Think you could also teach us some healing spells?”

“Sure.” George easily agreed as he moved onto Malfoy. “Also Fred, I agree with these three, colour changing charm or weak jinxes from now on.”

“Agreed.” Fred looked really apologetic. “Sorry.”

“It’s fine.” Ron patted his brother on the shoulder. “It was your first time teaching, you were bound to make mistakes.”

“But if you hit me with one more stinging hex I will summon a snake for Potter to set on you.”

“I think you can call me Harry,” Harry smiled tiredly at Malfoy. “We have after all just survived torture together.”

“Draco then.” Mal-Draco nodded at him.

“And I’m Ron.” Ron added with a lopsided smile. “Now, can we go to bed? Curfew is probably soon.”

“Good idea.” Harry agreed and groaned as he climbed to his feet. George may have healed him but he still felt sore. “I want a shower.”

“Forget a shower, I want to go to bed.” Ron helped Draco up.

“And that is why you smell, Weas-Ron.” Draco corrected himself.

“I’ll push you back down.” Ron threatened.

“Now, now.” George swooped in and wrapped an arm around Ron, pulling him away from Draco before taking a dramatic sniff. “Phew! You do smell.”

“Ew, you do!” Fred immediately joined in on the fun.

“Oh shove off!” Ron pushed his brother away.

Harry just laughed at his friends and led the way out of the chamber. They followed behind him, still bickering.

It was as Harry was climbing into bed that night that he remembered the letter he had received that morning. He got back out of bed and combed through his robe pockets to get it. He pulled out the letter and the scrap piece of parchment with the ICW’s PO box. He left the address on his side table and crawled back into bed with the letter. He closed the curtains around his bed and lit his wand with a lumos so he could read the letter. Inside the Envelope was two letters:

Harry,

When I spoke to Dodge, E (whose first name by the way is Elliot) he was ecstatic at the chance to ‘stick it’ to the Ministry. At that point his wife, Elizabeth Dodge Nee Roiser (the Dodger, E. R. in the firm’s name) came into the office intent on boasting to her husband that she had gotten a client that wanted to sue the Ministry. After a long and occasionally loud conversation, they decided to join forces and work together in the suit against the Ministry. Which works for us as it will keep people from wondering who is behind the lawsuit as they will already have a name: Narcissa Malfoy.

It should hopefully be printed in the Daily Prophet in more detail.

I don’t doubt that she will win her case and with it, the Kiss on Sight order will be revoked. I’ll keep you posted but I have a feeling that the Daily Prophet will keep you up to date just as well as I can.

Do you by chance know anything about how the International community became aware of Black’s situation?

Love you pup,

Trent.

Pup,

Are you sure that you aren’t in Slytherin? I have a feeling that you and your friends are behind the world’s sudden awareness of what is happening in Britain. If you’re not, which I

doubt, take it for the compliment it is.

My mate's letter to you is probably full of boring legal stuff so I won't bother with that in mine. Instead, have you had any success with the Protego charm? You've been suspiciously quiet with your progress reports on that. If you've succeeded at it, then maybe more on to the Patronus charm. With your new wand, you shouldn't have to worry about your wand exploding on you again. I believe that you can do it.

We miss you so much, all of us do.

Love,

Fen.

Harry grinned and folded the letters carefully. The novelty of getting letters from people who cared about him while he was at Hogwarts still hasn't worn off. He treasured each one. He opened his bed curtains and put the latest letters in his side table draw. He would put them in his trunk for safe keeping in the morning. He went to sleep with a smile on his face.

Chapter 14

Dear Trent,

It was Draco's idea, the son of Narcissa Malfoy, to send the story to the international papers and the ICW. I was a little surprised by the fact that his mother was suing the Ministry but like you said, it takes the focus off me. I'm more than happy for her to go head-to-head with the Ministry after all three people are already being sued in my name. Speaking of, how is that going? I'm surprised that it has actually made the papers.

As for everything else, I am doing well in my classes. I'm really enjoying Ancient Runes and Divination. I haven't had a chance to try using the tarot cards that you got me for my birthday yet as we aren't studying those at the moment. But I sleep with them under my pillow every night like the instructions said to.

Ron, Draco, Fred, George, and I have become a lot closer since this whole thing started, I even told them about the truth of my summer. I didn't tell them everything like the name I used or what I looked like, but they understand why. Granger and Lupin have been leaving me alone and the other Slytherins have also been making sure that they keep away from me just in case. It's weird that I have so many people looking out for me.

I miss you guys,

Love, Harry.

Fenrir,

You know that I'm not in Slytherin, but the hat did say that I would do well in that house. You would be right, Draco, Narcissa Malfoy's son, was the one to come up with the idea. We, as in me, Fred, George, Ron and Draco, carried it out.

I have to confess that I only started working on the Protego charm recently, but! I have managed to cast it semi successfully! Fred and George taught it to us and they are surprisingly good teachers. I will mention learning the Patronus charm to them and see what they think. Hopefully this time my wand won't explode.

Lupin has been leaving me alone and so has Granger, but I wouldn't say no to you sending them another howler. Their expressions made my day and it put Snape in a good mood to see Lupin freak out. A Snape in a good mood always means a peaceful potions lesson.

I miss you,

Love, Harry.

Harry got up early to send the two letters off only to find Hedwig sat on his window sill.

“You are such a clever girl.” He told her. “You always know when I need you.” He made a fuss over her. Hedwig was the best owl ever and he wouldn’t be surprised if she had some divination talent seeing as she always knew when he needed to send a letter. “You are an absolute star for saving me a trip to owlery.” He told her as he tied the letters to her leg. “Feel free to visit our favourite blacksmith after you’ve delivered these.”

She cooed and groomed his hair for a moment before taking flight.

“Mate?” Ron’s sleep thick voice came from behind his curtains. The bed curtains opened to reveal a still half-asleep Ron Weasley. “Wha-” He yawned. “What are you doing?”

“Just sent some letters off with Hedwig.”

“Kay.” He blinked sleepily before closing his curtains and presumably going back to sleep.

Harry smiled fondly before getting comfortable on his bed and practising his meditation.

Later when they went down to breakfast, Harry remembered that he wanted to write and send a letter to the ICW as Harry Potter and not anonymously like he had before. He would write the letter during History; it would help him keep awake and well he did want to know more about the history of the ICW because they certainly didn’t learn about it in school.

“Morning!” He greeted his classmates as Ron, and he sat down at the Gryffindor table. He pulled a bowl of porridge closer and dumped some blueberries into it, added a little dash of honey before digging in. yum.

“No bacon today mate?” Ron asked through a mouthful of said food item.

“Nah, Hedwig would be annoyed if she knew that I ate some without her.”

“Your owl is weird.” Dean commented before looking around nervously. “Do you think she heard me?”

“She’s out on a delivery.” Harry reassured him. “Though that doesn’t mean that you’re safe when she comes back.” He pointed at him with the spoon. Everyone knew how prideful Hedwig could be. “She tends to know when someone has insulted her.”

“Shit, please don’t let her bite me.”

“She won’t bite you.” Harry shook his head. “She only did that once and it was because Seamus called her something that I won’t be repeating.” He gave the boy in question a dark look.

“I said sorry!” Seamus ducked his head. “And I gave her a tonne of owl treats to make up for it.” He had called her a rat with wings in their first year. Apparently, he wasn’t a big fan of

owls and hadn't appreciated having one turn up every day at breakfast. He quickly learnt his lesson when she bit him.

"And she has forgiven you for it." Harry calmed him. "But it just goes to show that she knows all and should be treated as the goddess that she is."

"Who's a goddess?" Fred asked as he slipped onto the bench next to him.

"Hedwig."

"Ah," George nodded as he sat next to Ron. "She is indeed."

"All hail, Hedwig!" Fred crowed.

"Hail!" all the boys in Gryffindor near them repeated before laughing.

"I'm glad that you are all in such... high spirits." Snape appeared, looming near them but not over any of them. "I hope, Messers Weasleys, that you are prepared for your test this morning." He smirked before walking away.

"We have a test?!" Both twins exclaimed in horror.

"Later you lot." George stood and grabbed both of their bags.

"Later." Fred gathered some food, enough to make two breakfast sandwiches in a napkin before following his brother from the hall.

They were gone before any of them could say goodbye.

Harry shook his head amused and just focused on finishing his breakfast.

History was a bore as usual, so as planned Harry wrote his letter to the ICW and if he highlighted the poor history lessons that they had to attend then... well could anyone blame him? He hoped that Dumbledore would face some backlash for it although seeing as the man wasn't facing any notable charges for his hand in Black's illegal imprisonment, Harry doubted that his letter would do anything.

To whom it may concern,

This is my first time writing a letter to a governing body and so I'm not entirely sure who I should be addressing it to.

Due to the recent events that have hit the newspapers I have found out that the ICW exists. We aren't taught about it at all in school so I'm curious as to what you do. Is the International Confederate of Wix anything like the Muggle's United Nations? I would just like to know more about the world that I was thrown into at the age of eleven but the history professor at Hogwarts is a ghost who seems to be only able to teach about the Goblins wars.

Sure, Goblin wars are important to know about but from what I have heard from older students, that is all he teaches. For seven years.

Do you have any book recommendations? I want to understand this world because it is my world now.

Thank you for your time,

Harry J. Potter

Gryffindor Student at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

It was short but to the point. He didn't really know what else to put in it. It would do for a first contact attempt, maybe he could ask more pertinent questions if he gets a response. It took less time than he expected to write the letter and he was stuck listening to Binns for the rest of the lesson.

When History was finally over, Harry left the classroom with Ron and headed to Transfiguration. He wasn't sure what reminded him but with growing horror, Harry suddenly remembered what day it was. Halloween.

"Harry?" Ron stopped and turned back to his friend who had suddenly frozen. "What's wrong?"

"It's Halloween." Harry hissed, his eyes darting about nervously. "Something bad always happens on Halloween!"

"Calm down, mate." Ron placed his hands on Harry's shoulders forcing his shorter friend to look him in the eyes. "We'll sit next to Fred and George during the feast and stick by them for the evening. Hopefully, your curse will be too terrified of them to do anything this year."

That pulled a reluctant laugh from him. Fred and George could indeed be scary enough to frighten away his Halloween curse. And it was a curse, what else could explain the bad things that happened every year on Halloween? And it's not as if it was a purely Wixen World thing either! Every year without fail, even when he was the Dursley's something bad happened on the thirty first of October. He was punished harshly by his Uncle when Dudley demanded to know why he couldn't dress up as a wizard for Halloween when they were six; He was sent to his cupboard without food after he accidentally broke his Aunt's vase (thankfully he hadn't used accidental magic to fix it otherwise his punishment would have been worse); Dudley's gang caught him for the first time when he was eight on this date and beat him until he was black and blue and his nose bled; and so many more events, all happening on Halloween.

"Okay," Harry adjusted his bag strap. "We better get to class, or McGonagall will go through with her threat to us into pocket watches."

Ron laughed and threw his arm around Harry's shoulders and pulled him along to Transfiguration.

When lunch came round, Harry and Ron headed to the Great Hall with the rest of the students. However, before they could reach the hall they were grabbed and dragged out of the crowd of students and down an empty hallway.

“Hey!” Harry protested; it was only the glimpse of ginger hair that stopped him from hexing their abductors.

“Oi!” Ron shouted and struggled against his brother.

“Sorry, little brothers,” The twin holding Harry started.

“But a little birdy told us that a certain bushy haired third year,” The twin holding Ron continued

“Is on a rampage in the Great Hall.” and they finished the sentence together.

“What set her off this time?” Harry asked. “She seemed fine in Transfiguration.” Actually, how had she gotten to the Great Hall so quickly? If she was causing a big enough fuss for Fred and George to come get Harry and Ron, then she must have been there for a while which just wasn’t possible. Class had only let out a few minutes ago...

“No idea.” Fred and George shrugged together.

“We weren't listening.”

“But thought we would spare you from listening to her screeching and show you a secret.”

“A secret?” Harry echoed.

“You have our attention.” Ron eyed his brothers suspiciously. “What do you want in return?”

“You wound us!” Fred clutched at his chest.

“Would we ask for something in return for giving up one of our secrets?” George continued the theatrics by stumbling over to Fred and clinging to him as if he was the only thing keeping him on his feet.

“Yes, you would.” Ron said dryly. “So, if we could hurry this up so we could actually get a chance to eat something...?”

“I do need to take my lunch time potions.” Harry chimed in. He was also feeling rather hungry and wanted lunch despite how amusing the twins were.

The reminder that he was on potions put the end to the menaces’ antics and they sighed as they straightened their uniforms.

“You don’t owe us anything this time,” George gestured for Harry and Ron to start walking with them.

“Call us even.” Fred wiggled his arm as if it was a snake? Oh! It dawned on Harry what they meant. They were showing them this secret place in return for sharing the chamber of secrets, but Harry showed them that ages ago!

“In that case why did you wait so long to show us?” Ron seemed to pick up on what they meant too.

“Eh, we forgot.” George shrugged.

Harry and Ron rolled their eyes behind the twins’ backs.

They eventually came to a stop in front of a painting of a fruit ball.

“Wow, I am so impressed.” Harry deadpanned. He suspected that this was probably a secret passageway but that didn’t mean he wasn’t going to be a little shit about missing lunch. He was on a strict potions regime after all.

“Oh shush.” Fred flapped his hand at him.

“Watch and be amazed.” George reached out and tickled the pear?

“What-?” Ron was cut off by the pear on the painting giggling and then the wall opened like a door.

Harry was struck in the face by the fragrant smells of bacon, fresh bread, and a mixture of other food. Next came the sound of pots and pans and a low hum of voices. The twins were showing them the kitchen. It was a gigantic, high-ceilinged room with five tables identical to the ones in the Great Hall and along the outside of the room was the actual cooking area. Large quantities of pots and pans bubbled and spat on counter-tops or stoves, and a large brick fireplace burned happily at the other end of the hall from the door. It was nothing like the kitchen at the Dursley and Harry loved it.

“Young Masters should not be being here!” A house elf appeared in front of the boys as they stood in the entrance of the kitchen.

“Hey, Pip.” Fred greeted the house elf.

“Misters Weesies was told not come back!” The house elf huffed with their hands on their hips.

“You can’t still be mad about the bubbles?” George pouted. “We said sorry.”

“We didn’t know that they would react to your magic like that.” Fred looked genuinely regretful.

“Pip forgives yous but yous still not s’posed to be here.”

“Yeah, but we wanted to show our brothers where they could get food when the Great Hall gets too much.” George shuffled Ron and Harry forward until they were between them and the house elf. Harry felt warm at the fact that they called him their brother. Sure, they had said it in passing before but them declaring it out loud to someone else made it feel more official.

“Yous be allowed in just this once.” Pip caved. “But no more!”

“And our brothers?” They gestured to Harry and Ron.

“They be allowed so long as no bubbles!”

“No bubbles, I promise.” Harry was quick to agree. He elbowed Ron and he hurried to agree as well.

“Good.” Pip nodded. “Now you be sitting, and Pip be feeding yous.”

“Thank you.” Harry smiled at the house elf and followed them over to what he suspected to be the Gryffindor table if they were in the Great Hall. Pip was so much calmer than Dobby ever was.

As soon as he sat down a sample of the usual lunch foods served in the Great Hall appeared in front of him. Ron immediately dug into the food and Harry was quick to follow but he was neater about it.

“Thanks Pip,” Fred chimed as he sat across from Harry. “It looks scrumptious as always.”

“Pip is just doing Pip’s job.” The House elf wrung their hands before vanishing.

“I love House Elves.” George sighed dreaming as he helped himself to the food.

They ate for a few moments in silence before an idea came to Harry’s mind. He was pretty sure that Fred and George would definitely appreciate it and Ron would probably get a kick out of it as well.

“Hey, want to learn to swear in Norwegian?”

“YES!” was the enthusiastic response from all three of them.

Harry grinned and pulled his Norwegian dictionary that he’d been carrying in his school bag for a chance to teach his friends the new rude words he had found. He opened the dictionary to the dog eared pages, if he had still been friends with Hermione, she would have hexed him for that, and carefully pronounced the first swear word.

“Helvete.” The word had barely left Harry’s mouth before Pip descended upon him brandishing a wooden spoon.

“No, bad language!”

Harry flinched at the sudden movement, but he realised that the House Elf wasn't actually going to hurt him, the twins and Ron wouldn't let them. He also realised with dawning horror that the House Elf understood Norwegian and perhaps the kitchen wasn't the best place to be teaching his friends some new rude words. Oops.

"Sorry, Pip." Harry was quick to apologise. He didn't want to get banned from the Kitchen on the same day that he learnt where it was! And if he had learnt anything from Dobby's shenanigans, it was a terrible idea to be on the bad side of a House Elf.

"Pip be watching and listening." The House Elf huffed before vanishing again.

"Well that just happened." Ron laughed.

"Maybe we should have warned you that Pip is a little stickler for the rules." George grinned.

"Later." Fred mouthed soundless before continuing to speak normally. "Anyway, we better hurry up and eat before lunch ends."

Sirius Black, dressed in rags and smelling quite foul, stumbled into the White Wyvern Pub in Knockturn Alley. If there was anywhere in Britain that wouldn't give a shit about his criminal status it would be this place. He had a small number of galleons that had been thrown at him by a good Samaritan who clearly didn't know who he was, but it should be enough to buy him a room and a meal for a night...well so long as the prices haven't gone up too much in the last thirteen years.

"You look rough," The man behind the bar commented.

"You can say that again." Sirius' voice croaked from disuse. "How much for a room for a night and a hot meal?"

"For you? 4 galleons and I'll make sure that your room has got a shower."

"Thanks." He placed four out of his five galleons on the bar top. Oh Merlin, he was looking forward to a hot shower!

"Room 7 is all yours." He gestured towards the stairs at the side of the bar. "Just let me know when you want your meal."

Sirius took the bronze key with a grateful nod and wasted no time in scrambling up the stairs to room 7. He wanted that shower!

Once he was clean and was feeling more human, seriously spending so much time in his Animagus form hadn't exactly helped with his mental health much other than keeping the dementors less interested in him, he thought back over the weird rumours he had been hearing the past few days.

"*Black is innocent?*"

“...found as a rat in the child’s dorm!”

“...is being sued for false imprisonment?”

“I wonder where he is now that...”

He hadn’t been able to get his paws on a newspaper so he was totally out of the loop, but the rumours made it sound as if his lack of trial and innocence had been discovered. And it was only the comment of the rat being found in the dorm that kept him from mindlessly trying to break into Hogwarts to get at the traitor. After all, what was the point of needlessly frightening children when his target wasn’t even in the castle. He would have to ask the bar keep downstairs if they had any newspapers from the past week or so. He needed to find out what was going on, whether it was safe for him to be seen. Until then he would need to disguise himself.

He examined his face in the mirror and grimaced. Even after the shower he looked a mess. His face was gaunt and his hair, although clean, was still knotted and matted in place. His scraggly beard didn’t help either. His whole appearance screamed ‘criminal’. He rummaged in the cupboard under the sink to see if there was anything he could use to rid himself of his facial hair or at least a pair of scissors to cut his hair. Ideally if he had a wand, he would just use a cutting charm on his hair and some beauty charms that McKinnon taught him in his fifth year. He tried not to focus on the fact that McKinnon was dead, that all his friends were either dead, a traitor or believed him to be a traitor.

Luckily, he found a pair of scissors, a muggle straight razor and some shaving cream and brush. He was surprised at how well stocked the cupboard was, but he was grateful and set about making himself look more presentable. He had to really focus to stop his hand from shaking while he was shaving, the last thing he wanted to do was to cut his own throat by mistake. This meant that he didn’t have time to spiral into dark thoughts about old friends.

In the end he decided to just shave everything off, beard and full head of hair: everything bar his eyebrows. It took ages and he made an awful mess of the bathroom which he felt bad about, but it was done. He looked nothing like Sirius Black, the madman on the wanted poster. He was just a very gaunt, sickly-looking man that clearly was in need of a few good meals. He tidied up the bathroom the best he could, scraping the hair from around the basin into the bin which amusingly instantly destroyed everything that entered it.

With that done, he went back into his rented room with a towel wrapped around his waist. There was no way he was going to put his dirty robes back on, robes that he had pinched from someone’s washing line. He planned to wash the clothes in the sink only to find some clean clothes on the bed waiting for him.

“Huh?” He stared dumb founded at them for longer than he would have liked before he shook his head violently, much like he would have as Padfoot and then he picked the clothes up. On top of them was a note:

-Thought you could do with something clean to wear. It’s not pity, just means it’ll be easier to clean the bed after you leave.

Sirius snorted, amused and dressed in the supplied clothes. They automatically resized to fit him which showed that they were expensive pity clothes rather than someone's old rags. He definitely owed the bar keep or whoever it was that lent him these clothes. He looked at himself in the mirror and saw a stranger staring back. A bald, emaciated scarecrow of a man. He was however clean and looked nothing like Sirius Black which would only work to his advantage. This meant that he could have that meal he paid for in peace and should be able to go to Gringotts without being recognised by anyone other than the Goblins. Thankfully, the Goblins cared not for Wixen laws and should still let him access his accounts. Then he would pay back the bar keep for the clothes, and then figure out what to do from there.

With that decided and one more self-conscious look in the mirror, he ran a hand over his bald, smooth head, before leaving his room and going down to the main area of the pub. He was starving.

He beamed at the bar keep as he took a seat at the bar. "Thank you so much for the clothes."

"You look much better." He smiled kindly back. His warm maroon eyes crinkled attractively. He was pretty handsome for a vampire, and he was obviously a vampire. His skin was papery and the biggest clue? The fangs that showed when he smiled. "Are you ready for your meal?"

"Yes, bring me your finest broth, please." Sirius went to run a hand through his hair and was still surprised when his hand met the bald skin of his skull. That would take some getting used to.

"Of course, sir." The bar keep gave a theatrical bow and sent off a paper bird with the order towards the kitchen.

Sirius grinned. He loved it when people matched his energy and antics. "I'm Paddy by the way." It was a name that he would most likely respond to as it was close to his Animagus nickname: Padfoot.

"Ken." The vampire replied and pushed a glass of water towards him. "Your broth should be along shortly."

"Thanks, mate." Sirius sipped at the water gratefully. Merlin, he hadn't realised how thirsty he was. He finished the water faster than he would have liked but before he could ask for another glass, a bowl of broth with noodles and vegetables was placed in front of him.

"Here is your Japanese udon noodle soup." Ken explained at his bewildered look. "Nutritious and easy on your stomach."

"Thank you." Sirius was touched by the consideration this stranger had put into this meal for him. He made a mental note to remember to pay him back with several galleons as thanks after he goes to Gringotts. "You are a star."

"Eat up." Was he blushing? Had Sirius just managed to make a vampire blush? Huh, even after thirteen years in Azkaban, this old dog still had it! He thought smugly before digging into the food. Thankfully, Ken hadn't given him chopsticks and instead he had a fork and a soup spoon.

And that noodle soup? The best fucking thing Sirius had ever eaten. He was embarrassed by the inappropriate noises that escaped him while he ate but he couldn't help it, it was just so good! He ate every scrap that was in the bowl and drank all the soup, going as far as lifting the bowl to his mouth to make sure he got every drop. Finally, he placed the bowl back onto the bar top and neatly lined up his used cutlery.

"That was delicious." He sighed happily.

"We could tell!" Someone from a nearby table called back.

"Ha ha, oops?" He sheepishly rubbed the back of his head, forcing himself not to startle when his hand didn't touch any hair. Right, he was bald.

They just laughed good naturedly and then carried on doing whatever it was they were doing before they called him out on his poor table manners. Sirius shrugged and turned back to Ken who wouldn't meet his eyes.

"Thank you for the meal, I'll see you later?"

"Depends on how late you come back," He shrugged and continued to polish a glass tumbler intently.

"I'll make sure not to come back too late then." Sirius couldn't help but flirt for a moment before straightening up and heading to the door. He had some Goblins to see.

Harry arrived at the Halloween feast in one piece. He sat sandwiched between Fred and George with Ron sat opposite him. As promised, Ron had spoken to the twins and had explained Harry's anxiety of the day. The twins had taken to appearing at the end of each of Harry's lessons and personally escorted him to each of his classes. It was rather remancient of his second year where they had to do it to protect him from the rest of the school that were hell bent on hexing him in the halls just because he could talk to snakes.

"Merlin, I'm starving." Ron fiddled with the golden cutlery while they waited for the feast to start.

"When aren't you hungry?" Harry teased him.

"Shut up," His ears turned red.

"Yeah, Harry-" George started.

"Be nice to your little brother," and Fred finished. "He's a growing lad."

"Oi!" Ron blustered. "I'm older than he is!"

"Only by a few months." Harry argued back.

"It still counts!"

“Does not.”

“Does too!”

“Ron and Harry, you will cease arguing or I will send a letter to mum to tell her that you’ve been misbehaving.” Percy scolded them from a few seats down.

“Sorry Percy.” Harry flushed darkly, he hadn’t meant to start an actual argument with Ron and he certainly didn’t want to get a howler from Mrs Weasley!

“Fine.” Ron grumbled before sighing. “When is the feast starting anyway?”

“Yeah, shouldn’t it have started by now?” Fred narrowed his eyes at the Staff table that was suspiciously barren of staff. “Where are the professors?”

Harry had a sinking feeling. “Do you think something has happened?” He asked nervously.

“Don’t worry,” George wrapped an arm around his shoulders and pulled him closer to his side. “We’ve got your back regardless.”

At that point Professor McGonagall hurried into the hall looking quite harried.

“Students will return to their dormitories. The feast is cancelled. Food will be sent up to you.”

The hall burst into chatter.

“Is this the troll thing again?”

“Why is it cancelled?”

“Has this happened before?”

“A troll? There’s a troll?!”

Harry exchanged a concerned look with Ron as they were ushered from the hall by Percy and the other prefects. He didn’t know what had happened but it was clear that the Halloween curse had struck again.

Chapter 15

Hermione Granger was the brightest witch in her generation, Professor Dumbledore said so. It was why he had applied for special permission to allow her to use a time turner to attend all the electives that Hogwarts provided. Sure it was a little stressful and she wasn't sleeping as much as she should due to the amount of homework, but she would like to think that she was handling the responsibility quite well. So it was a slap in the face when Percy Weasley approached her during breakfast.

"Hermione." Percy wasn't smiling and Hermione was worried that Ron or Harry had done something to upset the prefect and he was coming to her to help get them back in line. "I would like to have a word with you if you have a moment."

"Of course." She had all the time in the world so long as she used her time turner carefully.

"I can tell by the golden chain around your neck that you have been given the opportunity to attend all of the electives." He gave her a knowing look.

"How does a gold chain tell you that?" She asked nervously. No one was supposed to know about the time turner, Professor Dumbledore said so!

"I was also given the same opportunity."

What? But Professor Dumbledore said that she was special! "But..." She didn't know what to say. She seriously doubted that the Headmaster had lied to her so maybe she had misunderstood?

"One student in every third year gets the opportunity." Percy continued unaware of her spiralling thoughts. "I was one such student and before me, my older brother Bill was one as well."

Ah, she had misunderstood then, but still that meant that she was chosen out of her whole year and that was still pretty special, right? Anyway, why was he talking to her about it anyway? Was there a special club maybe of all the students that had been given a time turner? That would be pretty neat!

"It's amazing isn't it." She beamed at him. It would be nice to talk to someone who knew about the time turner without getting in trouble. It had been a tiny bit stressful keeping it a secret from her friends.

"It is, but it can also be difficult to handle when starting off." He said gently. Immediately she bristled at the insinuation. This wasn't an invite to some secret time turner club like her imagination had spun, but an intervention! An intervention that she did not need.

"I can handle it just fine." She jutted her chin out confidently.

“Ron and Harry have said that you’ve been acting a little off...” Percy continued as if she hadn’t spoken which was awfully rude of him.

“I have not.” She narrowed her eyes at the ginger Prefect now knowing that her friends had set him on her. She would have to have a word with her friends. Just because she didn’t like how they were talking about a professor did not mean that they got to stick Prefect on her!

“It’s understandable, I was the same.” Percy once again continued on as if Hermione hadn’t replied. “Bill had to sort me out, so I’m going to tell you what he told me...”

Hermione zoned out of the lecture that Percy proceeded to give her and instead thought of what she was going to say to her friends the next time she saw them.

Unfortunately, things just seemed to spiral out of Hermione’s control. Harry was just being so disrespectful to Professor Lupin and, well when he threw her own disrespect of that hack Trelawney back in her face. Things escalated and well they were no longer friends.

It had been two months since Harry and Ron decided to be childish and end their friendship with Hermione. Not to mention that he was being friendly with Malfoy of all people! She just couldn’t understand why! Yes she had slapped Harry, and yes she did regret doing that but they wouldn’t give her a chance to apologise for it! It seemed as if the whole school was conspiring to keep them apart! She needed a way to get them to like her again but every time she tried to get close to either Ron or Harry she was blocked by either another student or a teacher. It was awful! She needed a way to get them to like her again. She wasn’t even going to think about the anonymous Howlers that she had been sent, she had her suspicions that they were sent by the Weasley twins but she didn’t have enough proof.

She chewed on the tip of her quill as she thought of what she could do to get back into Harry and Ron’s good graces. She had tried going to Professor Dumbledore, he was after all the best wizard in the world, surely he would know what to do? But he had just insisted that she make it up to Harry somehow. That Harry had stopped being friends with her because she had hit him. And oh, she hated that disappointed look in the Headmaster’s eye. She would have to come up with something by herself. What would get the boys to like her again? She wondered before catching sight of the haggard looking Defence Teacher.

An idea started to form.

Harry had made it clear that Professor Lupin had been rather rude to him, and yes Hermione was starting to become aware that she should have listened to her friend’s problems more attentively. She vaguely remembered that it was because he had said something about Harry’s parents? Either way, Harry didn’t like the man. So the way to get Harry to be her friend again would be to get rid of Professor Lupin; She had to get him fired. But how?

Well there was one sure way of getting him fired, it would go against everything she stood for...but it was worth it if Harry and Ron would be her friends again. She was going to out

Professor Lupin as a Werewolf.

Her plan was straight forward: As it was a full moon that night she would head down to the Shrieking Shack to get proof that the Professor was a werewolf. It was simple.

IT WAS NOT SIMPLE!

She had originally gotten a quick glimpse of the werewolf before using her time turner to go back to lunch to tell everyone. But no one believed her no matter how clearly she pointed out the evidence! It didn't help that neither Ron nor Harry were in the Great Hall for lunch so they hadn't even seen her talk bad about Professor Lupin. So she had gone through her day again, this time borrowing Colin's camera, not that he knew that she had borrowed it but she planned on returning it before he noticed it was gone, to get some photographic evidence.

But things had gone horribly, horribly wrong.

While everyone else was getting ready for the Halloween feast, Hermione had approached the Shrieking Shack armed with the camera. The sun had already set and the moon was clear and full in the sky. Professor Lupin would have already transformed meaning that it was the perfect time to take the picture. Only...the flash of the camera was blindly bright in the dark of the night.

The werewolf snarled and lunged for her. She screamed scrambling away, the camera dropped uselessly as she tried to get her wand out from her skirt pocket.

All she remembered after that was someone screaming. It was her, she was screaming and there was so much blood and it hurt so much! Then there were two flashes of red light. One hitting the werewolf and the other her. And then she knew nothing.

Sirius Black, sat in front of his Account Manager at Gringotts feeling absolutely gobsmacked. He had only expected to do a quick blood check to confirm his identity so he could withdraw some gold when he was escorted to a private room. In said room he was given that blood test and then handed a pile of newspapers once his identity had been confirmed. Their headlines screamed out at him:

Pettigrew Found Alive.

Pettigrew Trial

Pettigrew Guilty

Sirius Black Innocent?

Pettigrew and Black to be Kissed
The British's Disregard for the Law.
Stubby Boardman to be Kissed?!

Ministry SUED

“I-” He cut himself off. He didn’t know what to say. The world knew that he was most likely innocent. Wormtail had been caught, had been given a trial and was slated to be given the Kiss. His friend’s traitor was finally going to be punished. The Ministry still wanted him dead for escaping Azkaban despite his innocence of the crimes that sent him there but the rest of the world was up in outrage and his cousin Narcissa that had married that ponce Malfoy was suing them on his behalf? It felt like the world had turned itself upside down.

“Your son and heir visited the bank over the summer and discovered your existence.” The goblin stated, unaware of Sirius’ inner turmoil.

“Harry?” His head shot up away from the newspapers. “How is he? Do you know who he lives with? I tried looking for him but I couldn’t think of who he was with.”

“He is better than he was before the start of the summer.” The Goblin reluctantly told him.

“What does that mean?” What the hell does that mean? Was there something wrong with his pup?!

“As he is underaged, your son and heir, I can inform you of his interaction with the Bank.” The Goblin sighed. Was it just him or did this Goblin seem rather fond of his son? And was reluctant to betray his secrets? Well, Sirius could respect that.

“Just tell me if he’s safe, if he needs my help and maybe help me get a letter through to him?” Sirius decided to compromise. Getting on his son’s bad side wouldn’t be the best way to start a relationship with him.

“Your son arrived at the bank in June to inquire how the headmaster of his school was able to pay for his food and board at the Leaky Cauldron with a check from his own vault without his signature.”

“What?” It took Sirius a moment to unravel what had been said. “Dumbledore has his fingers in my son’s trust vault?”

“Only the Potter trust vault, yes.” The Goblin shuffled some papers on his desk. “He appointed himself Heir Potter’s Magical Guardian before dropping him off at his muggle relatives.”

“Muggle..PETUNIA?” He shrieked. “That twinkly eyed bastard put my son with that, that bitch?!”

“Yes.”

“Fuck.” He sank into his chair and buried his face in his hands and tried to calm down. He resisted the urge to turn into Padfoot, he couldn’t rely on using that form as a crutch also part of him was worried that his animal form would be bald too. No, you need to focus and calm down! He told himself sternly. He took a deep breath and looked up from his hands to meet the beady eyes of the Goblin that was currently looking at him as if he was just a bug on his shoe. “How badly did they treat him?” Petunia had been a right bitch to Lily especially when they got older.

“He will be on potions for a significant amount of time.”

“You said he was better now though, does that mean he’s no longer living with them?”

“He ran away during the summer but unless you are cleared of all charges, including your escape from Azkaban, he will likely be returned to his Aunt.”

“Then how do I get myself cleared.”

“We were hoping you ask that.” The Goblin grinned at it was terrifying. Sirius suddenly had the impression that he had walked into the Nundu’s den but it was worth it if it got his son away from that harpy!

Sirius left the bank several hours later feeling rather bewildered. He had found out that the world thinks/knows he’s innocent and that the ICW is willing to grant him a proper trial to get him cleared of all charges and that they’re working on getting rid of the kiss on site order. It meant that he would have to catch a portkey to Switzerland tomorrow afternoon for that trial but that was neither here nor there.

He was told that his cousin Narcissa is suing the Ministry on his behalf and that Harry, his blood adopted son, was the one who found the rat, was also going to sue but elected to let his friend’s mum do it. There was just so much to unpack! First, a Potter friends with a Malfoy? That was certainly new, as far as Sirius had been aware there hadn’t been anything friendly between those two families since James’ grandfather had been alive. Maybe it helped that Harry was technically a Black? Which made him second cousins or something with Malfoy? It didn’t matter, what did matter though was that his cousin was probably going to want to meet up with him after his trial in Switzerland which meant that he was going to have to play nice with her smarmy husband. He would do it for Harry.

The Goblins had also told him on no uncertain terms that he was to return after his trial to get medically treated. They had wanted to do it as soon as he had walked through Gringotts doors but had ultimately decided that it would take too long to heal everything and so it would have to wait. They did however emphasise that his health, mental and physical, had to improve if he was going to get custody of his son.

His first call of business now that he finished at the bank was to get himself a new wand. There was no way he was going to Ollivander’s he was pretty sure that the man was Dumbledore’s spy. Was he being paranoid? Perhaps, but he knew that those two old men were good friends, and the old wand maker always had a knack of recognising people

regardless of their appearance. He would recognise him as Sirius Black instantly. Would he rat him out to the Ministry? Probably not. Would he tell Dumbledore? Maybe. So instead, Sirius headed back into Knockturn Alley. If he remembered correctly there was a wand shop down there, one that didn't register the wands with the Ministry. He wandered around the alley until he found a rather worn shop with a sign declaring: 'Jimmy Kiddell's Wonderful Wands.'

The door had no bell as Sirius pushed it open. It was remarkably more welcoming than Ollivander's, it was spacious and dust free. A hell of a lot cleaner than one would expect a shop in Knockturn to be, well if you weren't Sirius Black that is. He had often sneaked into the Alley to explore and knew that it was more than dirty dark wizards. He may have hated his family, but he was still a relatively dark wizard and if he hadn't been thrown into Azkaban, he likely would have brought Harry up with those so-called 'dark' traditions. Only without the Curses that Mother Dearest liked to throw around like Berti Botts Every Flavour Beans.

"Hello," A melodious voice pulled him from his thoughts. He grimaced. He was prone to getting lost in his head since he escaped.

"Hello." He smiled charmingly at the gorgeous woman that was behind the counter. "I'm here for a new wand."

"Then you are in the correct shop." Her smile was sharp, and Sirius became aware that she was probably more than just a witch, a suspicion that was only strengthened with her next sentence. "May I have your name?"

"No, but you may call me Paddy." What in Merlin's name was a member of the Fae doing working in a wand shop in Knockturn?

The Fae had the audacity to pout and sigh. "Why does no one seem to fall for that anymore?"

Sirius just shrugged and hoped that she would get to fitting him for his new wand, he did want to try to get to the Wyvern before Ken finished his shift. Now that was a sexy creature and if he wasn't so focused on clearing his name and getting custody of his son then he would put all his energy into wooing that man.

"Fine, let's get started." She pulled down a handful of boxes. "You know the drill. I hand you a wand, you give it a wave and we keep going until one likes you."

Sirius was amused that she hadn't even introduced herself but shrugged it off and focused on finding himself a wand. His last one, the one he got from Ollivander when he was eleven, had been Ash with a dragon heartstring core, he wondered what he would be matched to know.

"Birch and phoenix feather-" BANG! The candle exploded.

"Yew and unicorn hair-" The glass vase on the counter shattered and Sirius had to wonder why it was there in the first place as getting your wand was renowned for being a messy

affair.

“Walnut and dragon heartstring-” This one shot out of his hand before he had finished waving it and clattered on the floor on the other side of the shop. “Well, that’s a clear no.” The wand maker said with her amusement clear. “None of the usual cores that Ollivander uses then.” She turned away muttering to herself.

The Fae lady disappeared into the stacks of boxes, leaving Sirius alone in the front of the shop. He wasn’t sure how long she was gone for, but it felt like forever. His ability to keep track of time was almost non-existent.

“Here.” Sirius startled in surprise as the Fae lady suddenly reappeared in front of him with a very old looking box. “Try this one.”

“Alright.” He gently took the box from her, slightly afraid that it would disintegrate from his touch. Inside was a wand made from two woods, marbled together. It was roughly the same size that his last wand was, but don’t ask him the inches, he couldn’t remember. As his hand hovered over the wand, he already felt drawn to it. He picked it up and knew that this was his wand.

“A blend of Dogwood and Blackthorn with a White River Monster spine. Twelve inches exactly and the last wand made by Thiago Quintana.”

The name sounded familiar, but he couldn’t place it. “Why do I know that name?”

“Quintana was an American Wandcrafter and was the only person given leave to harvest the spine of the White River Monster fish. When he died, the secret of how he did it exactly, and the permission to use them, died with him.”

“Huh,” Sirius eyed his wand with even more appreciation. “How much does the wand cost?” He asked carefully, mindful still that she was a member of the Fae.

“32 galleons.”

He didn’t even blink at how expensive the wand was, it was made of rare materials after all. “Here.” He silently counted out the correct coins and would have rounded it up with a tip but didn’t due to the fact that he was dealing with a member of the Fae. They were rather strict about debts and if he tipped the Wandcrafter then she would technically be in his debt? Maybe, he wasn’t a hundred percent sure and Merlin he was starting to get hungry again.

He left the shop without another word, the transaction complete.

Sirius got back to the White Wyvern pub just as the sun was starting to set. He had popped into another shop on his way back to get himself a wand holster. The last thing he wanted to do was to explode his bottom by keeping the wand in his back pocket. He also picked up some robes, nothing fancy but enough to tide him over until he could do a proper shop when he was officially cleared. He also planned on getting a hair growth potion, he missed his hair.

Unfortunately, Ken wasn't behind the bar when he walked into the pub. Sirius smothered a pout that wanted to form and instead went straight to his room. It was probably for the best that the hot vampire wasn't there, it meant that Sirius could focus on his trial tomorrow. Hopefully, he would be a free man and would be able to get custody of his son. He went to bed trying to imagine what his son is like now. Does he like Quidditch? What was his favourite subject? What...He fell asleep before he could finish that last thought.

"Mr Potter." McGonagall caught up to Harry and the Weasleys as they headed to their common room like they had been told to.

"Yes, Professor?" Harry turned to her with a sinking feeling. It was going to be like second year all over again. He would be taken to the side and interrogated for something he hadn't done but that would be enough for rumours to spiral around the school.

"Your presence is required." McGonagall told him, completely unaware of Harry's anxiety.

"Shouldn't he be going to the common room like everyone else?" Ron asked bravely, moving to stand in front of him. Harry loved the Weasleys.

"Headmaster Dumbledore has requested his presence to deal with the issue that has arisen."

"And why would the Headmaster need the aid of a thirteen year old?" George asked, crossing his arms.

"Harry's been with us all day when he wasn't in class." Fred added.

"It's fine guys." Harry sighed and tried to de-escalate things before anyone got detention. "Just save me a slice of treacle tart."

All three Weasleys looked like they were going to protest but Harry stepped away, closer to McGonagall.

"Good, come along then Potter."

He waved to his friends before following the professor. He didn't see his friends exchange worried looks, he just focused on keeping up with the Head of Gryffindor who was marching at a fair speed.

"What is this about Professor?" Harry asked as he caught up to her. He wanted to have at least some idea of what was going on before they reached the Headmaster's office.

"There's been an incident with Miss Granger." She told him with a sniff.

"Is she alright?" Harry asked. Although he wasn't friends with her anymore that didn't mean that he wanted anything bad to happen to her.

“Headmaster Dumbledore will explain.” Was all she said in reply which wasn’t exactly heartening.

Thankfully they reached the Gargoyle that hid the Headmaster’s office rather quickly.

“Chocolate Frogs.” McGonagall’s brogue was thick as she practically sneered at the sweet password. It would seem that many of the professors did not like the Headmaster’s choice in passwords. The Gargoyle moved aside and let them in.

“Ah, thank you my dear for fetching Mr Potter.” Dumbledore greeted them before McGonagall had finished opening the office door. Harry followed her in and was surprised to see all the Heads of Houses in the office as well and wondered just why on earth he was there.

“Why is the boy here?” Snape demanded to know crossing his arms with a scowl on his face.

“Harry is a friend of Miss Granger’s.”

“Was.” Harry blurted out before he could stop himself. He blushed darkly when all eyes in the office turned on him. “Er, we haven’t been friends since she slapped me two months ago.” He explained and resisted the urge to fidget.

“Even so, I wished to ask you if you were aware of Miss Granger’s plans this evening.” Dumbledore looked at him over his glasses and Harry made sure to only look at his eyebrows. He didn’t want to test his mental shields just yet; they were only just starting to form and were probably as thin as rice paper.

“No sir.” Harry told him honestly.

“Are you absolutely sure, my boy?”

“Really, Albus.” Professor Flitwick interrupted. “Mr Potter hasn’t had anything to do with Miss Granger in months. I have seen him, and Mr Weasley actively avoids her. Why on Gaia’s green earth would you think that he would know anything about the events that happened tonight?” It was official, Harry loved Flitwick.

“Um, what has happened to Granger?” Harry couldn’t help but ask. It was clearly something big, but they were all dancing around the issue.

“As you are no longer friends, my boy, I see no reason to inform you of the details.” Dumbledore sighed as if he was disappointed in Harry. “However, as you are here there is another matter, I wish to ask you about.”

“Um sure?” What did he want to ask now? To be honest Harry was completely confused about this whole thing.

“Why did you think it was a good idea to sue the ministry?”

“What?” Harry frowned trying to figure out how and what Dumbledore knew about that.

“What are you on about Albus?” McGonagall sighed exasperatedly. “The newspapers clearly stated that it was Lady Malfoy that is currently suing the Ministry.”

“Ah, but you have yet to see the late addition of the Prophet. It would have been delivered in the middle of the feast, but alas we had to move the students back to their common rooms.” He pulled a newspaper from a draw and laid it out flat on his desk.

Harry along with the Heads of Houses moved closer to the desk to read the front page of the Prophet.

Student Suing the Ministry?

Yes, dear readers, your eyes do not deceive you. A student at Hogwarts is suing the Ministry for false imprisonment of themselves during the summer holidays. So not only is the Ministry falsely imprisoning adults but children as well! I will not reveal the students name as they are underage but due to some events that I will not mention for their privacy, the student in question ended up staying at the Leaky Cauldron for the summer holidays. A room that they were paying for themselves. A room that the ministry saw fit to ward so that they were only allowed to leave it three times a day to have a meal in the main area of the pub.

-Rita Skeeter, The Daily Prophet

Harry stopped reading at that point and thought fast. How had this gotten out? Clearly someone had leaked things to the press but at least they didn't reveal his name, he could work with that.

“Why do you think this about me, sir?” Harry asked, looking at the Headmaster's crooked nose.

“Well, you did spend your summer in the Leaky Cauldron did you not?” He asked pointedly.

“I did.” Harry conceded. “But other than that, what makes you think that this has anything to do with me?” Would the Headmaster admit to knowing that Harry had been ‘grounded’ to his room in the Leaky Cauldron.

“Why is this even being discussed?” Snape sneered. “We are here about the little know it all that thought it was a good idea to-”

“Yes, thank you Severus.” Dumbledore held up hand to stop Snape from finishing his sentence. Spoil sport. “You may return to your common room, my boy. However, I wish you would consider forgiving Miss Granger, she has been your friend through thick and thin.”

“Friends do not slap each other hard enough to leave a hand mark on their faces, nor do they try to cast offensive spells at each other when their back is turned.” Flitwick narrowed his eyes at the Headmaster. “Miss Granger did both of those things.”

“Since when have you been interested in the children’s friendships?” Professor Sprout for the first time in the meeting, Harry had almost forgotten that she was even there. “You certainly have not shown as much concern over Mr Diggory when he fell out with Mr Limpley at the beginning of this year as well.”

“Well-”

“Oh enough Albus.” McGonagall cut in again. “We have more important things to deal with than who is friends with who.”

“Quite right, quite right.” Dumbledore was quick to agree, stroking his beard. “You may return to your common room, Mr Potter.”

“Yessir.” Harry nodded and left the Headmaster’s office as quickly as he could without actually running.

That meeting had just left him with more questions: What had happened to Granger? Why was Dumbledore so desperate to get Harry to be friends with her? Who told the press that he was suing the members of the Ministry and if Dumbledore was so sure that the Prophet was talking about Harry then did that mean that he knew what they were doing? The last thing he wanted was for Dumbledore to start paying closer attention to him, it would interfere in his attempts to get out from under his thumb and away from the Dursleys.

“Harry!” Ron called out as soon as Harry ducked through the portrait into the common room. A lot of the students were still hanging around, likely having seen him being escorted away by McGonagall and were hoping to catch some gossip.

“What was that about?” Fred asked as he appeared on his left side.

“Do we need to prank anyone?” George asked from his right.

“I’ll tell you on one condition.” Harry decided.

“What’s that?” The twins asked at the same time.

“On whether you left me any food and some treacle tart.” He smiled letting them know that he was alright.

“You and your treacle tart.” Ron rolled his eyes but ushered Harry over to the table next to the fireplace where there were some plates, one piled high with relatively healthy food and the other with a nice large slice of treacle tart.

Harry made himself comfortable on the floor next to the table and nibbled at some of the food before speaking, “Basically, Granger did something.”

“Did what exactly?” Fred asked, leaning forward.

“Don’t know.” Harry shrugged. “Dumbledore started off by asking me if I knew what she was going to do, but when I told him we weren’t friends anymore he was really disappointed and refused to say what she had done.” He went on and told them the rest of what had happened in the meeting, eating every couple of words.

“Huh,” Ron leaned back in his seat and looked thoughtful. “Do you think they’ll tell us anything in the morning?”

“Doubt it.” Harry shook his head before pausing. “Although Snape did almost tell me before Dumbledore interrupted him...”

“Maybe you could ask him after potions tomorrow?”

Harry made a face. Sure he was on better terms with Snape now but that didn’t mean that Harry wanted to ask him questions on something that his employer had already made clear he wasn’t supposed to know.

“Fine, but if I get detention, you’ll have to give me your dessert for a week.”

“Make it two weeks and you have a deal.” Ron bartered.

“You know you’re supposed to try and get a shorter period of time right?” Harry pointed out bemused.

“Two weeks and you make half of the extra dessert fruit.” Ron continued, ignoring what Harry had said.

“You know what? Sure.” He gave in, who was he to object when his food mad friend was willing to give up desert for longer than necessary.

“Then that’s settled. We’ll find out what Granger did tomorrow.” George relaxed back against the settee.

“That’s if Snape doesn’t give me a detention.” Harry took a large bite of treacle tart and hummed happily.

“He won’t.”

“You only say that because you have your dessert on the line.” Fred teased.

“Shut up.” Ron’s ears turned red and they all laughed at him. Harry knew he wasn’t upset though because he was smiling.

Before he went to sleep that night, he wrote out a quick letter for Fenrir, Trent, and Finn. He would send it with Hedwig in the morning or after when they found out what Granger had done so he could include that detail in there too.

Chapter 16

“Students,” Dumbledore called everyone’s attention to him during breakfast. Literally everyone was there, hoping to get an explanation as to why the feast had been cancelled. “I am sure you are all wondering what happened last night.” He paused briefly before continuing. “I am afraid that I must inform you that the werewolf, Fenrir Greyback, got onto the grounds last night and attacked two of own.”

There was instant panic.

“Oh Merlin! He could still be here!”

“A werewolf?”

“We’re going to die!”

Harry knew after the Halloween of his first year that his schoolmates could be rather dramatic, but this just further proved it. However, he wasn’t interested in their reactions. No, instead he was watching the staff members closely.

Professor Snape was scowling darkly and even Professor Flitwick looked rather cross. So, with those two teacher’s reactions and the knowledge that Fenrir wouldn’t actually bite anyone unless they were ill and the fact that Lupin was already a werewolf? It was obvious that Dumbledore was lying through his crooked teeth. He looked back at his friends and saw that they were looking at him confused. He shook his head at them, trying to convey that Dumbledore was lying that Fenrir, the werewolf that he had defended to them, hadn’t done this. He couldn’t remember if he had told them that Lupin was a werewolf or not. He cursed himself for not sharing that information.

The noise of panicking children was silenced by the main doors of the Great Hall slamming open. Harry flinched at the sudden noise before peering over Ron’s head to see who had stormed into the hall.

“I am Head Auror Amelia Bones,” An unfortunately familiar voice filled the hall.

“My dear, what brings you here?” Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled obnoxiously.

“We received a report of a werewolf attack on school grounds.” She glared at Dumbledore. “Which is something that you should have personally reported. Instead, the victim of said attack had to report it herself.”

“I’m sure my letter just got lost on its-”

“You should have flooed us, not sent a letter.” Bones interrupted him. “Instead I find you here lying to your students.”

At the announcement that Dumbledore had lied to them, the students started to whisper to each other again.

“Harry?” Ron leant in close.

“It couldn’t have been Greyback.” Harry murmured to his friend. “But Lupin is a werewolf.”

“Lupin?!” Ron exclaimed slightly too loud. He flinched when everyone turned to look at him. He ducked down in his seat, his ears turned bright red. “Sorry.” He mumbled to Harry.

“It would seem that some of your students are already aware, but yes, Professor Lupin is a werewolf and was the one to attack Miss Granger last night.” Bones announced to the Great Hall. Once again, she didn’t seem to understand tact. Sure, Harry wasn’t pleased that the headmaster lied to everyone to put the blame on Fenrir, but she could have told everyone a little more delicately, surely?

The noise level in the hall quickly rose again.

“We’ve been taught by a werewolf?”

“Is that why he was so awful to Potter?”

“My father will hear about this!”

“Why was this allowed?”

“Enough!” Bones’ shot a noisy spell at the ceiling to silence the students. “This is now a matter for the DMLE. Mr Lupin is being arrested as we speak.”

“What will happen to Granger?” Harry found himself asking. “Was she turned?”

“Unfortunately, Miss Granger was indeed infected by the werewolf and is now one herself.” Bones sighed. “As to what will happen to her now? There are not any wizarding schools in Britain that will accept a werewolf student.”

“Come now, Amelia.” Dumbledore stepped down to meet her. “She is just a child.”

“The law is the law, Albus.” Bones shot back with a cold look. “The girl is more than welcome to attend school outside of the country and do not think that you are off the hook for allowing such a dangerous creature to live and teach at Hogwarts.”

“Remus isn’t-” Dumbledore cut himself off as if he could feel the school’s sceptical eyes on him. Was the man seriously going to say that Lupin wasn’t dangerous, especially as the man had literally attacked a student the night before.

“Now, we aren’t just here to remove the werewolves from the school.” Bones adjusted her monocle. “Mr Potter?”

Uh oh. “Yes, ma’am?” Harry asked nervously as he stood from his place at the Gryffindor table. What was this about? Why was he being called out again? A large, freckled hand

squeezed his in reassurance. Harry smiled gratefully at Ron before facing the woman that had helped ensure that he would be locked in his room over the summer.

“I would like to formally apologise for my actions this past summer.” She bowed her head. “I have informed my lawyers that I am willing to settle outside of court and I will agree to pay whatever fee they deem necessary. However, I wanted to apologise to you personally.”

“Thank you.” Was all Harry could say. He sat down before she could try and get him to say more. He was pretty sure that he wasn’t actually supposed to speak to her without his lawyer because of the ongoing legal case...he would have to make sure to write his lawyer a letter detailing this interaction just in case. He didn’t partially care about the money, but he didn’t want her to get out of trouble just because she decided to be sneaky and publicly apologise. Not to mention that he could feel his anger starting to boil. She had just outed him to the whole school. The newspaper that had been delivered last night to the common rooms due to the feast being cancelled, hadn’t included his name because he was a minor. Bone didn’t seem to care about privacy at all. He would have to include that in his letter to his lawyer as well.

“You alright, mate?” Ron asked as soon as he sat down.

“Just annoyed.” Harry sighed and took a savage bite from his toast.

“To be fair mate-” George pushed a glass of orange juice towards him.

“I think everyone knew that it was you-” Fred continued.

“As soon as they read the article.” The twins finished together.

“Still, it's one thing to suspect but another to have it confirmed.” He scowled.

The noise in the hall picked up again as the Aurors left and Dumbledore followed them out. He was probably trying to do some damage control but Harry didn’t care. He pulled out the letter that he had started writing last night to add the new information.

Dear Trent, Fenrir, Finn and Ken,

I miss you guys, it's been months since I last saw you and before this summer I never had people to miss so this is all rather new to me, but I do, miss you that is. Would it be alright if I came back to the pub for the Christmas holidays? You can say no, if it's not!

I’m doing well in all my classes and even managed to get an O in potions! Lupin has been leaving me alone and Flitwick and Snape seem to be watching my back for me. Its a little weird as I never had much interaction with Flitwick outside of class before this year and previously Snape seemed to hate me but I’m not one to look a gift Hippogriff in the mouth. Runes are my favourite although I have to admit that Divination is a close second due to what you taught me in the summer, Trent. Though, I haven’t had much of a chance to use the tarot cards you got me for my birthday yet! I plan to try and do a reading soon, so much has been happening!

As you know, Halloween is my least favourite time of the year for obvious reasons and because every year something bad happens on that day. This year was no different. The Halloween feast was cancelled without reason and I was called to the Headmaster's office. It was really weird? Apparently, Granger, you know the girl I'm no longer friends with, did something that landed her in the hospital wing and for some reason Dumbles tried to pin the thing on me? He wouldn't say what she had done, but asked if I had given her the idea and once I, and professor Flitwick managed to get it through his lemon addled head that I was no longer friends with her and hadn't been in months he finally let up on the idea but still wouldn't tell me what she had done. THEN he pulled out the evening's special edition of the Daily Profit and asked why I was suing the Ministry. He all but said that he knew that the ministry had grounded me without just cause. Of course, he didn't outright say it unfortunately and then shortly afterwards I was told to return to my common room. It wasn't as bad a day as it had been last year, at least this time I wasn't accused of killing a cat...

I wrote the above last night. This morning everyone was in attendance for breakfast and Dumbles told us why the feast was cancelled last night. A student was attacked by a werewolf. He had the gall to try and blame Fenrir but just as all the students were panicking Head Auror Bones stormed in and told him off for lying. Lupin had attacked Granger and Dumbles did not inform the Aurors. Lupin has been arrested and from the sounds of things, Granger is going to be forced out of the school. Whether she will get a place in another school outside of the country is probably something I will never know. I'm not sure how I feel about that. I dislike Granger and Lupin for who they are rather than what they are, so I hate that they are being discriminated against but at the same time I feel vindicated that Lupin has been arrested and that I will no longer have to worry about being hexed by Granger in the halls.

The above puts Auror Bones in good light, she did after all call Dumbles out on his lies but then she had to go and put her foot in her mouth. Firstly, I'm a little uncomfortable at how easily and how much of the case she shared, surely she shouldn't be allowed to share the details of an ongoing case? And secondly, she called me out in the Great Hall, in front of all the students and all the teachers and the Aurors she had with her, that I was suing her. She said that she was going to agree to whatever settlement my lawyers decided on but wanted to apologise in person. I said thank you and sat back down. Does saying thank you, weaken my case against her? I plan on sending my lawyer a letter with more details. I'm just incredibly annoyed that she aired my business to the whole school. Sure it was already in the newspaper but I hadn't been explicitly named. So I'm feeling a little conflicted.

Anyway, enough about me, how are you guys? Tell me everything! Don't leave anything out, not even what you had for breakfast, I want to know everything! Has Finn made anything new lately? Has Ken managed to invest in a new sticking charm? Any good readings, Trent? How was the full moon for Fenrir? How are things progressing with the lawyers for the other issue, do you know?

Missing you,

Harry.

Finished writing his letter, Harry cast a quick spell to dry the ink before folding it.

“You done, mate?” Ron asked, rolling an orange at him. “Eat that quickly before breakfast is over.”

“Thanks.” Harry smiled at his friend. “We have divination first, right?”

“Yeah,” His friend garbled around a mouth full of toast.

“Afterwards, I’ll need to go to the owlery to send a -” Harry didn’t get a chance to finish his sentence as the goddess of his life soared down from the eaves of the great hall to land gracefully on the table in front of him with her leg outstretched in front of her imperiously. “Hedwig.” Harry grinned. “You always know when I need you!” He snatched a piece of bacon from Seamus’ plate, as the platter of the stuff was too far away and gave it to her.

“Hey!” Seamus complained but was ignored.

“For the usual suspects.” He tied the letter to her outstretched leg. Hedwig had excellent balance and could eat the bacon while standing on one leg. She finished her bacon, took a long sip from Harry’s water before gently nipping at Harry’s finger that was stroking her feathers. “Thanks girl.”

Hedwig flew off at the same time McGonagall stood from her seat at the Head Table. Harry was also vaguely aware of Ron getting him a fresh glass of water.

“If I could have everyone’s attention please?” McGonagall called in her clipped Scottish accent. Harry turned to face the front of the hall and wondered what she would be announcing this time. Maybe they were going to cancel classes? “I know that this morning has been very exciting but you still have classes.” There were the obligatory groans of dismay. “However,” She raised her voice to be heard over the din. “Due to the lack of Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, that lesson spot will now be considered Study Hall until further notice.” The tables started to clear themselves. “Breakfast has ended, please head to your classes.”

Harry and Ron headed to Divination, both wondering what the class would be like now that Granger wouldn’t be there causing disruptions.

Sirius landed with a thump in the receiving hall of the Federal Supreme Court of Switzerland. Switzerland was an interesting country, it is a confederation of states, called cantons, much like America. And was governed by a Federal Assembly which was divided into two chambers...neither of which Sirius had ever really spent time looking into. What he did know however, was that unlike the British Ministry of Magic that kept everything from their law courts to their Wizemogot and Minister in one building, Switzerland’s magical side lived alongside the muggles. There were Magical departments working out of the same buildings as the muggle! Which is why he landed in the building that was known as the Federal Supreme Court of Switzerland, he would be tried there but in front of the body of the ICW in the magical side of things.

“Good morning,” A heavily accented voice created Sirius once he had landed. A tanned hand was extended to him, and he grabbed it. “I am Hans Oelbermann.”

“Thanks,” Sirius grunted as he pulled to his feet. “I used to be so much better at portkey travel, I swear.” He groused while taking in the man that had been sent to receive him. He was tall, blonde and blue eyed with a stern face but kind eyes. “So, what happens now?” He asked, taking his hand back.

“Now, you let me handcuff you and take you to the waiting cells where your lawyer will meet you.”

“Sure,” Sirius squashed the urge to make an inappropriate comment and held out his arms in front of him. Now wasn’t the time. He needed to have this fair trial, be cleared as healthy by the Goblins and then he could meet his son. From what the Goblins had implied, he probably wouldn’t like Sirius coming storming in and forcing him to live with him. He wasn’t sure who he had made ‘friends’ with during his summer but he had clearly found somewhere to live...he just hoped that Harry would let him live there with him.

The handcuff closed tightly around Sirius’ wrists, and it felt like there was a band constricting his magic in his chest as well. These were clearly magic inhibiting handcuffs, he hadn’t expected these to be used but it was a smart thing to do after all, his abilities were unknown to them. He had after all managed to escape from Azkaban which was globally known to be a hellhole. His respect for the Swiss law enforcement went up with this decision, he liked that they were taking this seriously.

“Not too tight?” Hans checked.

“They’re fine.” Sirius confirmed.

While Sirius was being taken to the waiting cells in the Federal Supreme Court, Harry and Ron were just sitting down for their Divination lesson.

“Good morning class.” Trelawny greeted the students, her eyes wide behind her buggish glasses. “The past evening and this morning have been rather eventful.” She surveyed the class and saw that her students were looking quite peaky. “So today we will be reviewing Tasseography. But you will be divining what is in your own cups this morning.” She picked up her own cup of tea and drank it deeply before staring into its depths. “Hmm, looks like I should avoid lunch in the great hall next Tuesday.” She shrugged and then shooed the students. “What are you waiting for, get yourselves a cup.”

Tea leaf reading again? Harry relaxed in his very comfortable chair. He was starting to really like Professor Trelawney, she saw that they were stressed out and decided to let them have a nice calm lesson drinking tea. And as awful as the thought was, Harry was pleased that Granger wasn’t going to be there to ruin the atmosphere of the lesson. Divination was always tense due to her constant attacks against the Professor. Granger’s absence also meant that Neville could more comfortably sit at their table. He had been squished in on the end as Granger would always appear out of nowhere at the table pushing him out of the way.

“I’ll get the tea pot and fill it with hot water if one of you get the cups and the other the tea leaves?” Harry offered as he stood.

“I’ll get the cups.” Ron gave Neville a teasing look, the other boy had accidentally broken a cup during the first lesson.

“Then I’ll get the tea.” Neville smiled sheepishly.

They were shortly settled with a cup of aromatic tea each.

Harry inhaled the aroma from his tea deeply, it was a camomile blend, something to sooth the students. He smiled and closed his eyes and thought about what he wanted to know.

Will Sirius’ trial go well?

He focused on that question and slowly drank his tea until there wasn’t a drop left. He then turned the cup upside down for a minute before turning it three times, only stopping once the handle was pointed south on the last rotation. He then flipped the cup right way up and peered inside.

Clearly and with no other images, the tea leaves had formed a fish that sat in the centre of the cup. Harry flipped through the textbook, making a mental note that he really needed to learn all these meanings off by heart like Trent and found the meaning behind the image.

Fish: good news from another country

Harry grinned.

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

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

After a good hour with his Lawyer, one provided by the ICW so that they would be without the British bias, Sirius was escorted into the courtroom. He looked around curiously, he had never been in a courtroom before. Despite popular belief, Sirius had not been an Auror before he was arrested, and he had not gotten a trial either so he had never seen inside of a courtroom.

The courtroom was square with dark wooden panelled walls with black marble beams. At one end were several rows of wooden benches and at the other, on a raised dais was a curved court bench where the members of the ICW that are preceding over the trial were sat. There was also a gallery where the public could watch the trial and it was packed with journalists, their camera's occasionally flashing. In the centre of the room, was a marble bench that his lawyer had informed him that he would be sat on, just behind the marble bench were two tables, usually used for the prosecutor and defending lawyers.



Sirius was led over to the marble bench, his handcuffs were then attached to a metal bar that stuck up out of it, dividing the bench in two. He could feel his heart pounding madly in his chest. The room was dark due its décor and the chandelier above his head was the only light source in the room. It was rather unnerving. Despite knowing that he was innocent, he couldn't help but find himself afraid of the outcome of this trial. He didn't exactly look like the beacon of all that was good after all! His head had a five o'clock shadow for goodness sake! He made a note to buy a hair growth potion as soon as he could...he missed his long hair. And then realised that his mind had gotten off track as it was prone to doing since Azkaban. Luckily he didn't have to worry himself into a state for long as his Lawyer came over.

"It will be fine." His Lawyer, Wolf Spielman, a German wizard with greying hair and a calm demeanour, said softly to him. "You are to say yes to the Veritserum if offered, and the truth

will be known. Though I think that won't be necessary."

"I know." Sirius took a deep breath. "Let's do this."

And with that his lawyer stepped back and the trial started.

"The Court is in session." A tall African man stood from the bench and banged his gavel. The room fell silent. "Case four thousand, six hundred and twenty three: Sirius Black Vs. The British Ministry of Magic. Presided over by Babajide Akingbade, Royston Idlewind, Heinrich Eberstadt, Arnold Guzman, Pierre Bonaccord, Momolu Wotorson, and Christine Dixon." He gestured towards each person as he stated the name, the first being his own. "The defendant in this case is Sirius Black. The accusation: False imprisonment for crimes he claims he did not commit. Lawyer Spielman, your opening statement please?"

Spielman stood from his bench and stepped forward. "Ladies and Gentleman, my client, Mr Black was imprisoned by the British Government without a trial." He paused. "All because everyone knew he was guilty." He paused again. "He wasn't given a chance to explain, to defend himself against the accusation that he had betrayed his friends to the British Dark Lord; that he had blown up a street, killing thirteen muggles and another wizard, a wizard that by the way was declared dead but has since been found to be real culprit of the crime, my client was accused." He paused again. "And what did the British Government do, once they found out that my client was innocent? They continue to hunt him down, planning to give this man, who has spent the last twelve years in the hellish Azkaban prison, the Dementor's kiss." He made eye contact with each of the ICW members that were presiding over the case. "How is that fair, I ask you? Mr Black's only crime is escaping from his illegal imprisonment when he found that his godson was in danger." He gestured over to Sirius. "This man does not deserved to be killed by the Government that failed him." He finished his statement with a nod before stepping back.

"Thank you, Lawyer Spielman." Akingbade made a note on the parchment in front of him. "Lawyer Pickering as the delegate of the British Ministry of Magic, what is your opening statement?"

Pickering stepped forward, mopping her brow with a pink handkerchief. "We, the British Ministry of Magic have this to say:" She took a deep breath. "Mr Black may have been innocent of his original crimes however, he is not innocent of breaking out of Azkaban, which is a kissable offence according to British Law. The Law is the law."

"Thank you Lawyer Pickering." Akingbade nodded before looking down at his parchment. "This case, to us on the International Confederation of Wix, is rather up and shut. And to be honest we find it disgusting that it had to get this far." The other members of the ICW that were presiding over the court case nodded in agreement. "The British Laws obviously need to be updated."

Sirius watched as Pickering pulled at the collar of her robes nervously. It looked like his lawyer had been right, he wouldn't even need to be questioned under veritaserum. The outcome had been decided before he had even arrived in court. Still there was always a chance, no matter how slim that it would not go well for him.

“We, the ICW, declare that Mr Sirius Black, is innocent on all charges.” He paused as the journalists started to chat excitedly. “And the kiss on sight order is revoked.”

Sirius felt weak with relief and was thankful that he was sitting down.

“The British Ministry of Magic has until seven o’clock this evening to make it clear the public that Sirius Black is both innocent and no longer hunted.” And with that Akingbade struck gavel against the bench, closing the court. The room lit up with the flash from dozens of cameras as the journalists rushed to take the perfect picture of the innocent man that the British had condemned.

Hans Oelbermann, the nice man that had met him when he had first arrived in Switzerland, removed the handcuffs from him. “There we are.” He smiled at Sirius. “You are free to go.”

“I’m free.” Sirius mumbled to himself, a large grin stretching across his face.

“And I will work with you, against your ministry to get reparations for their unlawful actions against you.” His Lawyer appeared next to him. “But first let’s get you out of here, yes?”

Sirius nodded dumbly in agreement before remembering the promise he had made to the Goblins. “I uh, promised Gringotts that I would return straight to them after the trial.”

“Then we will get you to the Goblins,” Spielman promised.

“A return portkey can be provided if you want?” Oelbermann offered. “Free of charge.”

“That would be helpful, thank you.” Spielman accepted the offer on his behalf. “If we could have one that will take us to the British branch of Gringotts, that would be perfect.”

“I’ll get that sorted for you.”

Sirius just let them arrange everything. He still couldn’t believe that he was officially free. It was something that he had been dreaming of for the past twelve years, something he never thought would happen. Now he just needed to get better before he could get custody of Harry. Harry who had been so smart and brave.

While Sirius was being escorted to Gringotts to get some much needed healing, the British Delegate, Lawyer Matilda Pickering rushed back to the British Ministry to inform Amelia Bones and Cornelius Fudge on the outcome. She had been warned by Amelia before she had taken the position that the outcome would not be in the British Ministry’s favour but she hadn’t expected for the ICW to have already made up their minds before the trial. They didn’t even dose Black with Veritserum! She only took on the job because Beven, the usual go to lawyer/solicitor of the Ministry, was busy dealing with a lawsuit from Lady Malfoy.

“We knew that they were going to rule in Black’s favour.” Cornelius Fudge sighed as he dabbed at his sweaty forehead with a handkerchief. Pickering hadn’t come back with

unexpected news. “And now that we have the ICW telling us to repeal the kiss on sight order, we can without affecting our laws.”

“I’ll get an article out in a special edition of the Daily Prophet.” The Ministry’s media liaison Clare Hollingworth said as she quickly jotted down some notes. “I’ll put emphasis on the fact that it was due to an error of the previous administration that we as the current administration couldn’t fix due to our laws until the ICW overruled us. That we are pleased with this outcome.”

“Which means we really need to settle with Narcissa Malfoy.” The Ministry’s Solicitor Thomas Beven sighed.

“I hate paying out.” Fudge groaned before taking a deep breath. He was the Minister, he needed to act like it and that included giving remuneration from the Ministry’s coffers. “Alright, how much do you think we should give?”

“Lady Malfoy is asking for twenty million galleons.” Beven read aloud from his notes. Cornelius felt his heart sink.

“That’s outrageous!” Deloris Umbridge blustered from where she was sat next to the Minister. Her face turned puce.

“Not as outrageous as you would think.” The solicitor shuffled his papers, “Lady Malfoy quotes a similar case in America and is actually asking less than what was given out to someone who was imprisoned falsely for less time over there.”

“Then we give Mr Black, the twenty million-”

“What?” Deloris interjected.

“And add on the ten thousand we offered for his bounty.” He continued as if he hadn’t been interrupted. “This will help show us in a better light.” He gave his undersecretary a stern look. She was useful in getting the least important people and issues to stay away due to her attitude but right now she wasn’t being hugely helpful.

“Barty Crouch is awaiting trial for his misconduct, if he is found guilty of what he admitted to us then perhaps part of the punishment should be a hefty fine that will also be paid to Mr Black?” Amelia Bones suggested.

“Mention it to the Wizengamot.” Cornelius told her. They were in charge of the sentencing. “With the issue of Sirius Black sorted, I want to know how the Prophet got wind of a student suing us? We are just lucky that they did not use Mr Potter’s name.” He scowled as he remembered reading the article. They came across rather poorly.

“It was written by Rita Skeeter.” Delores pursed her lips. “We don’t know how she gets any of her information.” If they did then she would have made sure that the reporter only reported on what she wanted her to.

“Unfortunately we can’t do anything about the article because she left the student’s name out of it.” Amelia sighed. “She technically hasn’t broken the law even if she toes the line of it often.”

“While on the subject of the lawsuit...” Beven pulled out a sheet of paper. “Amelia, you have managed to get yourself into hot water with Mr Potter’s lawyer.”

“What? Why?” The stern woman frowned. “I agreed to settle outside of court, correct?”

“Indeed, but apparently you spoke to Mr Potter loudly and in a public place about your actions this past summer and the lawsuit. Thus making it clear to everyone in the Great Hall at Hogwarts, that he was the student that the article was alluding to.”

“You are kidding, right?” Cornelius wanted a strong drink. “Please tell me that you didn’t violate the privacy of a minor?” Was it just him, or did Amelia Bones seem to be losing her touch as of late? Shouldn’t she have known in the first place that the Ministry had no right to confine the young man to his room during the summer? And now this? Perhaps he should start looking for a new Head Auror.

“I-” She was cut off by the Minister before she could explain herself.

“What were you even doing at Hogwarts anyway?”

“We got a report from a student that they had been attacked by a werewolf.”

“A werewolf in Hogwarts?” Delores practically shrieked.

“It is being investigated, and the alleged werewolf has been arrested. The young victim is in an isolation room in St Mungos. Not that there is much we can do for them.”

“We will need to give a statement on that as well then.” He dabbed at his brow again. “With the investigation I want every I dotted and every t crossed.”

“Of course.” Amelia looked insulted but considering how her actions have led to a lawsuit, she shouldn’t be surprised by his order.

“Back to the issue of Mr Potter’s lawsuit, his lawyer is now asking for more money due to the distress you caused his client.”

Amelia grimaced. “Fine, I’ll pay whatever is necessary.”

“Good.” Beven made a note. “And may I suggest that you release a statement about the attack at Hogwarts, before Ms. Skeeter does?”

“I will have something written up to go out with a special edition on Sirius Black.” Hollingworth promised.

“Thank you and let’s hope for the love of Merlin that nothing else goes wrong!” Cornelius exclaimed standing from his chair. He had several more meetings to attend and didn’t want to

waste anymore time on fixing the errors of the past administration or Bones' blunders. "Now, if you excuse me, I have a meeting with the new Chief Warlock."

"Dumbledore has been removed from his position?" Amelia looked taken aback.

"It was almost a unanimous vote, after all if the ICW removed him as the Supreme Mugwump for his part in the Sirius Black debacle. We would have looked like fools for keeping him on as the Chief Warlock."

"Lucius Malfoy was voted in." Delores told her, sounding pleased.

"Malfoy is the new Chief Warlock?" Amelia said in disbelief. Cornelius ignored her and continued on his way out of the room. He knew that she had issues with Malfoy however, if he had things his way, she wouldn't be Head Auror for much longer.

Owls swarmed into the Great Hall, each carrying a special evening edition of the Daily Prophet. This was the second special evening edition that had been delivered that week. The reporters were clearly very eager to get the news out. Harry accepted and paid for his own copy of the paper and couldn't stop the smile that spread across his face as he read the front page.

Special Evening Edition: Sirius Black is a Free Man!

Sirius Black has been given a full pardon by the International Confederate of Wix (ICW) and the British Ministry of Magic has been ordered to retract the kiss on sight order. The Ministry's media liaison Clare Hollingworth had this to say:

"Minister Fudge is grateful for the ICW's decision and help in fixing the previous administration's failure. He is regretful that he had been beholden to old laws that he could not overrule without the ICW's aid. Minister Fudge promises to bring up a review of the laws...."

-R. Almeidus, The Daily Prophet

It looked like Harry's tea reading was correct! He made a mental note to include that in his next letter to Trent, he was sure the wizard would be interested in hearing of his successful prediction. But more importantly, his father was free. He was happy, of course he was but at the same time what did it mean for him? Would his father want anything to do with him? How was he mentally after spending so many years in Azkaban? He hoped that if he did end up living with the man that he would let him still go to the White Wyvern pub, that he would still get to see Trent, Fenrir, Finn, Ken and everyone else.

"Check out the second page." Ron nudged him, looking up from where he was reading over Dean's shoulder. "Do they say anything about what they're going to do with Granger?"

Werewolves in Hogwarts?!

There was indeed a werewolf at Hogwarts, employed there even! Mr Remus Lupin, was hired as this year's Defence Against the Dark Arts Professor, ironic isn't it? That the professor turned out to be a werewolf? Do not fear, dear readers as the werewolf has already been arrested! Unfortunately not before he had the chance to attack a student on the last full moon...

-Rita Skeeter, The Daily Prophet

“ No.” Harry shook his head. “But then they wouldn't, would they?”

“ What do you mean?”

“ Granger is a minor, just like how they didn't print my name in the paper they can't do hers.” Harry explained. “It's the same with muggle newspapers.”

“ True.” Ron nodded before digging into his food. The owls had arrived not long after everyone had sat down for dinner. “You need to eat.” He looked pointedly at Harry's empty plate.

“ Yes, mum.” He teased his friend and added some food to his plate. He would read the rest of the paper later but like Ron said, he needed to eat.

“ Want to talk about Sirius Black?” Fred asked Harry after he had dragged him and Ron up into their dorm.

“ Didn't you say he was your father?” George added.

Harry and Ron were sitting on George's bed while the twins were on Fred's. They had kicked Lee out of the room for a bit.

“ Yeah.” Harry nodded. “He blood adopted me when I was a baby.”

“ Weird how he was innocent and sent to Azkaban without a trial before you could live with him after your mum and dad died.” Ron commented.

“ Yeah, what a coincidence.” Fred and George said at the same time.

“ I know but he's free now.” Harry would focus on the implications of his father being put away so he would have to grow up with the Dursley's later. “Do you think he'll want me?” His insecurity bled through. What if after everything he had been through, Sirius Black did not want his son? Maybe he wanted to be free, completely freed and not tied down with a kid?

“ Don’t be silly.” Ron gently ruffled Harry’s hair, knowing better than to even lightly cuff his friend on the head. “Of course he will want you.”

“ And if he doesn’t then his loss.” George told him.

“ Yeah.” Fred walked over to where Harry was sitting and threw an arm around him. “You’ll still have us and your other friends in Knockturn. Didn’t you say that two of them were setting up a bedroom for you?”

“ Oh, yeah. I-I will have to let Trent and Fen know.” Harry felt guilty. Trent and Fenrir had immediately opened their home to him, wanted him from the start and now...now that Sirius Black, his father, was declared an innocent man....“If he does want me, do you think he’ll still let me see them?” He asked, biting his lip. He wasn’t sure what he would do if his father refused to let him go see his Knockturn friends.

“ Then you sneak out again.” Ron said simply with a shrug. “Like you did this summer.”

“ We’ll give you some pranks that will make sneaking out easier.” George promised. “Should work as a distraction at least.”

“ Thanks guys.” Harry felt warm and happy from their support. “Either way, I promise to invite you guys over to wherever I end up living.” Because one thing was sure, he was not returning to the Dursleys. Ever.

Trent sat at the bar, with Finn a seat over from him. He was sipping from a fragile looking tea cup while the blacksmith was nursing a tumbler of firewhiskey as had become their norm since Harry returned to Hogwarts. He missed his pup! And he didn’t even have his dashing mate to comfort him because it was that time of the month again. They always spent the days around the full moon apart as Fenrir had to look after his pack whilst transformed and afterwards so he wouldn’t have time to play with Trent in his Animagus form, a fox. So he was stuck in his pub with Grumpy the blacksmith and Mr Sensible serving the drinks. He pulled out his tarot cards, wondering if he could persuade Finn into letting him do a reading on him when a stranger walked into his pub.

The stranger was of average height but concerningly thin and pale. The only hair on his head were his eyebrows that hung low over light eyes. There was something familiar about him but he couldn’t put his finger on what it was or where he knew him from. Luckily, the man headed straight for the bar where he was sitting.

“Hey, sorry I didn’t make it back in time before the end of your shift.” The stranger smiled charmingly at Ken who to Trent’s bewilderment blushed. He hadn’t realised that vampires could blush.

“ Back for another night?” Ken, was Ken flirting back?! What kind of alternate dimension had Trent found himself in...? “You look better.” Ken continued as if he hadn’t just blown Trent’s mind.

“ Thanks,” the stranger gave Ken a roguish grin. “Got a full check over by the Goblins.” He ran a hand over his smooth head. “I can’t take a hair lengthening potion for a few more days due to the potions they have me on though.” He pouted.

“ Poor you.” Ken teased as he slid a glass of water, with lemon, over to the man. “Think I can get a name this time?”

“ I have a feeling you already know it.” The stranger leant closer to Ken, the bar between them was the only thing keeping them a polite distance apart. “Didn’t I say that you could call me Paddy?”

“ Ugh,” Finn pulled a disgusted face. “Could you not flirt over my firewhiskey please?”

“ Don’t be rude.” Trent was quick to scold him.

“ Nah, it’s cool.” The stranger straightened up. “I’m Sirius Black.” He formally introduced himself to the people at the pub...even if he was mainly making eye contact with Ken. “Nice to meet you all.” Wait, wasn’t Sirius Black the blood adopted father of his pup? Trent sat up straighter in his seat. What were the chances of that?!

“ So, you staying for a while?” Ken asked as he polished a glass.

“ If you’ve got a room free.” Sirius Black smiled warmly. “And if you’ve got another bowl of that awesome udon stuff you served me last time.”

“ Number seven is free for you.” He slid a key across the bar. “And I’ll get started on your udon.”

“ You’re the best.” Sirius beamed at Ken before turning to Finn. “Are you going to be mad if I sit next to you?”

Instead of answering, Finn got up and moved up a seat.

“ I take that as a yes.” Sirius said bemused before taking the middle seat that would leave an empty seat on either side of him.

“ Ignore him.” Trent shuffled his deck. “Finn is a grump.”

“ I don’t mind.” Sirius shrugged.

“ I’m Trent.” And then on a whim he asked, “Would you like a tarot reading?” He hoped the man agreed, he wanted to get a read on the father of his pup.

Sirius stared at him blankly for a moment, Trent wished that he was a legilimens so he could know what the man was thinking but he eventually nodded with a shrug.

“ Sure, why not?”

“ I’ll just do a general reading, shall I?” Trent focused on the cards in his hands. “Past, Present and Future spread.”

“ Alright.”

Trent thought about the man in front of him. Sirius Black, Father of Harry Potter aka Evan Fleamont; ex-prisoner of Azkaban; innocent man and, someone who was interested in his friend Ken.

He split the deck into three equal stacks and then flipped over the top card on the ‘past’ pile. “The Strength card reversed.” He announced. “You acted without thought, recklessly and it led to you doing something that you deeply regretted.”

“ I think everyone knows about that by now.” Sirius replied dryly. He had after all been sent to Azkaban because of his recklessness in being a decoy and he had chased after the traitor that had betrayed the Potters instead of caring for his son. It was something he regretted deeply.

Trent turned over the present card. “The Wheel of Fortune.” He smiled at the card. “You previously went through a bad time but like the wheel of fortune, life keeps going on and good things will return to you. This is also a critical turning point in your life. The Wheel of Fortune is also known as the wheel of karma and reminds you that ‘what goes around comes around.’ Be a kind and loving person to others, and they’ll be kind and loving to you. Be nasty and mean, and you will get nasty and mean turning back your way.”

“ So, don’t be a prat.” Sirius summed up and sipped from the glass of water that Ken slid his way. “I can do that.”

“ And finally, your future card.” Trent flipped over the last card. “The Lovers.” He hummed thoughtfully. “The Lovers card represents conscious connections and meaningful relationships. While The Lovers card typically refers to a romantic tie, it can also represent a close friendship or family relationship where love, respect and compassion flow. I get the sense that this is what the card is referring to for you.” He looks Sirius in the eye. “Not to say that you won’t meet your soulmate, but that there is a non romantic bond that comes first for you.”

“ My son.” Sirius whispered his eyes wide. “Thank you.”

He knows about his son then? Trent mused before he continued to tell the man what the card meant. “At its heart, The Lovers is about choice. The choice about who you want to be in this lifetime, how you connect with others and on what level, and about what you will and won’t stand for. To make good choices, you need to be clear about your personal beliefs and values and stay true to them. Not all decisions will be easy either. The Lovers card is often a sign that you are facing a moral dilemma and must consider all consequences before acting. Your values system is being challenged, and you are being called to take the higher path, even if it is difficult. Do not carry out a decision based on fear or worry or guilt or shame. Now, more than ever, you must choose love – love for yourself and love for others. Choose the best version of yourself.” He finished solemnly before picking up his cards and reshuffling them.

“ You have given me a lot to think about.” Sirius’ voice was shaky as he turned from him.

“ Thank you for letting me do your reading.” Trent smiled softly at the shaken man and hoped for Harry’s sake that the man would make the right choices in the future, whatever they be.

“ What’s wrong?” Ken asked as he came back to the bar with a steaming bowl of udon noodles.

“ Nothing, I’ve just been given a lot to think about.” Sirius reassured him.

“ Well, you can think about them while you eat.” Ken pointedly put the bowl down in front of him. “You are far too skinny.”

“ Yes, mum.” He gave the vampire a roguish smile before digging into his meal.

At breakfast the next morning more owls arrived with the usual Daily Prophet, letters and parcels. Harry accepted and paid for his paper but didn’t even have a chance to glance at it before Hedwig was in front of him with a bundle of letters.

“ Thanks, girl.” Harry smiled at his beautiful owl. He fed her some bacon from his own plate, Seamus was protectively curled around his plate so that Harry nor Hedwig could pinch any from him. “I’ll probably have a letter for you later.” She cooed and rubbed her beak against his nose in some sort of kiss, something she hadn’t done before but was adorable, before flying off to the owlery. He had a quick look through the letters and didn’t recognise the handwriting on one of them so he put that to the back of the pile to read later with the Twins just in case. There was a letter from Trent and Fenir, and one from Finn, and then there was a folded up note that was written in Snape’s handwriting. Curious, he put the rest of the letters in his bag and read the note.

Potter,

There are plans to get you under control. There has been talk about setting up a marriage contract. You may want to get ahead of this or else you will find yourself stuck with someone unpalatable.

It was unsigned but he recognised the handwriting and terse language. A chill went down Harry’s spine as he reread the letter. He had a feeling that he knew what a marriage contract meant but he hoped he was wrong.

“ We need to have an emergency meeting.” He told Ron quietly as the redhead added another slice of toast to his plate.

“ The whole group?” His best friend calmly asked not even questioning why they needed to meet up.

“ At least one green.” Harry nodded, implying that they needed one of the Slytherins, which to be honest would most likely be Malfoy as they hadn’t really hung out with Pucey or Nott in weeks.

“ I’ll tell the demons.” He promised before pulling out a piece of parchment and a self inking quill, it was a prank item from the twins, and it only wrote in pink so he couldn’t use it in class but it was useful for writing quick notes. He scribbled a message. “I’ll pass it to them on our way out.”

“ Thanks, mate.” Harry turned back to his breakfast not that he was hungry anymore but he knew that if he didn’t eat anything then Ron would start mother henning him. He would also need his strength for the discussion ahead.

Chapter End Notes

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-swiss-justice-idUSKCN26E1QZ> -image of the court room.

<https://www.instructables.com/Three-Card-Tarot-Reading-for-Beginners/>

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

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

Severus watched Potter and his friends disperse to share the contents of the note he had sent them. He had never been Potter's biggest fan, in fact when he first turned up at Hogwarts with his hair just like Potter Snr. And the eyes of the sister of his heart, he couldn't bear to look at him. It didn't help that the brat seemed to get himself into dangerous situations and suffered no consequences for breaking the rules. It was only when he came across the brat, in a rather good disguise, in Knochturn Alley that his perception of the brat shifted.

He had watched as the brat chatted fearlessly with the notorious werewolf Fenrir Greyback and create lightning strikes by accident. Which he had to admit, were all things that were on brand for Potter's luck but it was what else he had learned that had caused the most change in his thoughts about the brat. He had overheard that he had been brought up by muggles, that he didn't want to return home and that Dumbledore had bound his core and he been stealing from him. Potter, the werewolf and the rest of the rag tag group he had managed to draw to himself weren't exactly discrete when discussing these matters. Thankfully, no one in the White Wyvern pub had any intention to share anything that happened in the pub, it was one of the unspoken rules.

So, yes. His perception of Potter as a spoilt brat had changed, it also helped that the brat had confessed to Trent Greyback that he didn't know anything about the wizarding world...meaning that most of his slights and rude behaviours could be attributed to ignorance. His passion to learn was something Severus hadn't seen before. He wondered briefly why he didn't show that kind of attention in class before remembering that he had torn into the child during their first lesson. If Severus' suspicions about his home life, based on what he heard in the pub, he could not blame the child from not putting in effort. It wasn't as if Severus had ever encouraged him. That was something he was trying to fix this year.

"Severus, you haven't touched your breakfast." Minerva's voice brought him out of his musings and back to the Great Hall. She looked at him with concern. "Are you feeling alright?"

"Just thinking about a new potion." He lied easily and picked up his fork. Yes, a new potion to poison the Headmaster. Honestly, what kind of 'leader of the light' not only steals money from an orphan but binds their magical core? When he had over heard that little tidbit it had taken all of his skill as a Master Occulmens to keep his magic from exploding. He had instead decided at that moment that he would never trust Albus Dumbledore again. What little, and it was little, trust he had in the man was gone. He would support Potter and his ragtag group of misfits even if it meant becoming a triple spy. His mind drifted back to the meeting that spurred the unsigned letter that he had sent.

“You wanted to see me Albus?” Severus asked as he stepped into the Headmaster’s office. The door had, as usual, opened before he could knock. The old man liked to do this trick as it made him seem all powerful, when in fact there was a proximity charm on the last step of the stair case.

“Yes, Severus.” Albus stroked his long white beard as he sat behind his huge desk. It was piled high with parchment and knickknacks. “Who do you think would be more suitable? A younger witch, someone his age or perhaps someone older?” He asked all at once.

“Please start at the beginning Albus, who or rather is this about?” He had a sinking feeling that he wasn’t going to like where this meeting was going to go. He was already arduously using his occlumency shields to smother his anger so he wouldn’t strangle the old man with his own beard for all the lies he had told him and the abuse had heaped upon Lily’s son.

“Ah, yes.” Albus blinked as he finally realised that he hadn’t actually told his spy the plan. “Sorry, my boy. I got ahead of myself.”

Severus gritted his teeth at the inane form of address. “Get on with it, at this rate I’ll miss my first class as well as breakfast.”

“Of course, of course.” Albus stroked his beard. “Harry Potter has gotten rather out of control as of late.”

“He’s a teenager.” He drolly pointed out.

“Yes, yes. However, I feel it would be better to nip his little rebellious attitude in the bud.”

“What has this got to do with what you asked me when I first entered?”

“Well, in order to keep Harry in control it would be best to put a marriage contract in place before Sirius Black can get custody of him. It would have to be someone that was completely on the Light’s side.”

And a dumbledore fanatic. Severus thought snidely. “Would Black not be able to cancel it as soon as he gained custody?” He pointed out.

“Not if Harry signs it with a blood quill.” The smile on Dumbledore’s face was chilling.

“So,” He clapped his hands happily. “I have three girls in mind. Won’t you help me narrow it down?”

Severus had left that meeting with only one thought: Potter needed to know.

“Is this for real?” Draco asked as he reread the letter for the seventh time.

“Yeah, I imagine so.” Harry bit his lip and nodded. They were all back down in the chamber of secrets. Fred and George were like bookends next to him on the settee, while Ron and Draco were on the separate chairs.

“Its definitely Uncle Sev’s handwriting.” Draco finally announced and placed the letter on the table.

“Uncle Sev?” Ron repeated incredulously.

“Didn’t I mention it before?” Draco frowned thoughtfully. “Professor Snape is my godfather.”

“Godfather?!” The twins exclaimed.

“Yeah, got a problem with that?”

“Not-”

“At all.” They denied.

“Wait, Harry.” Ron interrupted any possible argument. “Hasn’t your Sirius Black, been exonerated?”

“Large word there Ronnikins.” Fred teased.

“Shut up, Fred.” He groused before continuing. “Black is your legal guardian as your blood father. Dumbledore can’t force a marriage contract.”

“But we don’t know if he’s on my side yet.” Harry pointed out. “What if he thinks its a good idea or what if Dumbles gets to him?” He didn’t want to be forced to marry anyone. He was only thirteen, recently discovered he was gay, and honest he was hoping that when he was of age that he could convince Finn to date him. But that was far from now. He just wanted to be a kid and learn magic.

“Send him a letter.” Draco told him. “Send him and your motely family from Knockturn letters about it.”

“He’s right.” George gently nudged him.

“Your best bet is to tell the trusted adults in your life about this.” Fred continued.

“Okay.” He agreed. “Has anyone got any ink? I forget to get a new one from my trunk and I finished mine in Transfiguration earlier.”

Sirius was once again in the White Wyvern pub. He had spent the day busily arranging with Gringotts for one of the Black properties to be cleaned, cleansed and made suitable for habitation. So he really needed a pick me up. If he got to see the handsome vampire, well that was just a bonus.

“Evening,” Sirius greeted the non-Ken bartender. “Could I have a glass of butter beer and food menu?” He aimed to stay sober, the last thing he wanted to do was to become a lush. He needed to be sober for Harry, his son. The Goblin’s may have healed his body and the damage that the Dementors had caused but he still had a hell of a lot of trauma and drinking to forget was an alluring idea.

“Here.” The butterbeer was slid across to him. “Ken told me that if a bald but attractive man came in, that I was to serve him udon.” The bartender smirked. “That wouldn’t happen to be you, would it?”

“What do you mean by ‘but’.” Sirius huffed playfully. “I’ll have you know that my bald head makes me look cool.”

“I’ll go get you your udon.” The bartender snorted and disappeared towards the kitchen area.

“Hey,” Trent, the man that gave him the card reading last night, appeared at his side. “This seat free?”

“Go for it.” Sirius smiled at him. If the Goblins were right, and they always were, the only man with the name of Trent that frequented this pub was the co-owner: Trent Greyback, husband of Fenrir Greyback. And far be it for Sirius to upset the landlord. He, unlike his friends or the other Light-side peons knew that most of the things said about Fenrir were just rumours and were pretty far from the truth...not that Remus or anyone else believed him when he told them.

“How are you enjoying your stay?” Trent asked.

“Its been great, thanks.” He told him truthfully. The bed was soft and the room was warm. There was an abundance of food and water and the total lack of Dementors really sold the place for him. “Five stars, will definitely recommend to others.”

“I’m happy to hear that.” Trent’s smile was gentle.

Before either of them could say anything more a beautiful Snowy owl soared into the pub with letters clutched in her talons. A letter each was dropped in front of Trent and Sirius before the beautiful bird took off and out of the pub, presumably to deliver the others that she was carrying.

Intrigued as to why he was getting mail from the same sender as Trent, Sirius opened the letter.

Dear Sirius Black,

Or should I call you dad?

Sirius’ breath caught and his hands trembled. His son. His son had written to him! He gently touched the writing, marvelling at how terrible his son’s handwriting really was before focusing and reading on.

First, congratulations of being declared innocent! I'm glad to see that the lawyer that the Goblins recommended was successful.

Harry was the one to arrange his lawyer?

I have loads that I want to talk to you about, want to ask you about. I want to get to know you and would like to meet up with you, face to face. I have a Hogsmeade trip coming up this Saturday, but need a guardian to sign the slip. Sign it and I can I meet you at the Three broomsticks.

Sirius found the permission slip and gleefully signed it with a self inking quill that he had in his pocket. He had bought it off the Goblins after having to sign so many documents earlier that day. Documents that thankfully hadn't needed him to use a blood quill. Instead he had used regular ink but after almost spilling the ink pot twice, they had forced him to buy a self inking quill from them. Once the slip was signed he continued reading the letter.

As you've not long become free, I thought I would tell you a little bit about myself before you get drawn into the awful Boy-Who-Lived rubbish that follows me. I was raised by my mum's sister Petunia Dursley and hated it. I sorted into Gryffindor and my best friend is Ron Weasley. I am also friends with his twin brothers Fred and George, and a couple of Slytherins. I had been friends with Hermione Granger, who you may have heard about in the news. We fell out near the beginning of the year for reasons but anyway she's left Hogwarts after she was bitten by the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher Remus Lupin.

You might know of him. Apparently he knew my parents (Lily and James and I suspect you as well) but he liked to rub that fact in my face. He was generally just really awful and although I wish it wasn't due to harming a student, I am glad that he is no longer in the school. I'll tell you more about it when I see you on Saturday.

Sirius didn't know how to feel about what he had just read. Oh he was fine with his son being friends with Slytherins, he was pretty pleased about it actually. His son was already a better person than he was. No, what he was upset about was Remus. Remus had been mean to his pup, his baby boy. He was already miffed with the man because he clearly believed that he had betrayed Lily and James, hell he had written a letter to him during his first year of imprisonment about it. So honestly, he wasn't much fond of the werewolf anymore, but he had never expected him to treat Harry badly! Not that he didn't believe Harry, if anything he was more inclined to believe him than Remus any day. He made a mental note to look for the newspaper article about Remus biting a student later. Clearly he had gotten lax about taking precautions during the full moon.

However, before I see you this weekend I have a favour I need to ask of you. Dad, I got news that Dumbledore, who you're hopefully no longer a fan of, plans to force me into a marriage contract with a stranger.

"That bastard!" Sirius roared, he barely had the mind to put the precious letter from his son down before he clenched his fists. "How dare he?!" He seethed. It was one thing to leave him rotting in Azkaban for thirteen years but it was another for him to target and try to control his son! It was bad enough that he had found that the bearded goat had sent his precious son to live with abusive muggles and steal from his trust vaults but now he wanted to steal his son's

future as well? Not on his watch! He carefully folded the letter before storming out of the pub, he needed to see a Goblin.

While Sirius was reading a letter from Harry, so was Trent.

Dear Trent,

I got word that a bearded someone has plans to set up a marriage contract for me and someone of his own choosing. I don't want to be forced to marry anyone! Not mention he'll likely choose a girl and I'm gay!

I've sent a letter to Sirius Black who as you know is my blood father. I hope that he'll be able to prevent this from happening or know what could help. I've also asked him to sign my permission slip for Hogsmeade and to meet me this Saturday. If all goes well, I plan to tell him about this summer and about you guys, is that okay?

Love Harry.

He had just finished reading his letter when the man next to him exploded with anger and stormed from pub.

“Where'd the baldie go?” Steve asked. He was covering for Ken this evening as the vampire was busy doing Morgana knows what. Ken had asked him to keep an eye on the recently freed innocent man but the bloke had gone and disappeared on him.

“He got some bad news.” Trent told him honestly. The news that Harry had sent him had been bad, Dumbledore was going to try and force him into a marriage contract with someone of his choice. Trent was furious as well but the only one that could help Harry with this was his true guardian and father, Sirius Black. He just hoped that the man would go about it in a smart way. Trent would have to wait until after this Saturday before he could approach Sirius as a friend of Harry's. He only hoped that the bloke wouldn't make a mess of things before he, Fen, Finn or Ken could get involved.

Harry received a small parcel and letter at breakfast the following morning. It was delivered by an unfamiliar owl, so he allowed Percy to run a few quick tests to make sure that it was safe before he even touched them.

“Its safe.” Percy promised before returning to his own breakfast.

“Thanks, Perce.” Harry beamed at him before turning to the letter.

Pup,

I would be honoured if you called me dad, but don't rush yourself kiddo. I have more that I want to say, that I need to say but most of that can wait until I see you on Saturday. Speaking of Saturday, you should find the signed permission slip in parcel.

As for the rather concerning matter that you ended your letter with...Do not under any circumstances sign anything. Do not sign your homework with your full name. Write HP, Gryffindor, year 3 and that will be accepted by all teachers. Only use your own quill and ink. Do not let anyone talk you into using theirs. To avoid any circumstances where you might be out of ink or without a quill I had Gringotts procure some self inking quills for you. Keep one on you at all times. I tell you this as one of the ways to create an unbreakable contract would be to have you sign your full name with a blood quill. A blood quill is a black quill that uses your own blood instead of ink. Keep the self inking quills on you, and don't accept any quills from anyone else.

I can't wait to see you. You have no idea how much I have longed to finally meet you, my son.

I love you,

Dad

(Or Padfoot, Paddy or even Sirius if you wish.)

Harry passed the letter to Ron before carefully opening the parcel. On top was the signed permission slip that he carefully placed into his pocket, he would need to give that to McGonagall as soon as he could so that he could definitely go on Saturday. Under the slip of parchment lay a dozen quills. They looked like regular quills and Harry immediately stuck two in his other pocket and the rest went into his bag.

"He seems to be on the Quaffle." Ron commented as he handed back the letter. "Smart of him to send you those quills."

"Yeah." Harry agreed. He was impressed by his dad's reaction and quick action. "Come with me on Saturday?" He couldn't wait to meet his dad in person but at the same time he was really, really nervous.

"Course." Ron nudged him with his elbow. "Now eat your breakfast, we have Potions first thing."

Chapter End Notes

Spoiler for next chapter: Harry meets Sirius in person for the first time!

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

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

Harry made his way to the carriages with all the other students heading down to Hogsmeade. His dad's signature on his permission form had been easily accepted and he wasn't stopped from joining his friends, which was a huge relief. He hadn't been sure whether they would accept Sirius' signature due to fact technically, or rather according to everyone else, he wasn't Harry's guardian yet.

"Right, so you're meeting your dad at the Three Broomsticks?" Fred asked as they sat in the horseless carriage.

"Yeah." Harry was all but buzzing in his seat. He was so excited and yet nervous. He was going to meet his dad! He seemed to like Harry in the letter, but would he change his mind once they met for real? What if he didn't like him being with his friends in Knockturn? Would he forbid him from seeing them again? Or-

"Oi, Potter." Draco nudged him, jarring him from his spiralling thoughts. "Relax already, you're making me anxious just looking at you."

"Yeah, it's going to be fine, mate." Ron chimed in. "He seems decent enough from his letter and if he's not, well you have a werewolf that sees you as his honorary son, right? Could always get him to bite or maul your dad if needed."

"I'm sure it won't come to that." Harry felt amused by his friend's attempt at comfort. It did, however, work and he felt much calmer about the impending 'meeting his dad for the first time' thing.

They quickly arrived in the village. Harry and Fred, who was the designated Harry watcher for this trip, separated from the others. The rest of their friends would go off and buy what they wanted from Honeydukes and wherever before meeting up at the Three Broomsticks to either join Harry with his dad (and Fred) or to just meet up and find out how things went.

The Three Broomsticks was a popular Inn and pub. Inside it was warm, a little crowded but not too bad at the moment and a little smokey...even so, as soon as Harry walked into the pub he spotted his dad instantly. Sirius Black was sitting at a table that was out of the way but not hidden. He seemed to have spotted Harry at the same time as he stood and waved him and Fred over.

"Pup?" His voice was hoarse with emotion as he watched his son approach him. To be honest he didn't even see the older red headed kid next to him. His eyes were wholly on his son. Harry was too skinny and short but he had James' hair and Lily's eyes and if he wasn't wrong, the little rascal had his cheekbones and chin. He was a perfect mixture of the three of them and couldn't be more perfect in his eyes.

“Dad?” Harry stepped up to him and his voice cracked on the unfamiliar word. He had never had the chance to call someone that before. He stared at his dad, tracing over the wild hair that was almost as untameable as his own, the grey eyes and the goatee. He was skinny from Azkaban but whatever healing he was getting was clearly working as he didn’t look as gaunt as he had on his wanted poster.

“Hey,” Sirius ran a nervous hand through his hair. Sirius felt glad that he had taken a hair growth potion as he didn’t want to scare his son off by looking like...what was the name of that creature from the book about a ring that Lily had told him about...Golum or something?

“Dad,” Harry repeated before throwing himself at the man. He was caught and held tightly in a hug that was tight enough to be a strangle hold but Harry didn’t mind at all. His dad was hugging him!

“Oh Pup, it’s okay, I have you. I have you.” Sirius soothed him as the small teenager rocked with silent sobs.

While the two were reuniting, Fred, the spare wheel, Weasley, popped over to the bar to order butterbeers for the three of them. When he returned to the table with the drinks, he found the father and son duo sitting down on the bench side of the table. Sirius had an arm around Harry’s shoulder and he barely blinked as if afraid that if he so much as glanced away or shut his eyes for a second that Harry would disappear.

“I’m Fred Weasley.” He announced as he set the mugs of frothing goodness on the table. “Harry’s friend and housemate.”

“Nice to meet you. I’m Sirius Black, Harry’s dad.” The man held out his free hand to shake Fred’s. “Thanks for keeping an eye out for my pup.”

“Eh, he’s practically a Weasley minus the red hair.” Fred teased but was also completely serious. “Anyway, has he told you about the time he and Ron flew a car to Hogwarts?”

“Um, what?” Sirius paused his action of reaching for his mug of butterbeer and looked down at the small teen next to him.

“I can explain?” Harry sheepishly smiled while cursing Fred mentally. Why did he bring that up?! Was he trying to get him in trouble with his dad when he only just met him?

And so Harry spent the next hour and a half telling, trying and failing to skip the worst bits, Sirius about his time at Hogwarts.

“I am of half a mind to take you out of Hogwarts all together.” Sirius declared and downed the rest of his lukewarm butterbeer. “But we’ll discuss that more after you finish out the year.”

“Okay.” Harry couldn’t find it in himself to argue against that. He had after all thought about changing schools before Sirius had been freed, so he wasn’t exactly surprised that his dad was of the same mind. “Everything changed this summer though.” Harry decided to trust his

dad, after all if he couldn't trust his dad who could he trust? Though if it did go badly he could always take on his fake persona for real and live with Trent and Fenrir.

"You have some luck, pup." Sirius interrupted when Harry got to the bit about finding the pub. "I've been staying at the White Wyvern since I was exonerated. I love that place."

"It's great!" Harry beamed.

"I even know the owner." His dad tried to boast.

"You know Trent?"

"Yeah, I shared a drink with him earlier this week and all."

Harry relaxes and tells him everything, everything after that. About Umbridge and Amelia bones grounding him in his room in the Leaky Cauldron, how Kingsley promised to help him but ended up just enforcing it. How the Goblins helped him with a portkey and how he found that his magical core had been blocked. His dad had nearly lost it at that point and took both Harry and Fred, who had been a silent audience member up to the point, to keep him in his seat.

"I'm okay now." Harry promised. "The goblins fixed everything."

"It shouldn't have happened in the first place." Dad hissed, it was impressive how close he came to sounding like parseltongue but he wasn't going to point that out. Sure his dad didn't care that he could speak to snakes, he actually seemed excited about it? But it just wasn't the time to point out that his dad could possibly speak it too.

Sirius meanwhile was making a mental note of who to add to his shit list. Dumbledore was of course at the very top for binding his son's magic and leaving him with abusing muggles. He quickly added Amelia Bones, Deloris Umbridge, and Shackbolt. And potentially Finn who his pup obviously has a crush on which is freaking adorable to be honest. He would blush every time he mentioned the man. The news of what Dumbles did to Harry, despite the Goblins alluding to it when he went to them for help, almost broke him. He was half, more than half tempted to whisk Harry away and leave Britain all together. Especially now with the news that Dumbles is going to try and force him into a contract marriage.

"I'm sorry, Remus did what?" He snapped out of his thoughts by the name of an old friend only to realise that his pup was talking about him for being horrible to him.

"He told me that I was being shameful by 'wasting my parents' sacrifice' all because I sneezed when calling out the floo destination."

"That bastard." Sirius saw red. "How could he-" Words could describe how horrified and furious he was with the man he had called one of his closest friends.

"He got worse." Fred chimed in.

"Excuse me?" How could he say anything worse than that?

“He told Harry that his parents wouldn’t have cowered from the boggart when Harry refused to take part in that particular exercise. Almost all of the class walked out in solidarity.”

“And let's not mention that he liked to throw the fact that he knew my parents for longer than I did in my face.” Harry scowled before brightening. “Luckily he’s been arrested for biting a student so I no longer have to deal with him.” It sucked that he had bitten a student, even if Harry was no longer friends with Hermione he hadn’t wanted her to come to any harm.

“I don’t know what to say.” Sirius was stunned. The Remus these two were describing was nothing like the Remus he grew up with. Oh he didn’t doubt what his pup and friend was saying, he completely believed it but it was hard to hear. Especially the fact that he had bitten someone. “Who did he bite?”

“My former friend, Hermione Granger. She’s a Muggleborn.” Harry told him. “I wonder what she’s going to do now?”

“She’ll probably be shipped over to the states.” Sirius told him seriously. “At least that was the protocol of newly bitten Hogwarts aged children. We don’t have any schools in Britain that will allow creatures to attend, but the states do.”

“She’ll be forced to leave the country?” Fred asked.

“If she wants to keep her wand and continue her education as a witch, yes.” He sighed. “Sadly Britain is behind in the times and our laws aren’t very kind to creatures or those with creature blood.” It was something he had planned to take up his lordship with James after the war so that they could work on the laws inside of the Wizengamot to change things. It looked like he would be doing it by himself and bloody Remus just made things harder for him by biting a student! He would mourn the friendship he once had with the man but at the moment he was just going to let his fury over the disgusting comments Remus made to his pup fuel him. Then he took a deep breath. He needed to focus on his pup, not his rage or his grief, but his son. So he took another deep breath and focused back on Harry.

Harry seeing that he had his Dad’s attention continued. “Not long after Lupin was arrested, Dumbledore called me to his office and seemed to try to get me to take responsibility? Luckily Flitwick went with me and protected me but not long after that Snape sent me a note saying that Dumbles plans to trap me in an arranged marriage.”

“I’m not sure how I feel about Snape being helpful but that's a problem for me.” Dad pulled a face but continued before Harry could ask about what he meant. “However, it seems that I owe him one. If you had signed anything accidentally or if you were tricked into signing a contract, well...” He winced. “Dumble could have forced you to marry literally anyone including himself and depending on what was written in the contract...I don’t want to even think about it.” He shook his head. “It doesn’t matter. We know and we can stop this.”

“We can?” Harry had turned pale at the fact that he could have ended up married to Dumbledore if the headmaster was so inclined and if he had managed to trick him.

“He can’t get a contract approved by magic if there’s one already in place.”

“But!” Harry turns white. He didn’t want to be forced to marry someone! Or to force

someone to marry him!

“Calm down pup.” Sirius quickly tries to calm him. “Obviously it would be easily dissolved! It would just be in place to keep you safe.”

“I-” Harry bit his lip and thought about it. “It would be cancelled easily?”

“I promise.”

“Who-who would you choose?”

“Pup, who would you choose?” Sirius gave him a gentle and yet teasing smile. “I can ask a certain blacksmith, if you want?”

“He’ll probably say no.” Harry’s face was now a bright red, red all the way to his ears. Finn’s scowling face flashed in his mind. Would Finn hate him for getting him involved in this? He didn’t want the older man to hate him! But at the same time he did really like him. Maybe if Sirius emphasised that it was to protect Harry, and that it could be easily dissolved...maybe he won’t hate Harry.

“You let me worry about that.” Sirius soothing ran a hand through Harry’s hair. “Now, what say you and I sneak off to Gringotts to have me instated as your Guardian, both legal and magical.”

“We won’t have to go to the ministry for that?” Harry leaned into the touch and decided to continue to trust his dad. He would leave it to him to get everything sorted. It would be his one chance. If His dad betrayed him, marrying him off to someone with no way to break the contract...then he would never forgive him and he would lose all his trust.

“Nah, we can do the paperwork in the bank and they’ll file it in the ministry. And the best bit? As I am your dad they can do nothing to refute it.”

“Then let’s go!” Harry almost trips over the chair in his haste to get up.

Sirius laughed and caught him. “Easy there, pup.”

“Oh,” The endearment reminded him of Trent and Fenrir. “Trent and Fenrir offered to take me in as well...” He frowned. “I-”

“Good thing I was looking for flats near their’s.” Sirius grinned. “I certainly wasn’t going to raise you in the hellhole that I was brought up in.

“Really? Great!” Harry beamed.

“Really,” Sirius chuckled. “Now let’s get moving before Rosemerta or anyone catches me whisking you away.”

“I’ll distract her.” Fred smirked, speaking for the first time in a while. “I’ll also let the others know what’s happening.” He then turned with a stern look on his face, a look that Harry had never seen on him before. “Make sure to get him back at least an hour before he needs to be back in the castle.”

“I will.” Sirius promised solemnly. “Don’t worry.”

“Good.” And with that Fred left to play distraction.

They headed to the bank, signed a bunch of forms and drew up a preliminary marriage contract for Finn to look over. It will allow both participants to dissolve it once the youngest partner is of age. Then Sirius dropped Harry back off in Hogsmeade, shoved some galleons in his hand and told him to have fun with his friends. He promised his son that he would get the marriage contract stuff sorted by the next Hogsmeade weekend so until then be careful and use the self inking quills.

With Harry safely back with his friends, Sirius wasted no time and went straight to the White Wyvern pub. Finn would hopefully be there, if not then at least Trent and Fenrir would be and Sirius seriously needed to have a conversation about his pup with them. He needed to firstly thank them for taking care of his son and secondly...talk them around to the marriage contract idea Harry and he had decided on. He hoped that this Finn character would agree to it, after getting him to swear some magical vows to protect Harry, otherwise they would have to find someone else. He would prefer to not have to use any of his school age friends seeing as they would still be under Dumbles' thumb. James and Lily would kill him if he wasn't able to safeguard Harry's future and happiness. They wouldn't be impressed that he had drawn up a marriage contract to do it, but at least this one could be easily dissolved once Harry was of age and at the same time made sure that Harry couldn't marry until he was of age as well. It was the best of a bad situation. Now he just needed to get Finn and apparently Trent and Fenrir to agree.

Chapter End Notes

Not my best chapter. But, Fear not! Trent, Fenrir and the handsome Finn will appear in the next chapter with the details of the marriage contract. So please be patient!

Thank you for sticking with my story and for enjoying it <3

End Notes

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