

Dodgers, Dresses, Teddy bears, and Spot. A Harry Potter Adventure

Downtown London at night is a mixture of the gothic and modern, leaning much more heavily to the gothic. Indeed, that was part of its continuing old world charm that made it so comfortable for the individuals currently gathered in a small building on its outskirts on the night of November 11th, 1981.

The meeting room within that small building contained a table, long and ornate, with seven chairs along one side, situated so as to be facing into the room. A single chair sat in the center of the room, obviously positioned so that it was subservient to those at the table. The man who occupied this chair appeared to be in early middle age. Fit and handsome, he appeared to be the type of man that any room he was in, he owned.

But not this room. Never this room.

"So, you feel that it's really in our best interest to throw our lot in with this so-called `Lord Voldemort?'" A dark figure with a deep voice asked. The questioner sat in the chair to the immediate left of the empty raised chair at the center of the table, his features hidden by the darkness of the hood he wore. "Do you really believe that he will be able to maintain sufficient control of the non-magical humans that we might be able to feed at our leisure?"

"My Lord, I feel that this may be our best chance to at last be able to finally stake a claim on our own separate part of the world," the petitioner said from his position of subservience, "We would finally be free of centuries of persecution, and..."

"I feel that joining this wizard would be a mistake," the woman occupying the chair to the immediate right of the center. Her voice held the tones of a vivacious young woman, but her bearing offered the impression of long experience, and of danger. "This so-called Lord has shown that he is willing to promise much to get what he wants, but seems to be unwilling to follow through when it comes time for payment."

"Agreed," the man to her right spoke up, "He reminds me of those mundane politicians that are willing to promise the sun and moon, only to conveniently forget their promises after they have achieved their goals. Even his claim of lordship is questionable, as there is no listing of him or his family in the old records. When you take into consideration the wizard proposes to control *millions* of the mundanes? Impossible."

“But, my Lord, his power is without precedence,” the youngster protested.

“If the mundanes could be so easily controlled, they would have been when they were few and armed with nothing more than sharp sticks,” the woman said. “What your Dark Lord proposes is not possible. You were only recently turned, barely half a century now. Have you already forgotten what the normal humans can do?”

"My Lords and Lady, please listen to me," the younger figure said a bit abruptly, "This may be the best chance that we have to be able to finally rule like we were meant to rule, as lords over all we survey, rather than from the shadows as we usually do! If you do not join, there is the chance that he may turn his vengeance on us and then we..."

"It sounds as though you have already cast your lot with your Dark Lord, youngling. Have you also made promises that are not yours to make?" the woman asked with a hint of a sneer, "You would do well to remember that you are but a fledgling, and you are only here to make a report, not to sway our voice in one way or another. Not that any of this really matters; no decisions can be made, as the Elder has still not yet arrived."

"Oh, I've been here for a while now Camilla," a new voiced interjected, drawing hisses and gasps from all the seated figures. An older man stepped out of the shadows and moved to the center of the table, taking his seat in the ornate chair that waited for him there. The newcomer lit up a cigar, taking a few puffs before setting it down in an ashtray that had appeared with a wave of his hand. With a keen eye, he observed each of the others for a moment, before breaking out in a hearty laugh. "I always enjoy having the chance to play around with some of you youngsters, sometimes it can get a little boring back home."

The others at the table rolled their unseen eyes, as the elder always seemed to be a bit more eccentric every time they met with him, still, he was the Elder of the council, and had survived for centuries longer than any of the others there.

"Now then, just to bring everyone up to date", the Elder grinned, "eleven days ago, on All Hallows Eve, the so called Dark Lord that the youngster seems so anxious to back, fell and was disintegrated. And brother, let me tell you, when he disintegrated, he really disintegrated."

The younger man that had been championing the Dark Lord Voldemort sat back in his chair with a look of disbelief on his face, before he leaned forward with his face in his hands. The others sat and watched his antics for a moment before turning back to the Elder with questioning looks.

"Oh yeah, blew himself up real good it seems," the Elder chuckled, "Better than I've ever been able to do. Apparently he decided to attack and kill a child, and while he was able to destroy the parents, his spell backfired and he was destroyed rather than the youngling."

The Elder picked up his cigar and leaned back in his chair. He took a few puffs and leaned back to blow a perfect smoke ring before continuing. "I've examined the child, and he is fair to bursting with some of the most potent magic I've ever seen. The question of course, is this magic something innate to the boy, or is it something that his mother managed to do when she was

trapped by this Voldemort character. Now that is something that bears a bit of research, don't you think?"

The Elder leaned forward, his elbows on the table, his face taking on a darker look as he continued, "Now, the leader of the light wizards seems to have gotten it in his head that the youngster needs to be protected, and I quite agree. Unfortunately, this wizard's best days are behind him, and the delusional old man has decided that the best way to protect the boy was to cover him in obscurity, and to place him with some non-magical relatives. When I stopped by earlier tonight to pay a visit, I saw his new mother figure smack the child on the side of his head, hard enough to leave a welt. Well, with that, I knew that this was no way for a potentially important young man to have to grow up, so I circumvented the wards that surrounded the house, some very good blood-based ones, but what is blood to ones such as us except more power, and went in to claim the child. While I was doing so, I discovered this." The Elder produced a large chunk of Amber, lit from within by a black mass of... something.

"That was lodged in the boy's forehead. I got it out, but the vile thing put up quite a fight, let me tell you."

"What is it?" Camilla asked, horrified by the aura of evil the mass offered.

"I'm not sure," the Elder replied with a shrug. "What I can tell you, the nasty little thing has quite the vocabulary, one that would have gotten any of my children or grandchildren a dose of a nice purgative potion," he held the amber to the light. "It's a foul little entity. Whatever it is, it's definitely alive. I think I'll give it to the boy to play with when he gets a little older."

The other figure sat in shocked silence for a few moments, before the whole group started shouting out questions and curses, some at the same time.

"Quiet, BE QUIET!" The elder shouted down the others, "My initial interest in the boy was that he is a distant relative of one of my granddaughters through her father, but when I found such power in the lad... I had to step in. This is much more preferable than what it seems he was being set up for with his so-called family. Now, the young man is currently asleep in my car. A judicious application of magic ensures that he will stay that way until we get to the airport, where I have a nanny waiting to accompany us back home. Once there, my daughter Lily and her idiot husband will take care of him. The house has been so quiet since little Eddie grew up, and I am sure the patter of little feet will bring some much needed excitement.

"But my lord," The first speaker started, then stopped after a glare from the elder, "I mean... Grandpa, are you sure that this is the best thing for the child?"

"Albus Dumbledore wanted to hide him away, and what better way to do so than to have him hidden where my family and I live?" The old man asked with another chuckle, "He'll get to grow up in a loving household, around magical beings, and will be well-equipped when it's time for him to return to the Wizarding world over here, assuming he wants to. I plan on letting the lad have a choice when he's old enough to understand such things."

Leaning back, he considered the others in the room for a moment, before he stood quickly, which caused all the others to do so as well.

"Very well, if there is no other business, then I'll just be on my way," he said with a jovial tone, before he stared down the others, "Of course, you know that you are all blood sworn to never reveal my location, on penalty of the final death.

The others all stood and sweated lightly as he looked them over, before his face lightened and he got the friendly look on his face that made him look so much like the Grandfather he was, "Very well then, all of you take care, watch you backs, and for god's sake try to have a little fun. We will meet again in another decade."

With that last statement, he turned and glided out the door, his cape flowing outward in a way that made him look like the bat for which his kind had been named. Stepping up to the car, his golem opened the door to allow him entrance. The golem closed the door behind the Elder and got into the driver's seat, starting up the engine and heading towards Heathrow.

The old man turned and smiled down at the sleeping child in the ornate basket, he had not had a little one to play around with since Eddie had left for college five years before, it would be nice to have some little feet and hands around to raise some havoc. He was sure that Lily and Herman would be looking forward to some excitement as well, just to relieve some of the daily grind. Oh yes, little Harry Potter was going to bring new blood to his family, both figuratively, and literally.

--ooOOoo--

Lily and Herman were busy making the appropriate noises to their newest family member and poor Marilyn was going through the first stages of depression with the realization that little Harry shared her unfortunate plainness.

The Elder had other things on his mind.

Specifically, what he had in mind was an unidentified other thing currently encased in amber. An evil aura surrounded whatever it was, and the way it had fought against being separated from the boy...

There was definitely a consciousness in there. Earlier in his afterlife the Elder might have gone about constructing a body for whatever it was to find out what was going on, but bitter experience had taught him that making bodies almost never went well... With Herman being almost the only exception to that rule.

And Herman was someone else's work. Not that Victor Frankenstein would ever let him forget that little detail when the old gang got together for the conventions... Bastard.

"Ok Book," he said as he settled onto a bench in front of his worktable. "You've got all the answers, what is this thing?"

The Book of Magic opened its cover and began paging through itself, before finally stopping.

"Fossilized tree sap," the Elder read before thumping the chunk of amber on the book's open page. "Not the amber you pretentious paperback. What it holds."

The pages began flipping again, before settling on another entry.

"Soul fragment," the elder read, "partial consciousness of a being, probably human, bonded to an object. The purpose being the pursuit of extended lifespan, see: Horcrux. Alright, show me Horcrux."

Again, the pages began to flip, ending up in an index of obscure rituals.

"Let's see," the Elder said, running his finger down the ritual process. "Murder of an innocent to rip the soul... And he attached you to a child?" The Elder sat for several moments puffing on his cigar, deep in thought. Making up his mind, the vampire shook the chunk of amber causing the soul fragment inside of roil.

"Normally, I wouldn't care, die and let live, that's my motto, but the boy is family, and so was his mother. You don't touch my family, no matter how distant, without a cost."

Putting down his cigar in a conjured ashtray, the Elder turned back to his book of Magic. "I've put a lot of effort into establishing a family for the life I always wanted, and this idiot is being a distraction. I think I need to have a few words with the original. Book, he blew himself up, that means the rest of him must be a wraith just now. Let's see what you've got for summoning disembodied loonies."

Again, the pages flipped to the desired information.

"Oh, that's a good one," the Elder laughed when he read the offered ritual. "Let's see now, six grams of middle-aged mandrake backcne, a quarter gram of centaur dander..."

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In a darkened storage room of a particularly ornate manor house, a seemingly ordinary pocket diary began to vibrate inexplicably, not that anyone was in the room to notice.

The room flared with magic as the binding charms and defenses of the diary fought against those of the summons. Deep within the diary, the consciousness of 16-year-old Tom Riddle woke to terror as his defenses were shredded.

The fear of death consumed the bound wraith's attention as he added his powers to those defending him from the outside magic.

It was not enough.

When the bindings to the diary severed, the backlash fed back into the other items hidden in the

chamber.

The elves of the manor sensed the coming maelstrom and popped away. It was only through luck that of the mansion's human residents, only the Master of the House was home when the chamber erupted and the manor house and all within it was consumed in magical fire.

--ooOOoo--

The explosion rocked the house, causing Lily to shout down into the basement for Grandpa to cut it out before he woke the baby.

The Elder picked himself up and dusted himself off. He certainly had not expected that kind of reaction, but still, it worked.

In the containment field, a new fragment twisted and fought against the charms holding it in place.

"Well, hello," the Elder said with a wry grin. "Welcome to my lab. Your other self was so lonely without you," the Elder leaned forward and reached out with his mind, "Tom. We are going to have so much fu..."

The Count's grin left him, and he looked between the soul fragment in the amber and the one in the containment. "You aren't halves," he said in wonder, "you're... sevenths. There are five more pieces of you out there?"

"How paranoid are you?" he asked wondrously while looking around the wreckage of his lab. "Well, if I have to do this five more times, we'll need to space them out. We will get you all back together, and then," his smile became cold, "we'll talk."

With a gesture, the soul fragment in the containment shot across the room to the amber, joining its elder self. "Hmm, that Amber is going to be getting awfully crowded... I'll have to find something else to bind you to, won't I Tom?"

--ooOOoo--

Arabella Figg made her way down Privet Drive, a woman on a mission. In the three weeks she had been living in the neighborhood she had yet to spot Harry Potter. Today, that would change.

Her collection of kneazels had cemented her reputation as a balmy old cat woman, yet one who loved children. Already some of the neighborhood families looking for childcare options had approached her. Now, all she needed to do was extend that option to the Dursley family.

She spotted her quarry on the pavement outside the neighborhood play park. The young woman she recognized as Petunia Dursley was walking toward the park holding the hand of a young man the right age. Young Harry must still be upset about losing his mum, the way he was resisting direction and kicking at his Aunt.

"Come along Duddikins," Petunia was saying, "we'll have a lovely time on the swings."

Arabella found a place on the park bench closest to the swings and kept a careful eye on the Aunt and Nephew. It was amazing. The boy looked so much like the photographs of Vernon Dursley that Albus had shown her in preparation for her mission.

Albus Dumbledore was such a genius.

Arabella smiled to herself. She had expected to find the miniature image of James Potter living here among the Muggles; instead, Albus had changed the boy's outward appearance to blend in with his Aunt and Uncle, and given the boy a Muggle name. The man was simply brilliant.

Was it any wonder the Headmaster was held in such high regard?

--ooOOoo--

Albus:

Have made contact with the Dursley family and offered my services for childcare. I will have Harry Thursday next while the Dursley's enjoy a night out.

As agreed, you can expect weekly reports from me, for as long as you need them.

Arabella.

Albus Dumbledore leaned back in his chair, nodding to himself. He loved it when a plan came together. He suddenly felt a deep need for one of his cigars. He reached for a lemon sherbet as he fought against the urge.

At some level, Albus was surprised that Arabella had not mentioned the Dursley's son Dudley, but her brief was to report on Harry, so, in retrospect, it was not very surprising when she made no mention the other boy.

Therefore, the pieces were in place. That meant that Albus had a decade to get ready for the next moves.

Perfect.

--ooOOoo--

June 22nd 1982.

23:16 GMT

Frank Bryce stood outside his cottage on the Riddle estate and watched in confusion as the old Gaunt shack appeared to erupt in flame.

The old man rushed to the stone fence that separated the Riddle estate from the road as fast as his bum knee would allow, trying to see if anyone was in the old shack. He could not see anyone near

the house, not that he really expected to. The local children had long claimed that the Gaunt place was haunted.

Flashing blue lights came rushing down the old country lane as the local constable responded to the fire.

"What the hell, Frank?" the Constable asked as he climbed out of his car. "Did you see what happened?"

"I didn't hear anything, but the light, I was inside with my kitchen window facing north," he gestured toward his cottage, "but the light from that old shack was enough to light up the room."

"Bright light? Like a flash?"

"Aye," the old man confirmed. "But no sound."

"A bomb maybe?" the constable suggested as the fire brigade arrived.

"No, not a bomb," Bryce shook his head. "I got to see and hear enough bombs during the war. There was no sound!"

The constable tipped his hat back on his head. "I saw something out this way. T'was like something from a movie, just a column of light disappearing into the night sky. That's why I came out here."

"I didn't see any column of light... just like a flash," Bryce said as he watched the brigade spray water onto the old shack from their truck. It did not seem to be making any difference.

"Well something happened here," the constable noted. "Once they get the fire out, we'll figure out what."

--ooOOoo--

May 3rd 1983.

02:51 GMT

Deep underneath the streets of London, a teacup began vibrating. As seconds passed, the vibration became sufficiently violent that the delicate porcelain cup started to skitter across a pile of gold coins.

Charms tied to the cup tried to force the ancient china to duplicate itself but that magic was suppressed by the summoning being forced upon it.

Nineteen year old Tom Riddle woke when the defenses failed. He barely had time to take his predicament into account before his consciousness was ripped from the teacup as the dueling magics flared into magical flame and the horcrux gave up its physical form. The flames, animated

portraits, old clothing, and books all flashed into vapor as the fire grew in intensity consumed the contents of the vault. The gold, silver and bronze coins softened and melted, flowing into the lower portions of the stone flooring.

Outside the vault goblins rushed about trying to prevent the fire from escaping the Lestrangle vault, finally a shift supervisor arrived to invoke the fire suppression charms of the local vaults, sealing them and causing the air within to be evacuated. Even with that, it took most of half an hour for the fires to be completely extinguished.

The Shift supervisor's inspection after the vault had a chance to cool down lead to the conclusion that some cursed object had sparked the fire, so the bank invoked the vault damage clause of vault holder contract.

Coincidentally, the value of the melted metals perfectly matched the fine for damage to the vault.

--ooOOoo--

January 10th 1984.

12:00 GMT

Kreacher Elf popped into the room, his eyes searching wildly, looking for the source of the disruptive magic he felt threatening to overwhelm, and possibly destroy the seat of the Family Black. There was an odd rattling from within the curio cabinet.

The curio cabinet that held Master Regulus's prize. The prize that Kreacher had failed to destroy.

The elf rushed to the cabinet just as an enchanted locket flew from its enclosure with the speed of a bullet. The flying bit of metal hit the elf fully between the eyes, exploding from the back of Kreacher's skull before the elf realized anything had happened.

The locket continued on, punching through the wall, and splattering the sentient portrait of the last lady of the house with the brains and blood of her last remaining retainer. The locket hit the wards, and ricocheted back into the house.

20 year old Tom Riddle woke as the defenses on the locket were falling. He tried to fight back, but could find no living consciousness to attack. Panic filled his being as he was ripped from the locket.

The magical fire caused by the summoning spread quickly through #12 Grimmauld place, jumping the building's firewalls to #11 and #13 on either side. In a matter of minutes, the entire building was engaged in the fire. The residents of the houses all managed to escape the flames, but a shrill screaming could be heard for several minutes, despite the fact that all the residents were accounted for.

--ooOOoo--

July 31st 1984.

18:15 GMT

Sybill Trelawney stumbled, paused to steady herself, and then started again. Her nerves were shot. The castle had been going through a series of disconcerting rumblings all afternoon, but no one could explain them. Not the Headmaster, not Minnie, not that arrogant fool Severus, not even the caretaker.

Was it any wonder she had needed so much of her nerve medicine today?

No, she just needed to get rid of her bottles. Too many bottles tended to inspire too many questions. The elves refused to clean her tower, and she had never gotten the hang of the banishing charm, so Sybill had long ago learned of a secret place for disposing of any inconvenient items.

The door appeared, and she smirked to herself. After this little chore was done, she would go to dinner and no one would be the wiser.

She opened the door and died instantly as the magical fire escaped the Room of Hidden Things and consumed everything in its path.

Fighting the fires taxed the abilities of the Castle and the Staff, but ultimately they defeated it. An investigation discovered both what little remained of the body of Sybill Trelawney and a heretofore-undiscovered room, but no hint to the cause of the catastrophe.

--ooOOoo--

"Well," the elder said, "That one took a while, where were you, anyway?"

The soul fragment struggled in the containment ward, and offered no answers.

"That leaves a single piece of you out there, but I can't find him. After all this time, he must have bonded to something living, and I can't just summon that..."

The Elder placed the amber, now almost completely black onto the tabletop. "With your latest piece of yourself, the amber would be overflowing with you, wouldn't it? Fortunately, I've got replacement accommodations for you."

He looked up and focused on the amber. "What's that? You're bored? Don't worry about that, you'll be able to move about and experience new things in your new home... Your new life will be frustrating, but never boring."

His attention moved to the fragment fighting the containment.

"You're pleading for mercy?" The Elder laughed. "Seriously? Sorry Tommy, mercy doesn't live here. You're keeping me from a party. Eddie is visiting, just in time for his little brother's birthday. Ah, Eddie, my grandson, the Witch Doctor..."

With a gesture, the six soul fragments merged into the new receptacle, and as they integrated, they began to slowly struggle in the Elder's grip.

At the foot of the stairs, he paused. The Elder slowly faded, to be replaced by the jovial Grandpa. "Let's go Tommy," Grandpa laughed, "It's time to give Harry our present."

--ooOOoo--

Grandpa found his family in the sitting room. Eddie was sitting on the far end of the sofa with Harry on his lap, listening to his little brother's latest story.

"Hi Grandpa," Eddie called when he spotted his elder, "Harry's telling me that you're still blowing stuff up in your lab."

"Oh, I try to keep my hand in," the old vampire admitted. "Of course my little lab is nothing like the ones you're used to, Mr. Fancy-pants Witch Doctor."

"Oh, stop teasing him Grandpa," Marilyn admonished. "We all know how proud you are of Eddie."

"Cut it out Marilyn, you're going to make me blush!" Eddie laughed. "I caught this monster running around with my Woof Woof. I don't mind, but old Woofie is getting a bit beat up. We need to get Harry a friend of his own."

"By coincidence, I have," Grandpa announced as he produced his gift for the birthday boy. "I was going to wait for the party, but now is as good a time as any." With a flourish, the old man presented four year old Harry with a small teddy bear.

"A bear!" Harry shouted, grabbing the squirming bear and hugging it tightly.

"His name is Tommy," Grandpa confided. "Tommy Bear."

"It moves," Marilyn noted.

"Take good care of Tommy Bear squirt," Eddie suggested while ruffling his little brother's hair. "A gift from Grandpa is always a wonderful surprise."

"T'anks Gampa," Harry said hugging the struggling teddy even harder.

--ooOOoo--

July 16th 1991.

14:36 GMT

Minerva McGonagall sat at her desk going over the class list again. The deadline for acceptance was fast approaching and she still had not heard from...

She tried to swallow the guilt over what she had allowed Albus to do a decade before. She was sure those.... *Muggles* would never allow Harry to attend Hogwarts.

To avoid thinking about how she had allowed the son of a pair of her favorite students to be left on a doorstep on a cold November night, Minerva had thrown herself into her work, more and more so as the time of Harry's turning 11 had drawn near. However, it was here now. Harry was now of age to attend Hogwarts and he still had not...

Her musings were interrupted when a familiar owl fluttered through her open window. The clearly exhausted bird came to land on her desk and offered its leg. Minerva picked at the knots holding the message to the bird and removed the letter. Once she had done so, its job done, the owl fell over asleep on top of her in-box.

How very odd, Minerva thought as she unfolded the sheet of parchment.

Dear Ms. McGonagall.

Thanks for the offer to attend your school. I was really surprised when your letter showed up, and you have a really cool owl. I had to sit down with my Grandpa so that he could explain your school to me, and then we made a cool potion that blew up Grandpa's lab. That was fun.

I am going to have to say no thank you to your invitation though; there are just too many things I would miss if I were to move to Scotland for most of the year. Mom said that it would only be polite to explain my reasons, so here goes.

First, there is no way I am wearing that uniform. My friends would laugh at me constantly. Dad says they are kind of like the robes he saw some people wearing back when he was still in the old country, but I think they look like dresses. No thanks.

Second, the allowable pets list is a problem for me. You list owls, cats and toads, but not dragons? How could I go to school and not bring Spot with me? Who would take care of him? I'm the only one who knows where he needs scratched when he get itchy. No dragons, I'm not going. You should really take that into account, I can't be the only one who feels this way.

And then there's Tom. I mean, Tom isn't really a pet, but I couldn't just leave him.

And my third reason is there isn't any baseball. Grandpa tells me that you do not even have television at your school. Without television, how could I watch the Dodgers games? Besides, my Dad has season tickets, he always lets me ditch school for opening day, I couldn't do that from Scotland. My little league coach says that maybe this year he will teach me to throw a slider, but if I'm in Scotland, I don't see how that will happen.

Anyway, those are my reasons. Mom laughed a bit at them, but I think they are important. Then she started yelling at Dad about the ditching school thing. I guess I should not have written that part, but it's too late now. So again, no thank you, I think I will stay here and go to the 6th grade with all my friends.

Oh, just so your records are accurate, I'm not Harry Potter any more. My Mom and Dad adopted me like before I can even remember. My name is Harry Munster.

- Sincerely: Harry Munster. Dodger Fan Forever!

Minerva looked up from the parchment trying to understand what she had just read. Lily and James' son didn't want to attend Hogwarts? What had Albus done? What had she allowed him to do? And what was this about having a *dragon* for a pet? What was going on?

Minerva stood from her desk and rejection letter in hand, headed for the Headmaster's office. Albus had some explaining to do.

--ooOOoo--

"Can I help you?"

Rebus Hagrid found himself in a position he had not experienced since he was seven years old. Having to look up to see someone's eyes.

"Uh," he hesitated for a moment in shock at finding someone taller than he who was not a giant... At least Hagrid was sure the man was not all giant... parts of him might be... not that giants tended to be green... "I'm here to see Harry."

"Oh, Just a moment," the huge, greenish, man... thing said before calling into the house. "Harry! You've got a visitor."

"Who is it dad?" a small boy said as he came running into view carrying what appeared to be a squirming teddy bear.

Hagrid swallowed. The boy was the spitting image of James Potter and he was staring up into Hagrid's eyes.

"Harry," the tall... man said softly, "this is mister..."

"Hagrid," the half giant supplied. "Rebus Hagrid, but everybody jus' calls me Hagrid. I'm the Gamekeeper an' Keeper o' Keys an' Grounds o' the Hogwarts school o' Witchcraft an' Wizardry."

"Hi," Harry responded. "Didn't Ms. McGonagall get my letter? I turned down the place she said was reserved for me."

"It might be best to have this conversation inside in the living room," the huge man suggested, "Harry's mother would skin me alive if I had you discuss the reason for your visit on our porch."

Hagrid was conducted inside the dark house, where he encountered another new experience. Furnishings properly his size. Soon, he found himself seated on a huge horsehair sofa with a properly sized mug of coffee in his hands.

"I never introduced myself earlier did I?" the huge man laughed. "I'm Herman Munster, this scamp's father. Now then Hagrid, why are you here since Harry turned down his invitation?"

"Professor Dumbledore, the Headmaster, thought tha' Harry might not have understood when he said no," Hagrid turned his attention to the boy, "yeh see, yer a wizard Harry."

"I know," Harry said simply. "My reasons for not wanting to go to your school had nothing to do with not knowing I'm a wizard. Grandpa told me when I was about four, when he started teaching me magic."

"He's taught yeh magic? But tha's illegal." Hagrid sputtered.

"What's illegal?" A new voice asked.

Hagrid turned and found himself staring into the eyes of a vampire, his breath caught in his throat.

"Teaching Harry magic, evidently," Herman theorized.

"Hmph," the dead man said. "You must be from Europe. They're the only ones who make age restrictions on magic."

Hagrid forced himself to stop looking the vampire in the eye, and took in the man's appearance. The vamp was short, perhaps half his size, 1/3rd the size of Herman, The vampire was dressed in classic evening wear, with an ornate badge hung on a ribbon around his neck. Hagrid gasped in recognition.

"Spotted it did you?" The Vampire asked. "Don't go all fan boy on me big fella." The vampire stuck out his hand. "Sam Dracula, Count Dracula if you want to be formal."

"Sam?" Hagrid asked, trying to remember the protocols for dealing with vampires, "but I thought your name was Vlad..."

"That's my good for nothing glory hog of a little brother," the vampire said with a wave of his hand, a wave that caused a lit cigar to appear in the Count's hand. "We don't get along. And you are?"

"Hagrid," he said respectfully.

"He's here to tell me I'm a wizard Grandpa," Harry chimed in. "The folks at that wizards' school thought I didn't know and that was the reason I turned them down."

"Of course he knows," the Count said. "How could anyone with as much power as Harry not know? Call me Grandpa, Hagrid, everyone does."

"Oh, look, how cute!" Harry exclaimed.

Hagrid looked about the room to see what the boy was talking about, quickly realizing that the

three other people in the room were staring at him. Hagrid looked down and discovered a small teddy bear on his lap, vigorously attempting and failing to stab Hagrid in the chest with the spoon that the half giant had just used to stir the sugar into his coffee.

"Tom likes you," Harry laughed. "He only tries to kill people he likes, usually just me." The boy scooped the squirming stuffed bear up from Hagrid's lap. "Trying to make me jealous Tommy Bear?"

"Yehr bear is alive?" Hagrid gasped.

Harry nodded in the affirmative.

"Don't be ridiculous," Grandpa laughed. "A living teddy bear? Absurd. That bear is a perfectly normal teddy, with an evil something bonded to it."

"Evil summat?" Hagrid echoed.

"Pulled part of the little SOB from Harry's head the night I adopted him. Once Harry was old enough, I gave him back."

Hagrid's eyes flicked to Harry's forehead and only then noticed the utter absence of the curse scar he had seen on the boy's forehead the night he had delivered Harry to Albus Dumbledore in Little Whinging.

This was entirely too odd for Hagrid, so he did what he did whenever he was exposed to excessive weirdness, he ignored it completely and soldiered on.

"So, Harry, about Hogwarts..."

Harry shook his head, "I'm sorry Hagrid, but I don't want to go to Hogwarts."

"But, Harry," Hagrid said, barely able to believe that anyone would turn down the chance to attend the premier school of magic in the world, "Yehr parents put yer name down as soon as you was born!"

"My parents, Mr. Hagrid," Harry said, a bit of anger in his voice, "live here at 1313 Mockingbird Lane, and they had never heard of Hogwarts until that letter from Ms McGonagall came."

"No, not the Munsters," Hagrid protested, "James and Lily Potter."

"The Potters were my birth parents, and I don't remember them," Harry said shaking his head. "My parents, the people who raised me, are here. I don't want to leave them to go to a school in Scotland, I don't want to leave all my friends behind, I don't want to leave Tom, and I don't want to leave Spot. Your school doesn't even ALLOW having a dragon for a pet. How could I abandon Spot?"

"You've got a dragon?" Hagrid asked, forgetting all about his assignment to convince Harry to

attend Hogwarts.

"Only the best one in the world," a now grinning Harry confirmed. "Want to see him?"

"Would I?" Hagrid asked rhetorically.

"Can you stay for dinner Hagrid?" Herman called after the half giant chasing his son out of the room.

--ooOOoo--

"Minerva, I have a delicate assignment for you," the headmaster said.

Minerva did not even look up from her lesson plan prep, "I'm not going to cover your meeting with the board Albus, not again. That's your job; I've got enough on my plate with my own, thank you very much."

"A faithful deputy would..." the headmaster began.

"Nice try Albus," Minerva sniffed. "You haven't attended a board meeting in two years."

"Well, no, but that isn't what I wanted to speak with you about," the Headmaster explained.

"Hmm," Minerva vocalized suspiciously. "I'm not making a run to a Muggle town to buy you lemon sherbets either. You should have thought of that before you sent Hagrid off to try and recruit Harry Munster."

"This isn't about me or any of my responsibilities, Minerva," Dumbledore huffed.

"You are behind on your paperwork for the new year as well, Alright, if the delicate assignment isn't about you, then..." her eyes narrowed, "Which goat herd is upset with Aberforth this time, Albus?" she asked half joking.

The headmaster's face contorted in disgust at her suggestion about his brother's antics for a moment before continuing, "This time it is not about Aberforth. It appears that I may have erred when I sent Hagrid to explain the opportunities offered by a Hogwarts education young Mr. Potter. The family that has claimed Mr. Potter as one of their own has invited Hagrid to remain for the summer. I need you to go to America and fetch both Hagrid and Mr. Potter home."

"Hagrid is an adult, who can stay where he chooses," Minerva noted. "And Harry Munster quite clearly declined his invitation to attend Hogwarts. I can't say I agree with his reasons or his nonsense about not attending because of a pet dragon, but he declined and that's the end of it, Albus."

"Minerva, please. This is the very least we can do for the son of James and Lily Potter."

--ooOOoo--

Minerva stood on the sidewalk staring at the house that matched the address on the slip of parchment in her hand.

1313 Mockingbird Lane, Mockingbird Heights, California.

Despite the matching address, this could not be the right place. This house was a crumbling Second Empire Victorian mansion that appeared to be on the verge of falling to pieces before her eyes. Shrubs heavily overgrew the low stone fence and the gnarled tree in the yard had obviously not been tended in generations.

How could any family live in such a disaster? The Shrieking Shack was a palace in comparison with this... house.

"If you're looking for the Munster home," a woman's voice broke into Minerva's musings, "you've found them."

"Really?" Minerva asked, turning for face an obviously Muggle woman. This woman was in late middle age, for a Muggle that would mean she would be in her 60s.

"Yes, I see people looking at that house in disbelief all the time," the woman continued. "You should think twice before going in there, vampires you know,"

"What?" Minerva asked shocked that the Muggle even suspected the existence of vampires.

"The wife and her father anyway," the woman continued. "I'm not sure what Herman is. I'm Yolanda Crivens by the way; these people have been my neighbors for almost forty years."

"I'm here to interview their son, Harry, for a position at our private school," Minerva explained, hoping to keep the woman talking. She was obviously the neighborhood busybody, and normally Minerva would not have given her the time of day, but it seemed this one time, an unredeemed gossip might be of some use.

"Ah, Harry, he's a sweetheart," Yolanda mused. "An odd boy, to be sure, but that is to be expected considering how he's been raised. He has been mowing my lawn all summer for pocket money. I doubt the Munster's could afford to send Harry to a private school. Lower middle class, you know."

Minerva nodded, wondering just what 'lower middle class' might be. "Still, one must do one's duty."

Minerva left the neighborhood snoop on the walk and passed through the rusting wrought iron gate embossed with an ornate 'M' and made her way through the over grown yard to the front door.

--ooOOoo--

The door opened at her knock, and Minerva found herself looking at someone who was quite possibly the most beautiful woman she had ever seen.

"Yes?" the blonde woman asked, "can I help you?"

"My name is Minerva McGonagall, I am the Deputy Headmistress of the Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry," Minerva said, hoping she was not in violation of the local Statue of Secrecy laws. "I would like to speak with Mr. Harry Potter's guardian."

The woman's brow furrowed for a moment, before her expression brightened. "Oh, Harry, I'm so sorry, I'd forgotten his birth name was Potter, he's been with us for so long. You'll want to speak with my Aunt Lily. I'm Marilyn, Marilyn Munster, won't you come in?"

Following the young woman through the dank house, Minerva had a chance to more closely examine her guide. The blonde appeared to be on the young side of thirty, with a most attractive figure draped in a yellow sundress. The beautiful young woman stood in stark contrast with the house she lead the way through. Dusty, festooned with cobwebs, the portions of the house Minerva could see appeared to not have been cleaned in years, if ever.

Surely, Harry Potter was not being raised in such a place...

"Aunt Lily is in the kitchen," Marilyn said as she opened a large door.

Minerva was shocked to find that the kitchen of this house appeared much like her mother's. While the witch had not used a private kitchen in more than 5 decades, she had seen examples of the modern Muggle kitchen during home visits. Much like the house itself, this kitchen showed no sign of the modern Muggle world. Something was very... different about this home.

At a huge range, a dark haired woman was fussing over a large stockpot, and she appeared to be attempting to subdue something that was attempting to escape the pot by striking it with a wooden spoon.

"Aunt Lily?" Marilyn asked softly. "This is Minerva McGonagall, the Deputy Headmistress of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry; she would like to speak to you about Harry."

"Take over with dinner won't you Marilyn? I think it's a little too fresh, it keeps trying to get away," Lily Munster said as she turned away from the range, wiping her hands on a dishtowel.

"Of course Aunt Lily."

Minerva's view of Lily Munster improved as she approached. Dressed in what appeared to be a grey linen dress, with black highlights, her hair was pitch black, with a shock of white that ran from the right side of her forehead. Around her neck hung a golden necklace in the form of a bat. She was very pale, so much so that her skin had a slightly greenish tinge, and her lips, painted black, only emphasized the woman's bloodless pallor.

Recognition caused Minerva's eyes to go wide and her left hand shot to her throat in a protective gesture. The neighborhood gossip had been right.

"Oh, you see it? Almost no one does anymore," Lily Munster laughed, raising a hand as if for an

oath. "Guilty, vampire here, but reformed."

"Reformed?" Minerva croaked.

"Yes, reformed Vampires only drink from volunteers," the woman said, with her cheeks becoming a bit more green, blushing? "My husband gives me all I need. Please, sit down."

Minerva felt her legs collapse from under her as she all but fell into the chair that slid into place behind her, and once she was seated, the chair continued to move until she was sitting at the kitchen table. A cup shimmered into existence in front of her, containing some hot liquid with vapors dancing upon the surface.

"So, I know what we love about Harry," Lily Munster said with a smile. "What is it about him that makes him so important to your school?"

"I'm not sure what you mean..." Minerva temporized when asked the same question she had asked of the Headmaster, only to receive a response that in reflection did not really answer the question.

"First you sent the standard acceptance letter by owl," Lily Munster noted. "I recall those from my childhood in the old country. Harry was intrigued until he realized that it would mean leaving home. After he declines your offer, Hagrid shows up on our doorstep to pitch your school to Harry. When Harry makes it very clear for a second time that he isn't interested, the deputy headmistress arrives. You'll have to pardon my suspicion, but I'm just a simple housewife, and all of this seems strange to me."

Minerva simply nodded, having no way of explaining just why she had come after a student who showed no interest in Hogwarts.

"I find it somewhat unlikely that you put this much effort in each and every student," Lily said with a sly smile. "So, what is it about our Harry that makes it so vital he attend your school? Is his presence required by some grant?"

Minerva opened her mouth to attempt to explain as diplomatically as possible that she had no idea what the reason for the Headmaster's insistence that Harry attend Hogwarts might be, when something small and soft began attacking her right ankle. Looking down she found herself under attack by a small teddy bear.

"Tom," Lily said in a scolding manner, as if she were speaking to a family pet, "stop that!"

"Oh, Tommy Bear," Marilyn said as she scooped the small stuffed animal from the floor in a practiced motion. "What are we going to do with you?"

"Sorry about Tom," Lily said shaking her head. "I don't know what gets into him sometimes. Attacking someone is how he shows emotion, though he usually reserves it for someone he loves."

"He tried to garrote me once," Marilyn interjected in a dreamy fashion. "I never felt so loved. I got dinner calmed down Aunt Lily, I'd best see to this little troublemaker so that you can have your

talk."

After her niece had left the room, Lily sighed. "Poor Marilyn, she's so starved for the attention."

"Starved for attention?" Minerva asked, trying to imagine a situation where such a beautiful young woman would not have all the attention she could possibly want.

"Oh, she tries, the poor thing, but the men she meets just can't seem to get past her unfortunate deformities."

"Deformities?" Minerva echoed.

"Surely you noticed her... plainness," Lily said, "It comes from her father's side of the family. My sister took one look at the poor girl when she was born, and just couldn't deal with it."

Minerva was shocked. Plain? These people considered that girl to be plain? "Her mother rejected her at birth?" she asked incredulously.

"Oh, no. Tried to eat her," Lily said with a shake of her head. "My sister was always the traditionalist. Daddy stopped her, and brought Marilyn to Herman and me to raise," the woman paused, obviously lost to her memories for a moment, "Harry is related to us through Marilyn's father, and sadly shares her plainness... though it's easier for a man."

"Where is Harry?" Minerva asked, "and I need to speak with Hagrid to see what he plans to do."

"Oh, my husband Herman took Harry and Hagrid to a ball game, they'll be back in a few hours, no doubt having spoiled their appetites on the horrible food at the ball park. Would you like to stay for dinner?"

--ooOOoo--

Minerva was startled when an older man appeared to have simply... appeared behind her.

"Well, hello there," he said, "I didn't know we had visitors."

"This is Minerva McGonagall, Grandpa," Lily Munster said. "She's the Deputy Headmistress of the Hogwarts School, she's here to speak to Harry."

"Enchanted," the man said with a bow, taking her offered hand and raising it to his lips. He lightly kissed her knuckles, before turning her hand over and moving to attack her wrist.

"Grandpa!" Lily said, smacking her father on the head with her wooden spoon.

"Sorry," he said with a sheepish grin. "Old habits.... So, Hogwarts, eh? I thought that Albus would have come himself."

"You know the Headmaster?" Minerva asked, pushing through the fog the vampire's presence had

imposed on her.

"We've had dealings," Grandpa answered, "they were a while ago, back when he was dealing with his pretty little friend Gellert. Albus tried to get an association I'm a member of to intervene in that fight."

"Oh," Lily exclaimed. "I thought I recognized his name. I didn't know he was a school teacher."

"Among other things. Albus made some interesting arguments, but then, so did Gellert," the Vampire continued as he took a seat at the table. "In the end, neither side was willing to make any binding promises to our advantage, so we let them deal with each other."

"You would have allowed Grendelwald's evil to survive?" Minerva asked incredulously.

"The affairs of the living and all that," Grandpa said with an airy wave. "Both sides were content with allowing their citizens to end our kind without penalty, why would we care what you did to each other?"

Minerva hated to admit it, even to herself, but the vampire had a point.

"So, why did Albus send you, lovely lady?" Grandpa continued without pause. "Why didn't he come for your savior himself?"

"What?" Minerva sputtered.

"I originally went to check on Harry in November of '81 because he was family. Marilyn's father was the brother of Lily Evan's mother. When I heard of her passing, I went looking for her son, to make sure the boy was all right."

"He wasn't?" Minerva asked, her blood running cold.

"Not hardly, the woman of the house backhanded the boy as I watched for no reason other than he was confused by his new environment and kept asking for his mum," Grandpa continued, a bit of anger showing through his jolly demeanor. "I only refrained from killing the fools in that house because they had a child of their own, though that boy showed signs that he was being ruined by over indulgence. It only took seconds for me to defeat the blood based wards erected on the property and remove the boy, but not before I pulled the details of the deal Albus brokered with them out of their shallow little minds."

Grandpa leaned back in his chair, "Albus wanted the boy raised in obscurity, and I found myself agreeing with him. The so-called Dark Lord may have been destroyed, but his followers were still operating unrestrained. But rather than leaving a member of my family to abuse, I decided that I would bring him home with me."

"Why?" Minerva asked, almost hating herself for doing so.

"He was family, and honestly, this old house had gotten awfully quiet with Eddie away at college.

Harry has brought excitement back to our lives."

"It had gotten bit boring around here," Lily confirmed. "Then Harry came into our afterlives and brought with him his special magic."

"And his normal magic as well," Grandpa laughed. "He is can be a stubborn boy when the mood strikes him. We've pretty much given up on hiding his birthday presents from him. He just summons them."

"Accidental magic is commonly seen in young witches and wizards," Minerva noted.

"You misunderstand," Grandpa said shaking his head, "there is nothing accidental about it. The boy has power and knows how to use it."

"Wandless magic?" she asked wondrously. "At his age?"

"Think girl," the Vampire said, causing Minerva to bristle a bit. She had not considered herself a 'girl' for sixty years. "You know about what your people call 'accidental magic' which is utterly wandless, and frequently quite powerful. Your culture celebrates the first instances of this, and then actively discourages it from then on, until you subjugate your magic to a focus in late childhood."

"We are all magical beings," He concluded waving his hand, causing a lit cigar to appear in his hand.

"Except for me," Marilyn said sadly.

"Marilyn," Lily admonished, "I wish you wouldn't say things like that. We've all got special talents, Harry is magical, I'm the ultimate housewife, Herman is our provider, you are a wonder with your botany, and Grandpa is... well, Grandpa."

"I know Aunt Lily," the young woman sighed. "I just wish..."

"So," Grandpa said with a grin. "You're a Scot, aren't you? My sixteenth wife was a Scottish lass."

"Sixteenth?" Minerva sputtered.

"Grandpa has been married 67 times," Lily supplied with a frown.

"None of my wives are still among the living..." the old Vampire said with a wistful tone. "But we keep in touch."

--ooOOoo--

"Tha' was amazing," Hagrid rumbled. "The game was smashin', even if there weren' anyone on brooms, an' I can' remember the last time I was in a crowd o' Muggles an' no one noticed anythin'."

"That's the price we pay for going to the game with a celebrity like my Dad," Harry laughed as he led his father and their visitor into the Munster's living room. "Didn't you see that no one could take their eyes off of him?"

"I'm hardly a celebrity Harry," Herman said with a greenish blush.

"Dad, you're the lead embalmer for Gateman, Goodbury and Graves, how much cooler could a job be? I bet Warren Beatty wishes he was you."

"Well," Herman said with grin, "I am better looking than poor Warren."

"Of course you are Herman," Lily confirmed. "I hope you didn't spoil your appetites with that horrible Ballpark food, dinner is almost ready."

"You missed a great game Mom," Harry enthused while displaying a gray mangled mess of leather and fiber. "Dad caught a foul ball."

"I might have squeezed a little too hard when I caught it," Herman admitted. "They make those baseballs so flimsy these days."

"Yes," Lily said with an arched eyebrow. "Harry, you and Hagrid have a visitor."

"Hello Harry," Minerva said. "I am Minerva McGonagall, the Deputy Headmistress of the Hogwarts School."

"Ma'am," Harry said suspiciously.

"Hello Min," Hagrid rumbled. "Why are yeh here? Didn' yeh get my message tha' Harry here didn' want to attend Hogwarts?"

"I did, Hagrid," Minerva said with a small nod. "However, the Headmaster insisted that I come to further make our case to Mr. Munster. What is that on your head?"

"What? Oh, this?" the half giant said pulling the Dodger's cap from his head. "Harry made it fer me, fer the game."

"It's an official Dodger's souvenir," the boy supplied, pulling off his own cap. "I just enlarged it, because they didn't have his size."

"May I?" Minerva asked as she took the Hagrid sized ball cap into her hands. "You did this Mr. Munster?"

"Yes Ma'am," the boy confirmed.

"Very nice work," Minerva said, slipping into her teacher mode. "Well beyond the ability expected of your age group. And you did this wandlessly?"

"Wand?" the boy asked blankly. "You mean those black sticks that stage magician's use?"

"Harry doesn't use a wand," Hagrid supplied.

"I see," Minerva nodded again. "Hagrid, I also come with a request from Professor Kettleburn that you return to care for your pets. It seems that Fluffy was a bit rambunctious with the man and buried him behind your cabin. It took Silvanus most of an hour to dig himself free with only one working arm. Poppy is most put out with him over his latest injuries."

"Fluffy's a good boy, he is," Hagrid protested with a sigh. "Stands to reason tha' Silvanus jus' didn' understand tha' Fluffy was jus' playin'."

Hagrid turned to his hosts and sighed, "Seems I best be headin' back to Hogwarts. I've got responsibilities to take care o' afore school starts September first."

"We'll miss you Hagrid," Herman said. "Especially me, I loved having my little buddy around. You're always welcome, any time you want to visit."

"Thanks Herman."

"If you're leaving," Harry piped up, "you'd better say goodbye to Spot."

"No worries, Harry," he turned back to his fellow Hogwarts employee. "Would ye like ter meet Spot, Min?"

"Spot?" Minerva asked. "Dare I ask just who Spot might be?"

"Spot is my Dragon," Harry explained. "I told you about him in my letter."

"Dragon?" she asked. "You've actually got a dragon? In the house?"

"Oh, yah," Hagrid assured her. "A smashin' great one too."

"No," Minerva said shaking her head, "I have no desire to meet a dragon."

--ooOOoo--

"I'm not sure I understand," the Headmaster said again. "Why doesn't Harry want to attend Hogwarts?"

"He's happy where he is," Hagrid said with a shrug. "An' he told me tha' the found the idea o' a boardin' school to be odd. He enjoys his school in Mockingbird Heights, he has fun with his magic lessons from his Grandpa, an' he loves his pets. There is nothin' tha' Hogwarts has to offer tha' he doesn' have at home."

"And Minerva couldn't change his mind?"

"She tried," Hagrid admitted. "I sat with her while she explained the advantages o' Hogwarts, but yehng Harry jus' doesn' want to come here."

"I fail to see the problem," Severus Snape said from the darkened corner of the Headmaster's office. "If it's that important that the boy attend, simply go there and use legilimency to convince the parents that the boy must attend Hogwarts."

"Thank you Hagrid," Dumbledore said. "That will be all."

The half giant nodded and exited the Headmaster's office, privately wishing he would be around to witness what happened when Severus Snape attempted his mind arts on one of the Munsters.

"Severus," Dumbledore sighed, "must you be so very offensive?"

"I hate wasting my time," the dour man said simply.

"Attempting what you suggest would be suicide, and you are a fool to even suggest it," Dumbledore sighed again. "This family's Grandfather is the Elder of the Council of Strigoi." Seeing the lack of understanding in Snape's expression, he continued. "The Council of European Vampires. He was ancient and leading the council when your great great grandfather attended Hogwarts. I attempted to get the Council to come in on our side during the war with Grindelwald. They refused."

"Vampires?" Snape sniffed. "Pretentious parasites, that prey on weaklings too pathetic to defend themselves. Just go and take the boy if you want him that much."

"Well Severus," Dumbledore said with a gleam in his eye. "Since you feel that way, I'm sending you to go and convince the Munster family that Harry Potter must attend Hogwarts."

--ooOOoo--

"Hello," the young woman said in the open doorway. "Can I help you?"

"I rather doubt it, but there is always hope," Severus sneered. This girl was obviously no vampire, his eyes swept over her with practiced ease. She was not even a witch, just a worthless squib most likely. "You will take me to the old vampire."

The woman appeared to deflate for a moment, going so far as to lean against the doorframe. She then appeared to collect herself. "I'm sorry, but you can't just come by and demand to see my grandfather."

"Take me to him you insufferable dunderhead, take me to him now, or you will wish you had."

Severus was confused for a moment by the shudder the girl experienced at his words, but again she collected herself and began to close the door. "I think you'd best go."

"Imperio!" his wand was in his hand before she could blink, and the control spell did its job.

"Now then," he said, replacing his wand in its storage pocket. "Take me to the vampire."

The blond girl blinked her large blue eyes at him, and beamed a smile. "Of course," she said, "if you would follow me?"

Severus followed the woman through the dank house. The house reminded him of his own home at Spinner's End, a thought that disturbed him on some level. Perhaps he should look into updating the property, or failing that, selling it off.

His guide led him down a staircase hidden behind a secret panel. Descending one flight, and then another before coming to a long dimly lit hallway that surely ran further than the property line. Just as Severus was starting to wonder where the girl was leading him, she opened a door and led him into a small room lit by a single dim lamp. "Grandpa, you have a visitor," she said demurely, before stepping back into a corner to observe the meeting.

Severus took in the vampire and his surroundings. He appeared to be an old man who was bent over a workbench looking through a large book. The room itself appeared to be set up as a potions laboratory, not in a manner he would have chosen, but certainly serviceable. The Vampire looked up from his book. "A visitor? Marilyn, you know that you aren't to bring anyone down here."

"He wanted to see you Grandpa," the blonde said vacantly.

"He wanted to see me, so you led him down here?" The vampire's expression shifted from curiosity to suspicion. "Marilyn, why is the sky blue?"

"Because he wanted to see you Grandpa," the girl said in the same vacant tone.

"I see," the vampire said, shaking his head. "Mind control, sir? Really?"

"I am here as a representative of Albus Dumbledore..." Severus began.

"Yeah, I figured," the old man pushed passed Severus to stand in front of the girl. He leaned forward to examine her closely. "The Imperius? Seriously? Are you people still using that?"

The vampire snapped his fingers in front of the blonde's eyes causing her to blink.

"Grandpa?" she asked, before she spotted Severus and her eyes widened and an expression of gloom crossed her features. "I brought him to your lab? Oh Grandpa, I'm so sorry!"

"Don't worry about it Marilyn," the Vampire said stroking her hair in a consoling manner. "You were taken advantage of by a gutless bastard. One I'm going to deal with. Later, we'll see what we can do to build up your mental defenses."

"I have my wand," Severus said drawing his weapon.

"I bet," the vampire said, turning to face his visitor. "What do you want?"

"Harry Potter is going to attend Hogwarts."

"Actually," the vampire said with a shake of his head, "he isn't. Not that you'll care, you won't be going back either."

Severus reacted instantly to the threat, his wand up and the Imperius cast as he gathered his magic to himself and making eye contact with the man, pushed with his legilimency into the Vampire's mind. This combination never failed. "You will bring Harry Potter to me."

A smile crossed the old man's lips and Severus discovered to his horror that mind to mind communication via eye contact was a two way street.

"No, I don't think so," Sam Dracula said pushing back against the wizard's attempt to subdue his will. It took but an instant for the Elder to establish his control over the wizard completely.

Severus gasped as he lost all control of his body.

"My," the old vampire said. "You're a tall one aren't you? Have a seat, boy."

Deep inside his mind Severus fought to regain control of his body as he found himself seated, his eyes still locked with the unholy gaze of the Master vampire.

"You know, I thought after three refusals, Albus might have put in an appearance himself," the vampire mused. "It seems I have overestimated him. He sent Hagrid when his letter was declined, he sent Minerva when Hagrid didn't return, and now he's sent you when Minerva dallied too long. I do hope Minerva isn't too fond of you. I wonder what Albus will do when you don't return? Let us find out shall we? Could you tilt your head to the left? Ah, that's a good boy"

"Grandpa!"

"Calm down Marilyn," the Vampire sighed. "It's not like he doesn't deserve it, you should see what a cesspool his mind is."

"But Grandpa... He's so handsome! And the way he looked at me..." the blonde pleaded in a wistful tone.

Handsome? Grandpa blinked twice. This fool? The poor girl had it bad. "All right, I'll give him to you."

The Vampire turned his attention back to the enthralled Severus. "What is your name boy?"

"Severus Snape," the potions master answered.

"Alright, Severus Snape," the Vampire nodded. "I'm giving you to my granddaughter. Remember, your goal in life is to make her happy. You don't owe your allegiance to Albus Dumbledore, or to the Dark Lord I saw in your memories, you owe it to her. She saved your life after all. If you ever make her unhappy, you'll be making me unhappy. Do you understand?"

"Yes." Severus croaked, the horror of what had happened to him... of what he had brought upon himself in his arrogance... almost burning through the thrall.

"Good," Grandpa nodded and retook his seat. "Well Marilyn, he's yours. Try not to break him."

--ooOOoo--

Severus found himself sitting on an oversized sofa in a dark, musty sitting room, trying not to notice that the son of Lily Evans and James Potter was staring at him.

"Should I call you Uncle Severus or what?" the boy asked.

Severus quite honestly had no idea how to respond to that, so he said nothing.

"I mean, it's not like you'll really be my uncle like Uncle Charlie or Uncle Lester," the boy continued, seemingly not noticing Severus' lack of desire to talk. "But it doesn't seem right to call an adult by his first name. Marilyn's my cousin, but "Cousin Severus" doesn't really sound right."

"I am a teacher," Severus said, hoping to shut the boy up. "You may call me Professor Snape."

Of course it did not work.

"Ok, cool," the boy said. "What do you teach? I like math."

"I am the Potions Master of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry," Severus said, rubbing his left forearm. An odd ache had suddenly started under his old Dark Mark."

"Oh, that school that Hagrid and Ms. McGonagall work at? They sent you to get me to go there too?" the boy asked. "Why do they want me so bad?"

"I have no idea," Severus admitted.

"I mean it's nice to be wanted, but at some point people have to take a hint," the boy concluded. "Know what I mean?"

Severus nodded.

"I still don't want to go," Potter said. "Just so we're clear, Professor Snape."

"Crystal," Severus assured him before he felt something scamper across his lap and a stabbing pain emanated from his Dark Mark. Hissing in pain, Severus looked down and found himself staring into the plastic eyes of a stuffed bear toy, a toy that was quite purposefully jabbing at this left arm with a plush arm.

Each jab was punctuated by a fresh bolt of pain.

"Oh, hey, Tom likes you," the boy said. "It's funny, he seems to like all you Hogwarts people."

"Tom?" Severus asked incredulously, his eyes never leaving the plastic eyes of the toy.

"That's his name," Harry explained. "He was left over from whatever happened when my birth parents were killed. Grandpa pulled part of him out of my head when he found me, and put him in the bear. Then he gave Tom to me for my 4th birthday."

~Severus~

Severus started when he heard the voice in his head, a voice he had not heard since the day before Lily was murdered and this boy was orphaned.

~Severus, please, help me~

"Boy... Harry," Severus said quietly. "Could you get me a glass of ice water?"

"Sure thing Professor Snape," the boy said happily as he exited the room, allowing Severus some privacy with the bear.

"Voldemort?"

~**Yes Severus, it is I. Do you see what I have become, what the boy has done to me, your Lord?**~

"You're... a teddy?" Severus managed to choke out, fighting with all his might not to laugh.

~**I am. To free me, you must kill the boy.**~

"Kill the boy? How would that free you?"

~**It doesn't matter,**~ the bear gestured wildly, ~**he has done this to me, we will work toward regaining my body after the boy is dead.**~

Severus lifted the bear from his lap and raised it to his eye level, feeling a bit odd in doing so, but doing it anyway.

"No," he said.

~**What? What do you mean, no?**~ the 6/7ths of a Dark Lord demanded.

"I said, no," Severus said simply. "I've served you and tolerated your tantrums; I've served Albus Dumbledore and tolerated his school full of idiot children and his insanity. Neither of you have frightened me in the years I served you as much as the vampire known as Grandpa did in a matter of minutes. I would never go against him. Enjoy what passes for your life, Tom."

With that, Severus heaved the bear across the room, and allowed his laughter to come.

--ooOOoo--

"You're getting married."

"Yes, over the Christmas holiday. You'll be getting your invitation," Severus confirmed.

"To a woman you met four days ago?" Albus pressed.

"Yes," Severus nodded. "I will no longer be living in the castle; rather I will commute from my family's home in Spinner's End."

"And Harry?"

"The boy is remaining with his adopted parents," Severus answered. "You were correct; I never should have made the attempt. I would advise you to learn from my mistake and not make any more attempts to change his mind. The Count is becoming annoyed. I was lucky to get away with only a fiancé."

"You don't understand Severus," Dumbledore sighed. "It is vital that Harry Potter attend Hogwarts."

"And you don't understand Headmaster," Severus replied. "He isn't coming and there is nothing you could do that would change his mind." The potions master rose to his feet.

"If you will excuse me, I must retire for the night. The trip was... difficult, the sorting ceremony was tedious, and my first class in the morning is my introduction lesson for the first year Slytherin and Gryffindor class, followed by the third year Slytherin/Gryffindor class featuring those insufferable Weasley Twins. Those are always trying under the best of conditions. My contribution to the defenses for the stone was in place before I left, so if you don't mind, I'm going to my bed."

--ooOOoo--

Severus entered his quarters and looked around wondering who would be getting them next. This had been his only real home for a decade, and the familiarity of the space would have missed.

Still, he reflected, being a follower had defined his adult life, and now he followed a leader not prone to psychotic rages, one who did not expect him to change, but who wanted him to change for the better. Now, he followed an immortal being who simply wanted his family to be happy.

Severus was joining that family. Somewhat reluctantly, true, but still...

He ran his hands over the spines of his books. Moving these would be a task, even with the help of the Hogwarts Elves.

A sound from his bedroom caught his attention. Severus had his wand out and was in the room in an instant. Never before had a student managed to penetrate the Staff Quarters. A lesson needed to be taught. If it was those damned Weasley twins...

"Hello, Severus,"

Snape spun to face the voice, where he found Marilyn Munster... his fiancé... lounging on his bed, wearing only one of his shirts.

"Marilyn?" he croaked. "What are you doing here?"

"I got Minerva to sneak me in," she said. "She thought it would be funny for me to surprise you."

"Surprise me?" he thundered. "The two of you thought it would be funny? You insufferable, idiot!"

"Oh, Severus," she said, her eyelids fluttering. "Tell me how useless I am!"

"You dunderhead! You ignorant cretin! You... You..." it slowly dawned on him that his abuse was actually arousing the woman.

Marilyn's strong arms reached out to pull him down on top of her. "I can't wait anymore, Severus, I don't want to wait any more! Love me." She began tearing at his robes.

"I..." Severus stammered. "I... I've never..."

"Neither have I," she whispered. "We can learn together."

--ooOOoo--

Potions lessons took place down in one of the dungeons. It was colder here than up in the main castle, and would have been quite creepy enough without the pickled animals floating in glass jars all around the walls.

In all honesty, just the idea of this class terrified Neville Longbottom. His Gran had tried to give him a few introductory lessons in the art of potions making the summer before, and he had been absolutely horrid at it.

A potion that was supposed to give the cat relief from her hairballs had somehow caused poor Moogy to detonate in a most terrifying manner, utterly destroying the sitting room in the process.

That had caused Gran to halt her classes and express the hope that Hogwarts carried full insurance.

Neville followed Hermione Granger into the classroom. The pair had met on the train the day before, and she had assisted him in searching for Trevor, his toad. Uncle Algie had gotten Trevor to replace poor Moogy under the twin theories that a boy needs a pet, and that if a toad blows up, no one really cares.

Uncle Algie really believed he was funny.

In the short time he had known her, Neville had learned that his new friend Hermione was everything he was not. She was Muggleborn to his being a Pureblood, she was traveled while he

had only ventured from Longbottom Lodge a handful of times in his life. Indeed the trip to Scotland for school was the first time he had been out of England.

Hermione was studious and feared nothing, while Neville did not even like reading and was frightened by almost everything. She had endless questions about how the magical world worked, and Neville, while quite interested about what life among the Muggles was like, could not bring himself to ask... not even his new friend.

That was when Neville discovered his new friend's flaw. She insisted on sitting in the front of the classroom, directly in front of the teacher's desk. Neville paused and considered his options. He could sit with Hermione or one of the other Gryffindors. He really could not see himself with any of his dorm mates. Oh, they were nice enough, but all of them were obsessed with sport, almost to the exclusion of everything else. And Hermione's two giggly gossiping dorm mates were out of the question as well.

Neville sighed, and then steeling himself, took the seat to Hermione's right.

The classroom was full now, but there was still no sign of the professor. Neville did not know if this was a good thing or a bad thing. Gryffindor House had found the idea that the Firsties' first class was with Snape to be hilarious.

Some of the more sympathetic upper forms had explained over breakfast that Snape was a bastard who only ever showed support for his Slytherins, and damned little of that. Snape was known to take points for the most nonsensical things, and to never award points for anyone not of his house.

It was rumored that Snape was not content until after he drove a first year from Hogwarts, never to return.

Neville had a horrible feeling he knew who this year's first year was going to be.

Before long, it was time for class to start, but there was no sign of their teacher. When the professor was five minutes late, the class, Gryffindor and Slytherin alike, began to fidget.

At ten minutes, Hermione had her class schedule out. "Are we in the right room?"

"I think so," Neville said. "How many potions labs could there be down here?"

The door in the back of the classroom slammed open and a man backed into the room, singing.

" When everything's a little clearer in the light of day? And we know the night is always gonna be here anyway?

Thinkin' of you's working up my appetite. Lookin' forward to a little Afternoon Delight Rubbin' sticks and stones together make the sparks ignite. And the thought of lovin' you is getting so exciting

Skyrockets in flight! Afternoon Delight! Afternoon Del... " Looking up, the man appeared to

have noticed the waiting class for the first time.

"Oh, hello. Am I late for class?"

The man, dressed in his trousers and shirtsleeves, made his way to the front of the classroom, where he threw his robes over the chair behind his desk. He pulled a podium and stool from beside the chalkboard, and perched upon the stool, while leaning heavily on the podium, with a contented smile on his face.

"Hi," he said simply.

Snape had... changed somehow, Neville realized. Unlike the unsmiling greasy haired man that he had seen the night before at the sorting and at occasional social events Neville had attended while accompanying his Gran, this man was obviously overjoyed at life and his hair was clean and wavy?

"I'm Severus Snape," the blissed-out man said. "Professor Severus Snape. However, you know what? I've always wanted to be called 'Prof.', so everyone call me 'Prof.' Ok?"

The stunned class nodded in silence.

"Ok then, you are here to learn the subtle science and exact art of potion making," he began in a bored tone, making it obvious that he had given the same introduction many times before. "As there is little foolish wand-waving here, many of you will hardly believe this is magic. I don't expect you will really understand the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its shimmering fumes, the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins, bewitching the mind, ensnaring the senses... I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory, even stopper death... if you're into that sort of thing."

"All right class, let's see who read ahead..." said Snape suddenly. "What would I get if I added powdered root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?"

Neville did not have a single idea, but he noticed Hermione's hand had shoot into the air.

"Yes, Ms. Granger?"

"Asphodel and wormwood make a powerful sleep potion called the Draught of Living Death," Hermione answered.

"Well done Ms. Granger, ten points to Gryffindor," Snape looked around the classroom. "Ms. Greengrass, where would you look if I told you to find me a bezoar?"

"They're carried in apothecaries, Sir," the girl answered.

"An accurate answer Ms. Greengrass, if a bit incomplete. Five points to Slytherin. Ms. Bullstrode, do you know where bezoars come from?"

"Goats sir," the largest student in the room answered hesitantly. "When my Da slaughters a goat, he always retrieves the bezoars from their bellies."

"Well done to you as well, Ms. Bullstrode. Ten points to Slytherin. For future reference class, pretty much any ingredient I might ask you about would quite likely be available in a well-stocked apothecary, but what I want to know is where they come from, not where you could purchase them."

"Mr. Longbottom, what is the difference between monkshood and wolfsbane?"

Neville blinked. He knew this; he actually knew the answer to a teacher's question. "No difference at all, Sir," he answered. "Those are just different names for the same plant."

"That answer earns you twenty five points for Gryffindor, Mr. Longbottom," Snape said with a grin. "Because it was an answer from the fourth year text. Well done indeed."

"So, class, my lesson plan calls for me to have you prepare a simple boil relieving cream so that I might assess the levels of skills you are entering my class with, but that sounds really boring. What do you all think about my going over a bit of ingredient prep, and then show you how to brew a couple of gag potions you can use to prank the upper forms?"

"And if there's time," a smiling Snape continued, "at the end of class we'll have a little fun."

--ooOOoo--

Albus Dumbledore stood in the shadows outside the door to Severus Snape's Potions lab, a very perplexed wizard. In all the time Snape had taught at Hogwarts, Albus had witnessed many reactions to the dour man's classes. There had been students who had run from the room in tears, those who swore that they would surpass the Potions Master in his art so that they could 'Show him', there were even those who appreciated the man's methods.

Never before had Albus ever heard peals of childish laughter coming from Severus Snape's classroom, nor had he ever heard singing.

But now, both laughter and singing came from the classroom as he heard Snape's drawling baritone leading a children's chorus in song.

A Muggle song, if Albus was any judge.

"I'm walkin' on sunshine, woh-oh, I'm walkin' on sunshine, woh-oh, I'm walkin' on sunshine, woh-oh!"

"And don't it feel good? Hey, all right now! And don't it feel good?"

What the hell was going on?

--ooOOoo--

"I don't believe it," Percy said shaking his head. "You two are up to something and somehow got the rest of your year to back you up."

"I'm telling you," George declared.

"He was... pleasant," Fred noted.

"Polite," George added

"He laughed," Fred stated. "Laughed!"

"He gave points!" George said.

"To US!" the pair chorused.

"He made jokes!" George recalled. "He made *TWIN* jokes!"

"They were funny. We laughed. How will we live with the shame?" Fred asked.

"I don't know why you lot even listen to them," Oliver Wood said from his place on one of the sofas where he was paging through a Quidditch magazine and trying to unwind after a hard day of not playing Quidditch. "Don't you remember last year when they tried to get you to stroke McGonagall's belly telling you it would force her animagus change? They're your brothers for Merlin's sake. Don't listen to them or their crap Perc."

"No!" Fred shouted. "That was funny, this is just... It's just..."

"Wrong, it's wrong, that's what it is!" George declared. "Let me say it again! He gave points. TO US."

"Yeah, right," Oliver laughed. "Nice try mates. Snape is a bastard. He's always been a bastard, he'll always be a bastard."

"You all shouldn't talk about Professor Snape like that," a young voice declared.

All eyes on the common room focused on the chubby first year, Long... something. It was far too early in the year to be learning the midget's names, so no one had bothered.

"Firsties should be seen and not heard," Lee Jordan opined.

"Give the kid a break," Katie Bell said, remembering how it had been for her the year before, not that she had ever felt the need to defend Snape of all people.

"Professor Snape is the best teacher in the school!" the boy declared.

"Well, Professor Flitwick certainly knows his subject," the bushy haired girl next to Snape's defender said, "but there was just something about Professor Snape's technique. You can just tell

that he cares about you."

"Yeah," the only blonde girl among the Firsties agreed. "The Prof is cool."

This led to a mass agreement from the entire first year cohort.

The upper years, at least those who had not yet had Potions that term, looked to each other in confusion.

"Don't tell me you don't see the latest Weasley among the firsties," Oliver said with a sigh. "What more proof do you lot need to see that this is all just the Twin's latest prank?"

"We aren't doing this!" Fred declared.

"Even we couldn't come up with something this twisted!" George agreed.

--ooOOoo--

"Marilyn is having a good time in Scotland," Lily said as Herman sat down at the table.

"That's nice," Herman said as he carefully tucked his napkin under his chin. "Though, I'm not sure I approve of her..." he glanced sideways at Harry who was busy shoveling his dinner into his mouth "spending quite so much time *visiting* Severus before they get married."

"Why not?" Harry asked.

Herman hesitated. Harry had been paying attention it seemed. Sometimes he really regretted not having a childhood. At this age, Eddie had been so self-absorbed with celebrating his lycanthropy Herman could have set off a bomb at the dinner table and the boy would not have noticed. "In polite society," Herman explained, "it's unusual to spend so much time visiting before you get married."

"Oh," Harry nodded, "I can see that, I'd want to hang with my friends before I got tied down with some dumb girl."

"*Dear Family*," Lily read. "*Missing you all terribly, but having a wonderful time exploring Severus' life.*"

"I bet," Grandpa snarked.

"Why buy the cow when you get its milk for free..." Herman mused.

"Marilyn's getting free milk?" Harry asked.

"That's not what your father meant," Lily said, aiming a sharp kick toward her husband's left shin. "Is it Herman?"

"No, of course not, dear," the large man said surreptitiously rubbing his now aching shin. "What I meant to say is that Marilyn should be careful about how she deals with the people at that school... They're British, you know."

"Oh," Harry said with a nod. "I do hope she buys the cow though, Spot needs a new playmate. They keep disappearing for some reason."

Grandpa stifled a laugh and resolved to explain to Harry just where Spot's playmates tended to disappear to.

"*Exploring the school has been fascinating ;*" Lily continued, reading from Marilyn's letter. "*I think Harry has really missed out in choosing not to go .*"

"Great," Harry grumped. "Now Marilyn wants me to go to Scotland in the middle of baseball season."

"That's not what she said, Harry," his mother corrected him. "She goes on to tell about meeting the staff. Oh, this is interesting. *The students have been amazingly supportive. I can hardly go five feet anywhere in the castle without a student stopping me, shaking my hand, and thanking me, though for what, I'm not sure . I've lost count of the number of times I've been stopped in the hall for an impromptu hug. It's really very nice, but I do wish I knew what I had done to deserve it.*"

Grandpa shook his head. "Wizards can be odd when left to their own."

"That's not very nice Grandpa," Lily sniffed putting the letter away.

"I'm done," Harry chimed in, pushing his plate away. "Could I be excused?"

"Put your plate in the sink and get started on your homework," Herman said.

"Ok," the boy said as he rinsed his plate. "I might need some help later, Dad. We're working on dividing compound fractions."

"Your Father will be along in a bit," Lily said.

Herman shook his head as his youngest son left the room. "Fractions, why does it always have to be fractions the boys need help with?"

"You're made of fractions Herman," Grandpa snarked, "they should come naturally to you."

"Ho, ho, ho," the big man said sarcastically. "Grandpa, you kill me."

"Not yet, but I'm working on it," the old man laughed. "It's nice that Marilyn has finally found her place in life."

"And about time too," Herman said reaching for his coffee mug. "I thought she was going to be with us her entire life."

"I didn't read it while Harry was here, because of how annoyed he is by the constant attempts to recruit him for the school, but Marilyn's letter had paragraph or two about your old friend Dumbledore cornering her and pressing for access to Harry."

"I thought he might," Grandpa said leaning back in his chair. "In fact I'm surprised he hasn't shown up on our doorstep. Invite him to the wedding; we'll get it over with then."

"Grandpa," Lily said, her eyes flashing dangerously. "You will not spoil Marilyn's wedding with your games."

"Don't worry about me Lily, I would never disappoint our girl," a grin crossed his lips. "My business with Dumbledore will be over long before the ceremony."

--ooOOoo--

Albus stood in front of the Mirror of Erised, carefully making sure he did not look into its depths. The stone was still safe within the reflection.

For now, anyway.

There had to be a way to get the Potter boy to attend Hogwarts. There just had to be.

If only he could think of it.

So far, all his attempts had achieved was to cause Hagrid to question him, caused Minerva to lose respect for him, and Severus... Albus was a firm believer in the idea that a man could change, but no one would ever have convinced him that anyone could change as much as Severus had.

All of it could be traced to those damnable Munsters. Because of them, and the way they had ruined the Potter boy, the entire world was in danger of...

Out of the corner of his eyes, Albus caught sight of his reflection in the mirror. He was there, young and strong, 18 years old, sitting on a golden throne, Abe and Gellert on either side, Ariana on his lap, expressions of love on their faces. His deepest desire.

With effort, he tore his eyes from the reflection before it consumed him. They had all been so young, so strong. If only...

That was when it hit him. The way to the Potter boy was through other children. Children formed associations so easily. If he could get the Potter boy exposed to members of his cohort...

But who? A Gryffindor certainly... The Weasley boy? Longbottom? Brown?

It should be a boy. Weasley had turned out to be something of a disappointment. That incident on Halloween when he had been tried to bully the Granger girl... Of course, Longbottom's reaction to that bullying had gotten Weasley a broken nose and the pair of them detention with Filch.

Perhaps the changes in Severus could be turned into an advantage...

--ooOOoo--

"My friends," Severus rose to his feet. The staff meeting had just finished and Minerva had asked if anyone would like to address the assembled staff of Hogwarts. "Colleagues. I'm sure, by now, you've heard the rumors. Marilyn and I are to be married in twelve days."

A rumble of congratulations came from the collected educators, most of who were still coming to terms with the change in their Potions Master.

"Marilyn and I would like to invite you all to attend our joining," Severus said. Hogwart's potions master had eschewed his usual robes for black trousers, white shirts and colorful cardigans since the first of the year. "The Wedding will be in Marilyn's home in California with a reception to follow, and the Headmaster has graciously agreed to produce Portkeys for the journey. Please friends, no gifts. Marilyn and I agree that your presence is the only gift we could ask for."

As the meeting broke up, Severus stood by the door receiving much good-natured teasing from his fellow staff members.

As that distraction was going on, Albus pulled his Defense Against the Dark Arts instructor aside.

"Quirinus, a moment of your time, if you would?"

"Certainly, H-H-H-Headmaster," the stuttering man ground out, while his master whispered inside his mind to be careful around the old man.

"Are you planning to attend Severus' nuptials?" Dumbledore asked, his eyes twinkling behind his half-moon glasses.

"N-N-N-No, not really," Quirrell said. "S-S-S-Severus and I have never gotten along, even b-b-b-before his change of attitude."

"I thought as much," the Headmaster nodded. "However, I must ask that you reconsider."

It was obvious that the request surprised Quirrell. "Why?"

"Harry Potter lives with Severus' future in-laws."

That was a bit of news to both Quirinus and his master. The possessed man nodded. "I see."

"For some reason, the boy has refused his invitation to Hogwarts," the Headmaster continued, "despite visits from Hagrid, Minerva and even Severus himself, all extolling the benefits of a Hogwarts education. I was hoping that you might have better luck."

"Why?" Voldemort asked using Quirinus' voice.

"He is living, I am led to believe, mostly as a Muggle," Dumbledore explained. "I had hoped that with your experience among the Muggles, and your being a former teacher of Muggle Studies, you might have more common ground with the boy. I cannot explain why, but I can assure you that it is vital that Harry Potter attend Hogwarts."

"I s-s-s-see." Quirinus said his mind racing along with that of his master.

The boy was unimportant to his master's plan, but he had done something that had caused his master pain. An opportunity for access to the boy... defenseless among the Muggles...

"Yes Headmaster," Voldemort said, once again usurping Quirinus' voice. "I would be please to help and make an attempt to speak with young Harry."

"Excellent," Dumbledore beamed, not noticing that the man had lost his stutter. "I knew I could count on you, my boy."

--ooOOoo--

"Harry,"

"Hi Professor Snape," the boy said happily, while wondering who the two kids with his soon to be cousin by marriage might be.

"Please Harry, call me 'Prof'. I'm using that nickname with my students these days. The full title sounds so... stuffy."

"Ok," Harry nodded. "I hope you're ready for this, Marilyn is a mess."

"Is she alright?" Severus asked, clearly on his way to a panic.

"Oh, she's fine, physically," Harry grinned. "But I think she's going crazy, her and mom both. They've been going on about flowers and matching shoes that need to be dyed because they don't match and caterers and place holders and tablecloths and carpets and all kinds of stuff no sane person cares about for weeks now."

"I see," Snape said. "Perhaps I should try and find her and lend some aid. Harry, this is Neville Longbottom and Hermione Granger, they are here to represent the Hogwarts students at the wedding. Do you think you could keep them entertained while I find my fiancé?"

"Oh, sure Prof," Harry laughed. "Good luck."

Still grinning he turned to his tow visitors. "Hey."

"Hello," the boy said, extending his hand. "Neville Longbottom,"

"And I'm Hermione Granger."

"Harry Munster," Harry said. "You came all the way from Scotland to go to your teacher's wedding? One of my teachers got married last summer, but I never wanted to go."

"But this is an exciting opportunity," the girl gushed. "The chance to see a real magical wedding doesn't come along every day. I'm Muggleborn you see, I didn't even know about magic until Professor McGonagall came to our house when I turned eleven."

"Muggleborn?" Harry asked.

"That means her parents are Muggles," Longbottom explained.

"Ok," Harry nodded. "What is a Muggle?"

"Someone without magic," the girl said, looking up at the house with more than a little concern. "Do you really live here?"

"Yeah," Harry acknowledged. "Great isn't it?"

"So," the Longbottom boy said, trying mightily to change the subject without being seen to change the subject. "What school do you go to?"

"Mockingbird Heights Middle school," Harry said pointing off toward the west. "It's about six blocks that way."

"You go to a Muggle school?" the girl asked incredulously. "Why?"

"Math and Science classes mostly," Harry admitted. "You guys hungry? Come on."

The pair followed Harry into the house and through the maze of hallways until they came to a kitchen, where he stuck his head in an old-fashioned icebox. "We've got apples."

"What did you mean, 'Math and Science classes mostly'," Hermione asked after accepting an apple.

"English class is boring, I mean, have you ever read Silas Marner?" Seeing the girl shake her head, Harry carried on. "Trust me, don't. We've spent the last three weeks parsing that stupid book. My history teacher is a dick, and I hate, hate, hate conjugating French verbs. So the Math and Science classes are the principle reasons I go to school."

"But what about magic?" Neville wanted to know.

"Oh, I get that here at home. My Grandpa is teaching me."

"Why don't you go to a school of magic?" Hermione asked.

"Don't see the point," Harry shrugged. "What would I get there that I don't get here? Just the idea of a boarding school is a little creepy, no offense. On top of that, your Headmaster has been

bugging me for months to come to Hogwarts."

"You turned down a place at Hogwarts?" Neville asked incredulously.

"How could you do that?" the girl demanded.

"Didn't want to leave home," Harry shrugged. "It wasn't that big a deal."

"Hogwarts is the premier school of magic in the world," Neville said, "with barely enough places for the eligible British students. How did you get a slot?"

"I'm not sure," Harry admitted. "My mom thinks it's got something to do with a bequest."

"What do you mean?" Neville pressed.

"Oh, I'm British by birth," Harry explained. "My folks adopted me after my birth parents died. Mom thinks that there might be a bequest to the school that requires me to attend before the school gets the money. That's the only explanation we've come up with for why the Headmaster keeps trying so hard."

"That makes sense," Neville nodded. "What family are you from?"

"The Potter family."

There was several seconds of silence from the two Hogwarts students. "You're Harry Potter?" Hermione asked.

"No, I'm Harry Munster. But I was born Harry Potter."

--ooOOoo--

"Excuse me, Grandpa?"

Grandpa looked up from the book he was reading, "What can I do for you, Harry?"

"A couple of Professor Snape's students are here for the wedding," the boy explained, "and I'm showing them around. They both say that Potions is their favorite class, and I was wondering if it would be ok to show them your lab."

"I don't have anything too volatile on the burners just now," Grandpa said, thinking aloud. "Why not? Sure, bring them down."

"Cool, thanks Grandpa, I'll be right back."

Sam shook his head. Albus was finally wising up. Rather than send another adult, he sent some kids to make friends with Harry and make Hogwarts sound like a good idea. It was not going to work, but at least it showed the boy was thinking.

"This is my Grandpa's lab," Harry's voice carried through the doorway as he led a pair of children into the potions lab."

"Why are potions labs always underground?" the girl asked, her hair frizzed out in an odd shape.

"Tradition, mostly," Grandpa volunteered. "The art originated from forbidden research that needed to be hidden from the world."

"Grandpa," Harry said, "this is Neville Longbottom and Hermione Granger. Guys, this is my Grandpa, the Count Dracula."

Grandpa grinned toothily as the girl paled at recognition of his name and title and then her eyes widened at the sight of him. She immediately fumbled at her neck, pulling out a golden cross that hung from a necklace.

"That's a very nice cross, Sweetie, excellent workmanship," Grandpa said as he leaned forward to inspect cross closely, while ignoring Harry's laughter. "You should probably put it away so that it doesn't get lost."

"You should have seen the look on your face, Hermione," Harry laughed, clutching at his stomach. "You've seen way too many movies."

"Are... are you really Vlad Tepes?" she gasped.

"Sam Tepes. We mostly go by the patronymic Dracula since we emigrated," the old vampire explained. "Vlad is my weird little brother. He's the one with the cross phobia. No mystic reasons for it, he just had a bad experience with a nun and a ruler when he was six. Now that I think about it, that's probably where his impaling habit came from."

"What was that cross thing about?" Neville asked.

"Vampires are supposed to be repulsed by religious symbols," Hermione answered.

"Nope, just my idiot kid brother. He's also the one behind that 'Bla Bla I want to suck your blod' thing." Grandpa laughed. "As a rule, we don't mind garlic either."

"What about a stake through the heart?" she asked. "Would that kill a vampire?"

"That would do it," Grandpa nodded. "Of course that would kill pretty much anyone. The same goes for cutting off someone's head and burning their body. That's just rude, no matter what anyone says."

"So, you're not going to drink my blood?" Hermione squeaked.

"Sweetie," Grandpa sighed. "You're far, far too young for me. Look me up in fifteen or twenty years if you're still interested."

Hermione blinked at that before turning to face Harry. "Are you a vampire, too?"

"Nope," he grinned. "I should be so lucky. Grandpa and Mom are vampires, Dad's a construct, my big brother is a werewolf AND a witch doctor. Me, I'm just a wizard," Harry's face took on a wistful expression. "Marilyn and I are the family weirdoes."

"Every family has a few, Harry," his Grandpa said soothingly. "And we all love you anyway. Never forget that."

"Now then," the old vampire said, rubbing his hands together. "About that tour..."

--ooOOoo--

Slipping away from the others had not been difficult. The Headmaster and heads of house were busy with making small talk with Severus and the insane vampire masquerading as a Muggle housewife. No one noticed when Quirrell left the room.

Now the hunt began. Voldemort assumed full control of his host. There would be no mistakes, not like the day Quirrell let the Stone slip through his grasp.

Today the boy would die for whatever it was he had done back in 1981. Even after all this time, Voldemort was not sure exactly what the boy had done, but he still remembered the pain of being ripped from his body, and the horror of seeing that body burned to ash.

But where would the boy be in this rotting hulk of a house? Upstairs perhaps?

Voldemort started up the staircase when he stopped. Something... He leaned down to examine the winged lion atop the right hand volute on the banister... a hidden lever?

Hesitating the Dark Lord reached for the lion when a voice broke his concentration.

"You don't want to do that."

Voldemort whipped around, Quirrell's wand at the ready, only to nearly drop the wand when he found the speaker to be a small raven peeking from the door of an ancient Cuckoo Clock.

"Silence, bird," he hissed.

"You really don't want to do that," the bird said, blinking at him.

"No one commands the Dark Lord Voldemort!" Voldemort retorted. "Especially not a bird!"

"Your funeral," the bird said with a dismissive avian shrug.

In a fury, Voldemort pulled hard on the winged lion and was rewarded with a loud thunk, which was followed by the stairs moving upward to reveal a dark hidden passage. The Dark Lord smiled at this, and strode forward. He had certainly shown that stupid bird.

His next thought was to wonder just why he had reacted so aggressively to the taunts of the bird. Perhaps it had been his time in the forests where his survival had depended upon possessing so very many of the beasts.

His second thought was to wonder what the pair of lights that had suddenly appeared in the darkness before him might be. Then the pair of lights vanished only to reappear a fraction of a second later.

As if they were eyes that had blinked... Glowing eyes... that blinked.

Voldemort turned and began to run as the wall of flame chased him from the hidden void.

"Told you so," the bird commented sarcastically.

--ooOOoo--

The best description for the next forty-five minutes of the Dark Lord's life was 'a running battle'.

With far more 'running' than 'battling'.

Between gasps for breath, Voldemort attempted to determine just what had gone wrong. Normally a dragon was a dangerous, but not insurmountable opponent for a wizard of his caliber. After avoiding the dragon flame, the first, best move was to slay the beast using a killing curse, of failing that, a powerful cutter to sever the animal's head.

However, there was something about the house that inhibited most high power magic. His killing curse seemingly dribbled from Quirrell's wand, to puddle on the floor as some sort of sticky goo, every cutter he tried simply splashed against the dragon's hide, and even apparition was impossible.

Concentration on the problem proved even more difficult with Quirrell's panicked yammering in his mind.

Voldemort scrambled up the stairs to the third floor of the old house, hoping against hope that he might manage to escape the dragon since the beast seemed hesitant to follow him to that floor.

The beast's roars showed that it had overcome its reluctance and was even now on its way up the stairs. Voldemort passed through the first door he came to, and spotting the lock on the door, slid the bolt into place, before leaning heavily on door, gasping for breath.

"Professor Quirrell?" asked a familiar young voice. "Is there something wrong?"

Voldemort turned slowly to find himself facing three children seated around a table. Two Gryffindors and a boy wearing the face of James Potter.

"Dragon," the Dark Lord gasped.

"Did Spot get out of his room?" The Potter boy asked, shaking his head and rising to his feet. "Mom's going to yell at me for that. I'd better go get him."

"Sit down Potter," Voldemort barked, emphasizing his point by shoving the boy back into his chair.

"Hey," the boy protested. "I don't care who you are, or why you're here. That was a dick move."

"Professor?" the Longbottom boy said. "What's wrong?"

"Why are you acting like this?" Granger asked.

Voldemort moved to silence the two students so that he could concentrate on the Potter boy. Looking down he discovered that Quirrell's wand was broken, the front half hanging by a few threads of its core. The dark wizard snarled, dropped the broken wand and gestured. Ropes manifested from nowhere and bound the two now struggling students.

Turning away from the pair, Voldemort moved to end the threat of the Potter boy once and for all when he was again distracted by something else in the room. His lower left leg was suddenly being grasped by... something. He looked down to find a small teddy bear hugging his leg.

"Tom!" the boy cried. "Get away from him! He's crazy!"

Voldemort blinked in amazement that the boy would have an animated teddy named 'Tom', before he kicked the plush doll away and returned his attention to the boy.

"Do you know who I am Harry Potter?"

"Other than the guy my Dad is going to beat the crap out of, not a clue," the boy said bravely. "And my name is Harry Munster."

"I am Voldemort."

Voldemort was surprised by the utter lack of recognition in the boy's expression. "Who?"

"I killed your father, boy," Voldemort hissed. "I killed your mudblood mother as she begged for your life." The Dark Lord advanced on the boy, his hands reaching for that defenseless throat. "And now, finally, I'm going to kill you!"

Harry kicked out suddenly, catching Voldemort hard in the crotch. The eyes of the possessed wizard bulged out as the Dark Lord fell to the floor clutching at his stones. Taking advantage of the older wizard's incapacitation, the boy scrambled for the door, managing to unlock it before Voldemort reached out to grab his trouser leg and pull the boy to the floor with him.

The boy kicked and fought against the older wizard, who used his weight and experience to end up on top of the Potter boy. The shouts of the other two children in the room added to the noise of their fight. Voldemort finally managed to reach for the boy's throat and began to squeeze.

Only to lose control of the body to Quirrell when his hands started to char where they were in contact with the boy's skin, and the man's screams added to the din of the room.

"Harry," a man's voice said as the door opened. "How many times do I have to tell you not to rough house with Spot in the hou..."

Voldemort and Quirrell felt both biceps gripped in a massive hand and they were hauled upright off their feet, and being turned to see a huge green face that was contorted in rage.

"You have three seconds," the man said with barely controlled fury, "to explain why you were attacking my son before I decide to play 'Make a Wish'."

--ooOOoo--

"He said his name was 'Foldafort'," Harry explained to the assembled adults in the living room.

"Voldemort," Hermione Granger corrected, only to be surprised by the reaction of that name by the witches and wizards in the room. "What? He's the one who killed Harry's birth parents. It is in all the books about Harry... Well, not his name. The books just call him 'You-Know-Who' or 'He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named'. I had to dig through some really old news reports to find out his real name."

"Well, he certainly made a mess of my house," Lily said, staring daggers at the captive. "And the day before the wedding too."

"What did you do to his hands?" Pomona Sprout asked.

"I don't know," Harry shrugged. He grabbed onto me and where his skin touched mine, he burned... which is pretty neat if you think about it. Maybe my Munster talent is coming out."

"Harry, let me see Tom for a minute, would you?" Grandpa asked.

"Sure thing, Grandpa," Harry said, handing over the squirming teddy. "Tom attacked him, and got kicked across the room for his trouble. Poor little guy."

"Well, I don't know if 'attacked' is the right word..." The old vampire approached the prisoner. "Hold him still would you, Herman?"

"Why, certainly Grandpa," Herman said as he effortlessly constrained the squirming wizard.

"Wait, what are you going to do?" Albus interrupted.

"Just complete my collection," Grandpa said as he placed his hand on the back of Quirinus Quirrell's head. The vampire muttered an incantation and then pulled his hand back violently.

A horrible wet sound filled the room, and then everyone could see a struggling black mass of... something writhing in the old man's hand. "I've been collecting bits of Tom Riddle for ten years,

and this one," Grandpa said through gritted teeth, "completes the set."

With a flourish, Grandpa merged the writhing mass with the struggling teddy. "Ladies and gentlemen," the old vampire smirked, while holding the now stunned bear. "Presenting, for the first time in almost fifty years, the complete Tom Riddle. Also known as the Dark Lord Foldafort."

"Voldemort," Hermione corrected him out of reflex.

"Whatever," Grandpa said with a wave of his free hand before returning the bear to Harry. "There you go, sport."

"Thanks Grandpa," Harry grinned.

"You can have your teacher back," Grandpa said to Dumbledore as the old man continued to look between Quirrell and the now waking toy bear in dawning horror.

"He used horcruxes?" Albus asked.

"Or possible horcruxi," Grandpa grinned. "I've never been all that strong in Latin plurals."

"And you've merged them all in that teddy? You're sure."

"I'm sure, Albus. Don't get so excited."

Albus sagged for a moment, before pulling himself to his full height. "As a representative of the government of Magical Britain and the International Confederation of Wizards, I will be taking custody of the soul of Tom Riddle, so that I can see to his rehabilitation."

"Like fun you will," Harry protested while backing away. "Tom is mine. He's always been mine and he'll always be mine."

"Harry, I'm afraid I must insist..." the old man said as he reached for the toy.

"Me too," the boy said shoving the bear behind his back before reaching out with his free hand to grasp the Headmaster's left wrist. "Burn!"

"Rats," Harry muttered seconds later. "Nothing happened."

"Harry!" Lily chastised her son as she interposed herself between Harry and the Headmaster. "Quit trying to burn the guests with your touch. And as for you Mr. Dumbledore, I believe you will find that neither the Government of Magical Britain nor the International Confederation of Wizards has any authority in this house."

"Madam, do you have any idea what he has done?"

"I know that the parts of him that made up Tom the Teddy until today has been an affectionate

member of our family for seven years." Lily sniffed. "While the part you had has been possessing one of your teachers, doing who knows what to the children under your care, including the two here to represent your school for Severus and Marilyn's wedding. That suggests to me that you are in no position to lecture anyone on the rehabilitation of evil wizards."

"I think," Severus said, breaking the tension in the room, "that we should all settle down. Albus, the situation is, if not resolved, then at least stable at this point. Please old friend, let it go."

"I will be calling the Aurors." Dumbledore announced.

"You do that," Grandpa laughed. "Do you really think they don't know about us? The magical governments of North America have agreements in place with me and my family. They don't bother us, we don't bother them."

"Albus," Severus sighed sadly. "I can see you're not going to let this go. I think, perhaps, you should go. Take Quirinus home with you and try to stay out of other people's business, would you?"

"Severus?" Albus gasped in shock.

"You've brought it upon yourself Albus," Severus said shaking his head sadly. "I can't have you upsetting my new family, can I?"

"Don't worry Albus," Filius Flitwick chirped, holding one of his several cameras above his head. "I'll document the whole thing; it will be as if you were here. Better maybe."

The assembled staff of Hogwarts stifled a shudder as they each, in his or her own way, recalled the horror that was one of Filius' slide show evenings.

--ooOOoo--

"Harry?" Neville asked in the darkness of the bedroom the two shared.

"Yeah?"

"Do things like today happen to you a lot?"

"You mean being attacked by a crazy man with a wraith stuck to the back of his head?" Harry laced his fingers together behind his head and contemplated his answer. "No, not really. I'm just a normal kid with a normal family."

Neville snorted at the thought that either Harry or the rest of the Munster clan might be 'normal'.

"I've had fun here the last couple of days..." Neville continued after a few moments. "This afternoon being an exception of course. Would you like a pen pal from Britain? We could keep in touch and maybe you could visit me someday."

"Yeah, I'd like that," Harry said. "I think we had best be ready for Hermione's disappointment tomorrow."

"Yeah," Neville agreed as he rolled onto his side so that he was facing his new friend across the room. "I tried to tell her that there isn't really any magic in a wedding, but she doesn't believe me."

"Especially this one," Harry laughed. "The minister is a Methodist."

"A Methodist?" Neville asked, the word seemed odd in his mouth.

"He's the minister of the church we go to," Harry explained.

"Oh," Neville rolled onto his back. "I've never been to a church; most wizards don't really do Muggle religions."

"Why?" Harry asked.

"That whole witch burning thing they were doing four or five hundred years ago kind of soured everyone on it," Neville paused in thought, "except for a couple of lunatics who really got into being burned at the stake. As a rule, most European magicals avoid Muggle religions on general principle."

"Oh, yeah," Harry laughed. "I can see that. Well, don't worry; they hardly ever burn witches anymore."

"You're a nut Harry," Neville laughed.

--ooOOoo--

"That was a nice wedding," Neville said as he returned to the table the trio were sharing for the reception, with drinks for everyone. "A whole lot more civilized than most of the ones I've been to."

"But there was no magic," Hermione pointed out. "None. It was just a normal ceremony, not much different than my Auntie's last summer."

"I tried to tell you," Harry said. "The family is magical, but we live in the larger community. Besides, what did you expect to happen? Some sort of bonding seal that tied to two of them together with mystical golden chains after they drank from silver chalices of dragon blood?"

"Those chains come later when the Prof wants to go out with his friends," Neville snarked.

"Very funny Neville," Hermione said in an icy tone.

"I thought so," Neville grinned. "I am surprised that no one seems to be paying any attention to Tom."

Harry grinned at the antics of his childhood teddy. The plush beast, dressed in top hat and tails for the wedding, struggled to remove the outfit on top of the table.

"People see what they expect to see," Harry said. "Most of the normal folks don't believe in magic or magical people, so they think we're a bunch of eccentrics. They explain things like Tom to themselves by believing that Grandpa is some sort of inventor, and Tom is some kind of prototype toy robot."

"Oh," Hermione said with a nod. "I can see that. People came up with all kinds of 'logical' explanations for things that happened due to my accidental magic."

"A robot toy would be cool," Harry noted. "But nowhere near as cool as having my very own evil Dark Lord."

"You know," Neville said as he nodded toward the table across the room where Filius Flitwick was dancing on the tabletop while the other Hogwarts staff members cheered him on. "Seeing your teachers outside of the classroom is a little... odd."

"I wish I'd thought to bring a camera," Hermione agreed as the song ended. "No one is going to believe us."

After a few moments, the band started another song. Hermione looked back and forth between the two boys expectantly.

"What?" Harry finally asked.

"Aren't either of you two going to ask me to dance?" she responded.

"Not me," Harry said shaking his head.

"I don't dance," Neville said. "Old broom injury."

"Boys!" Hermione huffed as she took hold of Neville's hand and pulled the protesting boy onto the dance floor.

--ooOOoo--

Severus Snape stood with his head against the door, fighting against the urge to beat his head against it.

His life had changed so very much over the last four months. Ever since he had made the biggest mistake of his life and tried to impose his will on the elder of the Vampires. The fact that it had been the very best mistake of his life did not change the fact that it had, in fact, been a mistake.

His outlook had changed so very much, in such a short time... for the first time in his life, he was... happy.

Happy. Such an odd feeling. Not one he had much experience with.

At one time, he had thought that he might find happiness with Lily... before he had ruined it all in his fury over how James Potter had humiliated him.

The choice he made that day in anger colored most of the next two decades of his life, contributing to his joining the Dark Lord in his quest and ultimately to the death of the woman most precious to him.

And now... now he had a second chance.

If only he didn't have to...

Buck up, old boy, he told himself. You know what you need to do.

He fixed a sneer on his face and opened the door.

"There you are," He snarled.

"Professor?" She whispered.

"And what do you want, you simpering dunderhead?"

"Please sir?"

"Don't 'please sir' me you slack jawed waste of flesh. What do you think you're doing in my bed?" He demanded.

"Oh, Severus," Marilyn Snape moaned as she reached for him. "You always know just what to say!"

--ooOOoo--

"I must say, it's quite an honor to be able to assist you, Professor Dumbledore," the young clerk said.

"I just appreciate that you could find the time to help an old teacher on Christmas day," The headmaster said with a small private smile. Fame certainly came in handy on occasion.

"I applied to Hogwarts you know..." the clerk continued as he started up the odd technomagical device that the Americans used for coordination of their Auror force.

"Many promising young students do," Dumbledore noted. "Unfortunately, we tend to have very few vacancies in our class rosters."

"I figured it was something like that," the clerk said as he manipulated his controls. "Ok, the cursed item to be confiscated is a teddy bear?"

"It is," Dumbledore acknowledged.

"And how is it cursed?" The clerk asked looking up from his display.

Dumbledore hesitated, "is that information really needed? The fewer people who know about this item, the better."

"I don't know how important it will be to the investigation," the clerk said apologetically, "but my system will not process the case without the information."

Fine, Dumbledore thought. "The teddy has the soul of a dark lord bonded to it."

"Really?" The clerk wondered aloud while making his entries. "Possession of an inanimate object? I wonder what possessed him to do that?" The functionary started grinning at his own little joke. "So, the town is Mockingbird Heights?"

"It is," Dumbledore confirmed. "1313 Mockingbird Lane."

"Ok," the clerk said as he finished with his data entry. "And you are requesting the cursed item be turned over to you."

"Yes."

"Well, that's all I need," the young man manipulated the controls of his device, and then paused as a look of confusion crossed his face. "That's weird..."

Albus' opportunity to ask what might be 'weird' was lost when the door slammed shut and sealed itself, trapping the pair in the small windowless office.

"We're in lock down," the clerk said with a hint of panic in his voice. "I'm locked out of the network and there is someone on his way to deal with this."

"What does that mean?" Albus asked.

"Someone didn't like the case I just filed," the clerk looked up from his device, clearly on the edge of panic. "Someone important."

--ooOOoo--

"I absolutely do not believe you, Dumbledore," Angela Goodfellow, the US Government's Secretary of Magic said. "You come here, and use your legend to get a young clerk to organize a raid on an American family, the Tepes no less? Are you out of your mind?"

"I assure you, Mrs. Goodfellow, I meant no harm. The Munster's are harboring the soul of the Dark Lord Voldemort."

"Voldemort?" the woman asked with a raised eyebrow. "You mean the Dark Lord that you,

yourself, reported dead to the International?"

"I may have reported my wishes rather than reality," Dumbledore admitted.

"May have?" Angela scoffed. "You know, I got a call yesterday. How many people do you suppose can call me on Christmas Eve and get through?"

"I'm sure I have..."

"Four," the Secretary interrupted. "The President, the Secretary of State, my Deputy, and Sam Tepes. So I got a call from the Count Dracula yesterday explaining that you might try something, and why."

"A self-serving call, no doubt," Albus said.

"Actually, he told much the same story you did, and in more detail. While any action against Tepes' family would be flagged for review, I had that changed so that it would be flagged for review by me." The woman narrowed her eyes. "That family has had most of your Dark Lord under control for most of a decade, while you had a portion of him in your school possessing one of your teachers. Explain to me why you would be a superior custodian of his soul."

"You're frightened of him," Albus said accusingly.

"I am frightened of what forces he could marshal against us, yes. The Vampire himself, no. If he so chose, he could wage war against the United States. We would win, but it would be costly. This is why we have a strict hands off policy toward that entire family, unless they start breaking laws, which they do not do. If only all magical beings were so law abiding and conforming to local norms."

"Go home Albus. Leave that family alone. You've lost," she said quietly. "Don't make me make your expulsion official."

--ooOOoo--

Eighty Four years later:

"Gam'pa!" Four year old Josh Munster called as he ran into the room.

"Hey," Harry Munster shouted. "Who let the rotten kid in here?"

"I thought I was the rotten kid," Michael Munster said, chasing after his son.

"You were," Harry laughed as he lifted his eldest great grandson onto his lap. "But you grew out of it... the kid part anyway. How you doing Joshie?"

"Ok," the boy said, before laboriously pushing the thumb of his right hand in toward his palm. "I'm this many."

"Four?" Harry asked incredulously. "Why aren't you in college yet?"

"Gam'pa!"

"I've got you something, Joshie," Harry said, reaching down beside his chair and lifting up an old and well-chewed teddy. "This is Tom."

"A Bear!" the boy cheered as he hugged the squirming bear tightly.

"Yep, the best bear," Harry nodded. "I got him when I was your age about a million years ago, my grandpa gave him to me."

"Gam'pa Sam!"

"That's the guy," Harry agreed before leaning in close and stage whispering. "I heard there's going to be a party for a rotten kid... I bet Granma Lily made a cake. Wanna go lick the frosting bowl?"

"Oh, yeah!" the boy laughed as he hopped of his great grandfather's lap and ran for the kitchen.

"So, Michael," Harry said as he rose to his feet. "Where is that gorgeous wife of yours?"

"In the kitchen, Grandad, she stopped to talk to great gran Lily. Where Great Grandad?"

"Too many granddads around this place," Harry complained. "Dad's in the basement with Grandpa, getting an upgrade. Thirty or forty more years and I might need one."

--ooOOoo--

Tom was in hell. After almost ten child free years of bliss, and multiple attempts at murder, he was once again in the clutches of a child.

Even worse was the knowledge that only one of his murder attempts was even remotely successful, the time he managed to trip Harry at the top of the stairs, only to have the man catch hold of the bannister before he could actually fall.

He only had to survive five to ten years with this child, then he could try for Potter again... unless another of the man's damned spawn managed to reproduce again... then it would be into the tender mercies of yet another Munster child.

His plotting for revenge was interrupted when he noticed that this latest hell spawn has in the midst of shoving him face first into a bowl of... pink cake frosting. He struggled in the boy's hand, but it was no use. Tom found himself fully immersed in the sticky pink substance.

Through the pink goo he could hear the boy's mother scold his newest owner, and felt himself being snatched away.

Tom managed to wipe the frosting from his eyes, only to discover the latest indignity that awaited

him.

The washing machine! The horror, the horror!

--ooOOoo—