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Exit: Stage Left Prophecy

"The Dark Lord will fall in battle this night, and the Chosen One will take the Dark One's power as his own."

Silence filled the Great Hall as every eye suddenly focused on the third year Hufflepuff who was inexplicably glowing, his eyes wide with only the whites showing. The boy noisily drew a breath and continued.

"With that power the Chosen One will take his brides and they will be as one."

Another Prophecy? Harry Potter flinched, almost recoiling from the mere idea. 'Brides'? As in plural? That could not possibly be good.

"The Witches of the World will Bond With the Chosen One and with No Other, for they will know his true power and will revel in it."

What? Harry looked about the Great Hall, taking in the expressions of the assembled students and staff. There were buying this? Some magical kid gets all glowy and starts spouting nonsense and everyone believes him? It was only then Harry realized what was being said. 'The Witches of the World'? What the hell did that mean? Surely not... Not **ALL** of them?

"Fake!" a visibly inebriated Sybil Trelawney protested from her place at the staff table, sloshing a goblet of some amber liquid over herself and those sitting on either side of her. "That's not how you do a prophecy, you just don't start spouting nonsense with a definite outcome, you have to shroud it in mumbo jumbo and such. It keeps the punters coming back." The tipsy witch took another deep drink from her goblet, "the glowing thing is a nice touch though."

Somehow the drunken woman's protests didn't make Harry feel any better as the third year continued.

"The Witches of the World will know the touch of the Chosen One and will find joy such as they have never known."

It was at this point Harry noticed that all of the girls at the Gryffindor table were inspecting him in a speculative manner. Even, perhaps especially, Hermione. Even Hermione.

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"The Dark Lord will fall in battle this night, and the Chosen One will take the Dark One's power as his own."

Harry stood in wide-eyed horror as the words of the prophecy echoed in the Great Hall, throughout the student body, and in fact even among the teachers a cheer went up, the time for fear was evidently almost over.

All around him the young men high-fived each other in celebration for the impending end of the Dark Lord, and the girls were similarly excited, with now more than just the Gryffindors eying him expectantly.

But Harry knew better as he eased from his seat, his meal forgotten. He had been Fate's bitch far too long not to recognize the danger. The Wizard raised in the school had not yet seen the problem, but some of the Muggle raised males in the Great Hall were starting to let their common sense overrule their joy at the news that the Dark Lord was doomed. Harry noticed a few eyes narrow as they sought him out, a few hands start their way to their wands.

Harry swallowed and exited the Great Hall as quickly as he could. Racing to his dormitory, Harry threw his things into his trunk, shrinking it as soon as the lid closed. Pocketing the trunk, Harry opened the window and mounted his broom just as the screams of rage started making their way up the stairs from the Gryffindor common room. Harry kicked free of gravity's restraints and rocketed out the window running for his life.

Harry happened to look down as he was passing over the Forbidden Forest and saw that Voldemort was already in the clearing where they had agreed to meet. Riddle was an hour early, setting up some sort of trap probably. Harry hesitated, the bastard deserved what was coming, but he couldn't do that, not even to Voldemort

"Tom!" Harry called out as he landed.

"Potter?" Voldemort exclaimed, somewhat embarrassed he had been caught, and then realizing how the boy had addressed him, he rose to his full height and proclaimed "I am Lord Voldemort!"

"Yeah, Tom, I know. Look that's for the sheep ok? Not for between us. Look, something horrible has happened, there's been another prophecy!"

"Another prophecy?" Voldemort gasped recalling the pain the previous one had caused him. "What does it say?"

"I don't remember the exact wording," Harry said shaking his head, "but the gist of it is that there is going to be a fight tonight, a fight that you lose."

"Of course Potter, if we fight, you kill me," Voldemort scoffed. "That's why you're warning me."

"I'm not warning you for your sake old man," Harry spat. "It's for MY sake. The aftermath of tonight's fight is the problem. According to that idiot third year, when you die I'm going to somehow end up absorbing all your magic and knowledge, becoming the most powerful wizard the world has ever known. There will be something in that level of power that will bind ever witch to me, forever." Harry's expression took on an even more haunted look.

Voldemort blinked. "And how is this bad?"

"Oh come on Tom!" Harry exclaimed incredulous that the man had not figured it out. "Think back to when you were in school and still had your balls. What would you have done to anyone that had ensured that you would never get laid, ever?"

"I'd have murdered the bast..." A look of realization washed over the Dark Lord's serpent like features. "Oh. I see. So why did you stop to warn me?"

"Because the stupid prophecy didn't say that *I* was going to be the one to kill you. I was there Tom, I saw their faces, they BELIEVE this crap.

Voldemort's snake life features shaped themselves into a puzzled expression. "You don't?"

"Of course I don't," Harry all but screamed at the reigning Dark Lord. "Prophecies are stupid. Do a little fucking research; the only prophecies that have ever turned out to be true did so because they had a bunch of idiots behind them making them come true. You and Dumbledore come to mind for that first one concerning you and me."

"But if you don't believe it ... "

"It doesn't matter what I believe," Harry said trying to calm himself down. Panic would only serve to get him killed. "I was in the Great Hall when the prophecy was made, and I saw them all listening to it and believing it. I saw people who have told me time and again that prophecy was so much nonsense, listen and BELIEVE. I saw the girl who I thought was the most cynical about prophecy decide to believe it. I got out of there before the boys figured out what that prophecy was going to cost them. The Prophecy did not say you and I were going to fight, only that you would fall in battle tonight. But the Pure Blood sheep don't put all that much effort into thinking things through. What if they haven't figured that out and decide that the new prophecy means I have to kill you and they go on to figure that the best way to ensure that I don't kill you and get all the women is to have someone else do it? Run man, run hard, run long and don't look back." Harry swung his leg over his waiting broom. "That's what I'm doing."

With that, the boy kicked free of the ground and vanished into the night.

The Dark Lord stood and watched open mouthed as his hated rival disappeared into the dark cloudless sky. "That poor bastard."

Voldemort then turned to take his own leave, considering that he should probably heed the boy's warning.

"Where is he?" a voice said from over his shoulder.

Voldemort turned to find himself surrounded by almost three hundred young boys, all with their wands drawn. The Dark Lord spent a moment remembering what he had been like at that age and his mouth went very dry. "Potter is gone."

"You let him get away?" an enraged Draco Malfoy asked. "You had him here and let him get away?"

"We're all in this together lads!" Ron Weasley proclaimed from beside the Slytherin Prince. "Let's show this wanker what we do to collaborators!"

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Harry was high over the English Channel when the first burst of Tom's magic hit him. He felt his reserves fill to bursting, expand and refill over and over until he almost fell from his speeding broom. "Ah, Tom, you stupid bastard," he gasped as he struggled to remain astride his broom. "I told you to run."

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Four days later, Luna Lovegood slid into a seat at the Hufflepuff table, a seat directly across from third year Muggleborn Hufflepuff Gordon Cooper. The third year looked up from his oatmeal and grinned.

"Good Morning Luna."

Luna sighed. "Good morning Gordon. You win the bet." She slid the ten galleon coins across the table to the grinning boy.

"Cool," the boy's grin got wider. "This will come in handy for the Hogsmeade weekend."

"I should be angry with you," Luna said petulantly. "I had my campaign for the seduction of Harry Potter all planned out for this year."

"Hey, I never expected that Harry would run off like that," the Hufflepuff laughed. "I thought he'd just hide out until everyone calmed down. Besides, you were the one who said that only Harry could deal with that Voldemort bloke. All I did was provide enough motivation to get everyone off their duffs and pushed them to deal with the idiot."

Luna shook her head. "I thought surely that if they weren't willing to fight to save their lives..."

"Sex is a major motivator for most lads Luna," Gordon said returning to his breakfast. "My dad works in advertising, and he uses sex to sell almost everything, so when I made the suggestion that if Harry killed Voldemort then he'd get all the women and all the other lads would have to turn to their own hands or each other, the Voldemort was toast."

"But that's not what you said Gordon," Luna corrected him. "You just said that Voldemort would fall in battle, not that Harry was going to kill him. And he did. Since you made your prediction, I've noticed that most if not all of the established couples among the students have broken up, and that all most of the girls are willing to talk about is Harry."

"Really?" The Hufflepuff stopped eating again. "I wonder if enough people believe my little prophecy would provide the magic needed to make it come true. Interesting."

"You had best hope that's not what has happened Gordon," Luna said as she stood from the table. "Because if of the prophecy you made to win our bet ends up forcing me to share Harry Potter with even a single other witch, I'm going to kill you."

Gordon Cooper stared open-mouthed at the young woman as she walked away.