

Harry Potter and the Elder Sect **The Beginning**

The Great Hall was silent other than the chanting of the young woman, her hands raised toward the stone ceiling. Her chanting ebbed and flowed with the pulse of the magic that came from the three ley lines that all three of her companions could feel.

The woman began to glow with a blue aura and a burst of blood red energy leaped from her upraised hands to feather against the unyielding stone. The column of magic pulsed in time with the woman's chant, building with each stanza until she reached the end of her casting, and all the occupants in the room were blinded by the final pulse.

"Bloody hell!" the largest of the observers breathed as he stared at the ceiling, which now displayed the sunlit sky of the summer day, complete with the clouds scudding across the ceiling.

"Bloody hell is right," the other man said staring upward in amazement. "I thought you were going to make windows to let light in, not... that."

"That's our Rowena," the plump woman said admiringly. "Even her windows stand out above all others."

"Oh dear," the caster said, covering her mouth with her left hand. "I certainly didn't intend to do that."

"Congratulations!" a new voice broke in, "You've invented magical glass Clara, you must be proud."

The two men were instantly on guard, wands drawn, offensive spells on their lips, only to find themselves and Helga frozen in place.

"Endora?" Rowena asked. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to invite you to my wedding Clara, that's what Sisters do, you know," a redheaded woman emerged from the shadows.

"And I'm here to help," a fopish man said as he joined her.

"Arthur, do be quiet," Endora instructed. "Maurice is finally making an honest woman of me Clara, and I'd like you to stand up with me."

"But only because I don't have the legs for the dress," Arthur snarked.

"Of course I'll be at your wedding, and I'd be proud to stand up with you, but could you please release my friends?"

"Oh of course, how selfish of me," Endora said in a condescending tone. She turned to examine the frozen people. "So these are your charity cases? Which one is your friend Gershom?"

"Godric," Rowena said, going to stand next to her frozen lover. "Godric Gryffindor. Release them Endora? Please?"

"Of course," the redhead said with a small gesture and a smile.

Godric, Salazar and Helga crowded around Rowena. "Are you alright Rowena?" Helga asked.

"Why are they calling you Rowena?" Arthur asked.

The woman blushed. "I've never cared for the name Clara. When I left to find my adventure, I took on a new name, Rowena Ravenclaw." She seemed to steel herself. "Endora, Arthur, these are my friends, Salazar Slytherin, Helga Hufflepuff, and Godric Gryffindor. Everyone, this is Endora my younger sister, and Arthur our brother."

"I always get introduced last," Arthur quipped. "That's because I'm the youngest and prettiest."

"Such power," Salazar said as if mesmerized. "How is it possible for them to be so powerful?"

"Good," Godric breathed. "I was wondering if I was imagining it."

"I need to speak with my sister," Rowena said. "Will you excuse us?"

Taking her sister by the arm, the woman led Endora into the seemingly endless hallways of the castle.

"Such a quaint little place you've built here Clara," Endora said breaking the silence between them. "What are you and Gilbert intend to do here with your other friends?"

"This is going to be a school, if we ever get it finished," Rowena said. "And his name is Godric."

"A school?"

"To teach young magicals to use their powers." she explained. "To prevent them from becoming dangers to themselves and others."

"Clara, you know you're only building up their hopes. The so called magicals you get for this school will be the stunted weaklings you've taken to surrounding yourself with."

"Endora," Rowena said with a sigh, "you know I've never been the most powerful witch. Half the

time I ruin the things I try to enchant. The ceiling in the Great Hall, the 'Magical Glass' that amused you so much is one of my happier accidents. You should see what I did to Godric's hat."

"You have problems because you don't pay attention to what you are doing Clara," Endora said quietly, "you are as powerful as anyone else in the family."

"Thank you for that little sister," Rowena said with a blush, "but we both know the truth. At home I was the pathetic almost a witch with erratic powers. Here I'm an amazing witch who can do more than almost anyone, and I stand out for being powerful instead of for being weak."

Endora nodded. "So does Gladwin know what he's getting into? Does he know how old you are?"

"Godric and I have discussed it, yes. He has a refreshingly different attitude about our situation. He once told me that everyone lives the same amount of time. You are born, and then you die, hopefully well. In between those events, are a series of 'nows'. Each person gets a different number of 'nows' but they can only use one at a time."

Endora blinked. "That is an uncommonly wise thing to say. Perhaps this Gervase will turn out to be good enough for you."

"The question I have is am I good enough for him," Rowena took her sister's hand. "When is your wedding, I'll be there."

---oooOOOooo---

She was too late. The very ground underneath her feet was scorched and smoking. How much power had those two wonderful, infuriating, and confusing men expended trying to defend the school? Why hadn't they waited for her?

To her left, Rowena heard Helga gasp in horror. She had found Salazar... or what was left of him. Horribly burned, from the way the man's body was positioned it was clear that he had spent his last breath fighting. A dozen paces further on lay her beloved Godric, the stub of his wand in his left hand and the oddly undamaged sword that had come to bear his name in his right.

After most of a century together, Rowena wasn't sure if she could go on without him, but she knew she must.

Perhaps a fifteen yards away a man swayed as he regained his feet. "Stand down Mother, and you too Aunt Rowena. I have proven myself my father's master and that I was superior even to the great Godric Gryffindor. I have no desire to slay mere women.

"Salazar, how dare you do this?" Helga demanded raising her wand to the youngest of her nineteen children. "Your father, and Godric both dead at your hand. Do you really think I will allow you to get away with this?"

"The Muggle Born must be ejected from the school, it is the only way the purity of my vision for the future can be maintained," Salazar the younger barked, batting away his mother's disarming

spell. "Father would have supported me if Godric and you two hadn't poisoned him against me."

Rowena looked up from her dead husband for the first time. "You killed my husband," she said as her hair began to move as if wind blown.

"Of course I did Auntie Row," the man laughed as he dropped his own mother with a casual ease. "He stood against me."

"You killed my husband," she repeated, the wand she had never needed falling from her nerveless fingers. Static electricity began crackling around her head as her fury built.

"The great Godric Gryffindor fell before my power," the oblivious man crowed. "As did the famous Salazar Slytherin and the Amazing Helga Hufflepuff. In your haze of confusion, you were always the weakest of the four founders Auntie Row, stand down before I destroy you!"

"You," Rowena said again as she felt her magic rampage past her ability to control it and realized that she didn't care, "KILLED MY HUSBAND!"

The youngest child of Helga Hufflepuff and Salazar Slytherin died never knowing what had happened to him as lightning suddenly flashed from the heavens and obliterated him utterly.

Rowena sank to her knees next to her beloved as the tears began to fall. A hand came to rest on her shoulder.

"Clara?"

Rowena looked up into her sister's eyes. She flowed to her feet and wrapped the redhead in an embrace. "Endora? How did you know?"

"We all felt your loss," the younger witch explained while returning the hug and gently stroking the other woman's hair. "We all felt your pain. It's time you came home."

"Home," Rowena repeated. "But what of my children and grandchildren?"

"You can always visit them any time you want, no matter where they live, you know that Clara."

Rowena nodded, and then made a decision. It was time to go home. It was time to stop being Rowena. She closed her eyes and cried for what she had lost.

After a few moments Clara opened her eyes. "Thank you Endora. You're right, it is time to go home."

---oooOOOooo---

When history spoke of the end of the Founders of Hogwarts, it became an accepted fact that Godrick Gryffindor and Salazar Slytherin met each other in battle and the resulting carnage resulted in the deaths of Helga and Rowena.

What history didn't tell those who came after was just which Salazar Slytherin it was who slew the founders. It has often been said that history is written by the winners. There were no winners on that particular day.

---oooOOOooo---

As the red haired woman fell lifeless to the floor of the nursery, the Dark Lord turned his attention to the child who was somehow prophesied to be a threat. The little one had pulled himself upright in his cot, his tiny hands gripping at the bars. The boy's large green eyes were regarding him with a mixture of curiosity and fear. Voldemort raised his wand.

And found himself pinned to the wall of the nursery.

"You dare?" an old woman appeared before him carrying a ridiculously large hand bag and wearing a fur stole and an absurd hat. "After what your grandfather did, you dare attack the last of my family?"

"Who are you?" Voldemort gasped out.

"You killed my grandson and his wife and threatened their son and you dare ask who I am? I utterly destroyed your grandfather after he killed my husband and his own mother and father, and I will not stand for you to follow any further in his footsteps!"

"How are you doing this?" Voldemort demanded. "Where is your wand?"

"Wand?" she whispered. "Silly magician, I have no need of a wand! If you ever threaten my family again, this will seem a lover's kiss!"

She gestured and the Dark Lord's flesh exploded allowing his cloak to fall to the floor. The energy feedback of the spell destroyed the entire upper floor of the cottage.

"Oh dear," Clara said, covering her mouth with her left hand as she moved to protect herself and the boy from the wild magic she had unleashed. "I certainly didn't intend to do that."

After a few moments, the destruction had quieted down. Clara lifted the crying boy from the remains of his cot. "There, there," she cooed. "No one is going to hurt you. I'm your Gran Clara. Oh dear," she wiped at the boy's eyes with a handkerchief that appeared in her hands. "Whatever shall we do with you young Harry? Your old Gran is far too crotchety to care for you herself. We need to find you a mum, don't we?"

The old woman's face brightened. "Of course, I know just the place for you!"

The pair disappeared without a sound.

---oooOOOooo---

"Headmaster," the huge man said, "I'm tellin' yer, he wasn't there. I found James and poor Lily,

and even You Know Who's cloak and wand, but Harry Potter wasn't there."

To suggest that this news caused Albus Dumbledore concerns would be something of an understatement. The monitoring equipment he had calibrated to the boy showed that he was alive and happy, but nothing that would indicate where he might be.

He would find the boy. He had to.

---oooOOOooo---

Samantha Stevens heard an odd noise coming from her hall closet and sighed. That could only mean one thing. She opened the door and smiled. "Hello Aunt Clara."

Clara entered the room, carrying a bundle of blankets and appearing to be a bit more distracted than usual. "Oh, hello dear, I've come to ask a very large favor of you."

"What can I do to help you Aunt Clara?" Sam asked while leading the old woman to her sofa and conjuring a cup of tea for her guest.

"This is Harry," Clara said as she unwrapped the sleeping boy from the blankets and handing him to the blond woman.

"Harry?" Samantha cradled the toddler in her arms showing the efficiency of movement that only a mother could have. "And who is Harry?"

"Harry is my Great Grandson. His parents were just killed; he's the last of his family... the last of my children's children." Clara explained.

"Aunt Clara, are you sure? I mean you haven't had any children since the 1100s," Sam examined the boy. He appeared to be about a year and a half old, more or less the same age as her Tabitha.

"Oh, there are quite a few 'greats' in that Great Grandson thing. But as you know I married into the wand users and I've always kept track of my family. Harry is the last... the very last of my children's children," the old woman wiped at her eyes. "I caught the murderer of his parents in the act of attacking the boy and punished him quite severely. But I cannot care for him; can you imagine me with a child?"

In truth, Samantha could not. "What are you asking?"

"I know you've got your hands full with Tabitha, but I was hoping that you could take Harry in, at least until I can make other arrangements."

"Aunt Clara..."

"I know Samantha, I know. But I couldn't leave him with the wand users, feel his magic. He's one of us, and just imagine the havoc he would cause among the mortals."

Samantha's eyes widened as she realized her aunt was right. She could practically feel the magic roiling inside the boy... real magic and something else.

"If we leave him with the wand users, they will stunt his development, if not kill him outright. Please Samantha? You're the only one in the family with young children right now, otherwise I wouldn't be asking."

Samantha sighed. How was she going to explain this to Darrin?

---oooOOOooo---

Albus Dumbledore was in a quandary.

Where was Harry Potter?

There was no evidence that anyone had left the Potter cottage via any form of magical transportation, and whatever had happened in the nursery had destroyed the cottage to the point that it had taken Hagrid's strength to gain access.

So surely the boy hadn't somehow *walked* away.

Where was he? There were faint echoes of the boy's magic in the remnants of the cottage, Lily had been found in the wreckage of the nursery, as had Voldemort, so surely Harry had been there when his mother died.

So, where was he?

Dumbledore had been stretched thin over the last month, with the apparent destruction of the Potter family, dealing with the Sirius Black affair, and the attack on Longbottom Lodge.

It turned out that 'everyone knew' that Sirius Black had been the Potter's Secret Keeper, which was, of course, a patent lie. No one could possibly 'know' such a thing, if Black had actually been the Secret Keeper, that bit of knowledge itself would be tied to the secret and buried deep within the man's body.

Since 'everyone knew', obviously he wasn't. The Fidelius itself was badly fractured. The remains of the cottage were clearly visible to anyone who looked, but the knowledge of to whom the cottage had belonged to and who had been living there was still hidden. This showed that the Secret Keeper still lived.

There were those among law enforcement who wanted to lock Black up in Azkaban and throw away the keys after witnesses reported him brawling with Peter Pettigrew in the middle of a London street in an event that left more than a dozen Muggles dead. Barty Crouch in particular had been vocal in eschewing due process.

At least he had been until the debacle at Longbottom Lodge. Once the Potter's hiding place had been pierced, Frank and Alice Longbottom had bundled young Neville up and fled to family

properties in Norway. Frank's mother Augusta had refused, saying that she would never abandon her home.

That very night Longbottom Lodge was attacked by a band of desperate Death Eaters looking to either avenge or find their master. Augusta Longbottom had been murdered, but not before the formidable witch had crippled Bellatrix Lestrange by burning her wand arm off and killed a masked Death Eater before the others took her down.

After it was revealed that the dead Death Eater was Barty Crouch Junior, Barty the elder lost his position in short order.

Normally Dumbledore would have recused himself from having any dealings with how Magical Law Enforcement did its job and would have allowed them to deal with Black as they saw fit. But the obvious Child of Prophecy was missing. If Black actually was innocent, then he could provide some much needed resources to be used to find the boy.

There were protests in the Wizengamot that a sufficiently disciplined mind could fight off the effects of Veritaserum, so the Unspeakables were called in. Prior to his dosing with the Potion of Truth, Black was first given a heavy dose of a Muggle muscle relaxant to put him into a euphoric state.

Enough of the Fidelius remained that Black couldn't tell them the name of the Secret Keeper, but he could confirm that he himself was not the Keeper. He could also tell the court that Remus Lupin also wasn't the Secret Keeper. Black was utterly unable to speak of Peter Pettigrew in any way.

That was evidence enough. While Black was under the influence, Albus was able to finally confirm something else about Sirius Black. Black most certainly was the one who put the easily traced monitoring charms on the mirrors in the Hufflepuff 7th year Girls showers and hid the receiving mirror in the Headmaster's office during the boys 6th year.

For that, Black would pay. But later in a humorous manner of Albus' choosing. For now, they needed to find Harry Potter.

Black was marshaling what resources he could, which were currently limited, but with the recent death of his younger brother Regulus, Black was being reinstated as his father's heir, and soon there would be more.

But Albus wasn't sure they had the time. The Headmaster was certain that Voldemort was far from dead, Harry Potter would be needed, probably sooner rather than later. The boy had to be found. It was with this in mind that Albus approached the International Confederation of Wizards to put forth an international search order for the boy.

Magical Britain needed Harry Potter to be found.

---oooOOOooo---

"Alright Tabitha, settle down," Darrin Stevens said as the family sat at the kitchen table for breakfast.

"Daddy," his pretty five year old whined, bouncing in her seat, "We're going to school!"

"Well, we're going to register you sweet-heart," Samantha explained from where she was feeding Adam. "School doesn't actually start for another two weeks."

"Well, I think we all know Tabitha is excited about starting school, what about you Harry?"

Harry looked up from his bowl of cereal. "I can't wait to go Dad. Jason says that it's mostly fun, but the work is hard sometimes."

Harry had been with them for six months when he started calling Darrin 'Dad'. That, more than anything else, had crystallized the affection that Darrin felt for the boy who had seemingly appeared from nowhere.

"Good, we'll set aside some time each night to help you both with the hard stuff," Darrin said reaching out to ruffle the boy's hair. "Now, both of you, what is the first rule?"

"No magic in front of anyone, ever." the pair chorused.

"Good," he nodded. "Registration is at 9 Sam?"

"Yes. We're going to be there early to avoid the rush," his wife responded.

Darrin lifted his cup of coffee and slurped noisily amusing his two elder children to no end and earning himself a glare from his wife. "I wish I could go along, but I've got a train to catch. Work, work, work."

"Oh, yes," Samantha said after she received her good bye kiss. "Off to the salt mines with you!"

"Now then," she continued after Darrin had left the room, "I need to get Adam cleaned up from his breakfast. Do you two think you can stay presentable until I'm finished?"

"Yes Mom." the pair said in unison.

Samantha's lips twitched into a small smile. She was positive that they practiced doing that.

---oooOOOooo---

Corina Jefferson had never really thought that being an agent for the US Department of Magic would end up being such a boring job. For some reason the young woman, who had been third in her class at Salem, had thought that she might be out, wand in hand, defending her nation from magical threats.

That belief had lasted until the second hour of her first day on the job, when she had been

disabused of that idea. Fighting Darks and Invaders was the purview of Investigators who worked for the Magic division of the FBI and for special combat units assigned to each of the armed forces.

No, excitement was for someone else. Her job was to keep the bureaucracy running. Every day she would wade through reams of paper and research sometimes isolating an obscure fact that aided in some unknown function, but most days it seemed that her efforts were pointless.

She arrived at her desk and turned on the new computer she had been given to assist in her research, then she left for the break room to get a cup of coffee while the damned machine finished starting up. Once she returned to her desk after a nice chat with some coworkers she logged into her account on the network and started her reprogrammed searches.

It wasn't until the machine beeped at her, startling Corina to the point where she almost spilled her coffee that she realized she had gotten her very first hit from the machine. It had identified a designated name in a listing from somewhere.

Corina fought against her excitement. It was probably a false positive; they usually were... but maybe...

Harry James Stevens had enrolled at Abigail Adams Elementary in Westport Connecticut as a new Kindergartener... Stevens?

Corina searched her records. No one named 'Stevens' was on any of the search lists. She dug deeper in the computer's report. Birth Name Potter... That rang a bell somewhere in the back of her mind. Harry James Potter.

Yes, a positive hit. Possible kidnap victim. Immediate Verification Investigation authorized. Expedited Reporting to the International was required. Albus Dumbledore himself was to be immediately notified when Harry James Potter was found.

Corina blinked. Albus Dumbledore? This one was big. She quickly generated her report and personally walked it up two floors to her supervisor whose eyes bugged out when he read it. The man thanked her for her diligence, and rolled the report up, placing it in one of the carriers for the Lamson tubes and sent Corina's report off to be dealt with.

Corina returned to her desk feeling a bit more pleased with her lot in life. Her job might not be adventurous, but she might have just saved a kidnap victim.

---oooOOOooo---

Jason Thomas Kincaid sat back in his Government Dodge, waiting for his partner to return and tried his best to look inconspicuous. Not an easy task for someone who was six foot six inches tall and weighed in at 280 pounds.

Kincaid had been recruited as an Agent by the Magical Division of the FBI when he had been

attending Cal Tech after finishing first in his class at the Seattle Academy of Magic. The training at Quantico had been the most challenging of his life, and he had loved it.

Now, twenty years later and the senior field agent in the state, he still loved his job, and more importantly this case could quite possibly be the one of the more important of his career. He shared the FBI's institutional hatred for kidnapping and kidnapers. If this kid actually was the Harry Potter that Dumbledore was looking for, Kincaid would take deep satisfaction in making sure that those responsible to stealing the boy paid a very heavy price.

The woman with the boy seemed at very least oblivious to the surveillance she was under. He checked his notes on her.

Samantha Stevens. Housewife. Those were rare these days. Thirty Two according to her driver's license, though those were sometimes fudged a bit. Probably not this time, she was a handsome woman. No tickets, no record of working outside of neighborhood charities. They hadn't found any record of her attending college... or high school for that matter Kincaid suddenly realized. That was odd.

Darrin Stevens, her husband. Thirty three. Account Executive at McMann and Tate Advertising. Had been there since he graduated from New York City College with a bachelors in Communications. Played golf. No evidence that the family was living beyond its means, no out of character vacations, a comfortable but not too expensive home. The two older children attended public school.

The family consisted of the parents and three children. Young Harry and two of their own. Tabitha, five years old, and Adam, 16 months. He had verified the hospital records for both of the Stevens children's births.

Harry James Stevens, born Potter. Adopted by the Stevens family according to state records on January 23rd 1982. The paperwork filed with the state was impeccable. Each page appeared to be brand new, and oddly filled out by hand in an odd calligraphy style rather than typed.

The newness of the paperwork had raised some red flags for Kincaid until he remembered that the file cabinet he had retrieved it from hadn't been touched in quite a while if the layer of dust was any reference. Maybe it was the quality of the paper...

The boy's parents were listed as deceased, which they were if he was the Harry Potter they were looking for, and evidently Samantha Stevens was a distant cousin to the boy.

The passenger door opened and Leslie Lewis slid into the car.

"Well?" Kincaid asked.

"The boy's magical alright. Amazingly so. He pegged the meter of scope." she said while she pulled out her own notes and began making notations. "Weird readings though."

"You have to be careful on the lower settings Rookie. If you break that damned thing the Supply weenies will have it taken out of your pay."

"It was on the adult settings. I always start high and shift lower. He indexed higher than I do." she huffed.

"At five?" Kincaid asked incredulously, sure that she had somehow fouled up the reading. From a manila envelope on the seat between them he pulled a wizarding photo of a couple at their wedding. "Well, he looks like James Potter to me. You were closer, what do you think?"

"He has Potter's hair," Lewis agreed. "But up close you can see that under the baby fat, he has Lily Potter's eyes and cheek bones."

"Did you get a reading off the woman?"

"Yeah," Lewis nodded. "Complete flat line. No detection of anything at all. I've never seen anyone with so little magic."

"Well, I'm satisfied." Kincaid said as he watched Samantha Stevens leaving the park, crossing the street while pushing the stroller containing her youngest with a happy five year old on either side. "The boy is Harry Potter. Time to call the boss for instructions."

---oooOOOooo---

Samantha opened the door to find a man and a woman, both dressed in suits on her doorstep. She offered them her best smile. "Can I help you?"

"Samantha Stevens?" The taller of the two asked.

"Yes," she answered wondering just what was going on, but she maintained the smile.

"This is Special Agent Lewis, and I'm Special Agent Kincaid," he said offering her his ID. "We're from the FBI. We would like to speak with you and your husband."

Samantha regarded the offered ID. "I had no idea that the FBI even had a magical division. Would you like to come in?"

The agents exchanged a look. Their IDs were charmed so that only a magic user could see what department within the FBI they worked for... but this woman had tested out as being a magically null. That was very... odd. They followed the young woman into her home and took the offered seats in the home's living room.

"Darrin?" the blond called. "Could you come in here please?"

Darrin Stevens entered the room, wiping his hands on a dish cloth. "Who was at the door Sam?" he asked before spotting their visitors.

"A pair of special agents from the FBI," Samantha said. "If they weren't magical, I would be asking what you and Larry have been up to. So," she asked after Darrin was seated. "What can we do for the FBI?"

"We're here about Harry Potter," Kincaid answered.

Tabitha led Harry who was carrying Adam into the living room from the kitchen. "Adam finished his carrots," Harry called as he entered. Upon spotting the visitors the children smiled and made their way quietly to a small table set up for them in the corner of the room.

"Harry Stevens," Samantha corrected. "My husband and I adopted Harry through the Witches Council three years ago."

Kincaid paled. "The Witches Council?" he asked weakly.

"Yes. What could you possibly want with Harry? He's only five."

"Mrs. Stevens," Lewis said once she noticed that her partner was suddenly speechless, though not really understanding why. "Harry Potter has been reported missing from England since the night his parents were murdered."

Two small heads came up immediately as those words left the agent's mouth. She never noticed the sudden attention she was getting from the children and continued on. "He is suspected to be a victim of kidnapping. Our instructions are to take the boy into protective custody until the investigation is concluded."

"Excuse me?" Samantha asked in the coldest tone either agent had ever heard. "You think you're going to take our son from us?"

"Mrs. Stevens, please, don't make this any harder than it has to be," the other agent continued, ignoring her partner while drawing her wand. "There is a charge of kidnapping here. Of course we are going to take him. How could we do anything else?"

"Kids," Darrin said. "Upstairs now."

Tabitha looked like she was going to argue. "Now." Darrin repeated in a tone of voice that would brook no argument. Harry reached out and put his hand on his younger brother and the pair vanished without a sound. Tabitha looked angry at being dismissed.

"Nobody is taking Harry from us!" she said before she vanished as well.

Leslie Lewis goggled at the now empty table. "Silent Apparation? By children? But that's..."

"Lewis..." Kincaid hissed, finally regaining his voice, "shut up!"

A puff of billowing smoke appeared behind Samantha, Lewis tried to raise her wand and was utterly shocked when she found she couldn't move.

"Samantha? Is there something wrong?" Endora asked as she materialized. "I felt your anger all the way in Paris."

"These FBI agents are of the impression that they are going to take Harry away from us, Mother," Samantha said, while attempting to rein in her anger. Her mother's presence seemed to calm her.

"Oh?" Endora smiled. "Do you have plans for the bodies afterwards? Dr. Bombay is always on the lookout for potions ingredients."

"There won't be any bodies, Mother." She levitated the two agents to a standing position with a nose twitch. "Unless, of course, they are foolish enough to ever come back. Do I make myself clear?"

Kincaid nodded violently while Lewis struggled against the paralysis that held her frozen in place.

"Let me be clear, Harry was not kidnapped. He is family. From my side of the family in fact. You know who we are, don't you Agent Kincaid?"

Again Kincaid nodded violently. "The Elder Sect." he whispered.

"Very good. Make sure you tell your supervisors, so that they don't do something foolish like send someone else to annoy me. Tell them that Harry Stevens is with his family, with people who share his blood. There may be people more closely related, but those people aren't capable of teaching him to deal with the magic he had access to without doing major damage. We have always had a policy of leaving you Wand Users to your own lives. Don't make the mistake of interfering in ours."

Again her nose twitched and the two FBI agents disappeared.

---oooOOOooo---

Kincaid and Lewis found themselves back in their car parked at the curb in front of the Stevens home.

"What the hell just happened?" Lewis breathed.

"The blond is part of the Elder Sect, and so is the Redhead she called mother," Kincaid said as he tried to stop his hands from shaking by gripping the steering wheel firmly.

"The Elder Sect? What the hell is that?" Lewis asked, still teetering on the edge of hysteria.

"The first Magic users. Their ability to use magic is as far beyond ours as ours is beyond Muggles. They don't use wands or incantations or much of anything beyond a gesture of some kind. The Stevens woman twitched her nose, that must be her signature gesture," he swallowed, and then fished the keys from his jacket pocket and started the car. "We've got to get to Headquarters and report this."

---oooOOOooo---

"Endora, I don't believe I'm saying this," Darrin said with a smile, "but I'm so happy to see you, I could have kissed you."

"Oh really?" Endora asked, a single sculpted eyebrow rising toward her hairline. "Please Durwood, do fight the urge."

"Oh, don't worry, that particular urge passed as soon as you calmed Sam down to the point where she wasn't going to murder those FBI agents in front of me," the mortal man rose from his chair. "Someone is going to have to explain this 'Wand User' stuff to me, but for now I'm going upstairs to make sure the kids are ok. Thank you again Endora."

The older witch waited until her daughter's husband had vanished up the stairs. "Are you alright Samantha?" she cocked her head to the side. "I don't believe I've ever felt you become quite that angry."

"No one ever tried to take one of my children before," Samantha said quietly. "Darrin was joking with you, but he was more right than he knew, I have never been closer to doing someone physical harm."

"That is motherhood," Endora pointed out. "Harry's birth mother died to protect him, and she didn't have a significant fraction of your power. The Wand Users aren't capable of taking Harry away from you, none of them are. If his attacker ever comes back from whatever Clara did to him, I strongly suspect that he would regret a second attempt."

Samantha blushed at her mother's compliment.

---oooOOOooo---

"Are they going to take Harry away?"

"Tabitha," Darrin said as he pulled his daughter up onto his lap. "Harry isn't going anywhere."

"But you'll get into trouble Dad!" Harry said plaintively. "I should go so that everyone else will be ok."

"We won't get into trouble Harry; no one has done anything wrong." Darrin tried to think of a way of explaining so that the children could understand. The major problem was that he didn't really understand exactly what was going on himself. "We're a family, all five of us. We always will be."

"Promise?" Harry asked.

"Promise." Darrin assured him.

---oooOOOooo---

Jason Kincaid sat nervously outside the Director's office. His supervisor had listened to the story that Kincaid and Lewis had told, and then kicked the report upstairs. The next thing the Agent knew he was told to report to the district office in New York City, and upon their arrival at the apparation point in the Federal Building, he and Lewis were immediately directed to continue on to Washington to speak the the Director of Magical Investigations.

This couldn't possibly be good.

Leslie Lewis was in the middle of convincing herself that nothing had happened and that everything she had experienced at the Stevens home was some sort of hallucination. Kincaid tried not to think about what might happen if the Director also took on that view.

Why didn't more people know their history? And why didn't they have a way of detecting the Elder Sect to prevent the two societies from coming into contact?

Eli Estes, the Director of Magical Investigations appeared at his door. "Inside," he said with a nod to his two agents before disappearing back into his office.

Like most offices in the Magical Investigations Department, Estes' was much larger inside than out. By the time the two agents entered the office, Estes was back at his desk. "Close the door and sit down," he instructed while looking over a familiar looking folder.

After Kincaid and Lewis sat down Estes looked up from their report. "I'm having trouble wrapping my mind around the idea of a member of the Elder Sect living in the suburbs of Westport Connecticut and raising a family, with the Brit's missing Magical Savior as an adopted son no less."

"I know sir," Kincaid agreed, "but the woman scanned as a magical Null, but was still capable of seeing that our IDs were shrouded in magic. She paralyzed Lewis with a gesture and then levitated both of us before forcing something like apparation on us to send us away."

"With no wand?" Estes asked.

Before the senior agent could answer, both his and Lewis' chairs were shoved away from each other as a larger more opulent chair suddenly appeared in the space they had just cleared. Sitting in this new chair was the red haired woman from the Steven's home.

"Of course there was no wand," she said dismissively. "My daughter quite clearly identified herself as a member of the Elder Sect."

Estes sat back in his chair in shock that this woman had somehow pierced all of the protective wards designed to keep unwanted visitors out. The briefing he had gotten on the Elder Sect had been superficial at best, so he decided to carry on as best he could.

"We apologize for the intrusion into your daughter's home, but we are investigating a reported kidnapping. I am Eli Estes, the Director of Magical Investigations for the FBI, and you are?"

"I am Endora of the Elder Sect, and there was no kidnapping," the woman said in the manner of someone unused to being questioned. "Young Harry's birth parents were killed by a minor magician seeking immortality, and this 'Voldemort' was punished for his presumption by my sister, Clara who is the boy's Grandmother. Clara then brought the boy to my daughter, her niece and Harry's cousin, to care for him. Samantha and her mortal husband adopted the boy and are raising him as their own."

"I see," Estes said, while not really believing any of this was happening. "Grandmother you said? The British say that all of his grandparents are dead."

"I may have left out a few greats in calling Clara his grandmother. A thousand years' worth or so," Endora said with a small smile.

The three Wand Users in the room blinked at the admission of such a lifespan.

"We will of course inform the International of your family's desire to be left alone," Estes said warily. "However the Brits have a history of ignoring the rest of the world, and they have a fair amount of political capital tied up in finding the Potter boy."

"The British were the source of the last conflict between our two societies," Endora sighed. "Hopefully that doesn't happen again."

---oooOOOooo---

"Dumbledore!"

Albus looked up from the briefing papers he was reviewing prior to the meeting he was chairing for the International Confederation of Wizards to find the Yank Secretary of Magic striding toward him with a look of fury on the man's face. While angry voices were far from unusual at these meetings, it was fairly unusual to have anyone direct their anger at the Supreme Mugwump.

"What the hell are you playing at Dumbledore?"

"I'm sure I don't know to what you are referring Donald," Albus said pleasantly.

"Your international warrant for Harry Potter," the American said slapping a file folder in front of the Supreme Mugwump. "We found him. You might have mentioned that he was with members of the Elder Sect."

"What?"

"The. Elder. Fucking. Sect!" Donald Murphy said, emphasizing each word so as to make his point. "When the Potter boy showed up on in our searches when he enrolled in school, we sent a pair of agents to investigate. We found your boy, absurdly powerful for a five year old just as you said he would be. Then my agents approached the family with your kidnapping charge."

"Which wasn't taken well?"

Murphy gave the Chief Mugwump a disbelieving look. "The Agent in charge has been in the field for twenty years Dumbledore, and has seen things that would probably curl even your hair. He came from the meeting with that family terrified at the power they casually throw around. They made one thing crystal clear, they want no contact with us and Harry Potter is not to be approached." Murphy reached out and tapped the file folder he had place in front of Dumbledore earlier. "All the information we have on the boy is right here. I'm informing all of my counterparts' world wide of the situation. Don't ask for any more help on this topic unless you really want to be laughed at."

Murphy stepped back from the table and fixed Dumbledore with an appraising look. "When you ignore this family's demand that we leave them alone, and we both know that you will, please, for the sake of international cooperation, try and get them to kill you in a manner that doesn't leave a body that I will have to investigate. I'd really appreciate that."

Dumbledore sat and watched Murphy stride away before he opened the file folder. Now that Potter had been found, what was he going to do about it?

---oooOOOooo---

Harry concentrated on keeping the ball suspended in the air in front of his eyes.

"That's very good Harry," Samantha said a smile curling her lips. "I believe you've broken your old record."

"Thanks Mom," he said, breaking her heart just a little bit. Harry had returned from his first week in Kindergarten and announced that only babies call their mother's 'Mommy'. "But why are we doing this? You and Auntie Endora don't do this kind of stuff."

"You need to learn to walk before you can run Harry," Samantha answered. "Ok, now that you can keep your ball floating, I want you to try and get it to stay there without you having to focus on it. Look at the magic and see if you can figure out how you can do that."

Harry looked past the physical world as he had been taught to be able to see the magic holding the ball. There had to be some way of getting the ball to hang in the air without his needing to stay focused on it. As he usually did when trying to do things with magic, he visualized normal items and used their images in his mind to make his magic do what he wanted it to do. In this case he imagined a push pin like they used at school to attach papers to the corkboard.

The boy's concentration was rewarded with an ethereal push pin that hung in the air before his eyes. His astral aspect took hold of the nap of the magic holding the very real ball suspended in midair in the real world and with concentration he used the pin to anchor the ball.

Satisfied with his performance, Harry pulled his senses back into the here and now, and found that Tabitha had also managed to suspend her doll in midair. She gave him a happy grin and waggled

her eyebrows at him.

"Very good both of you," Samantha enthused.

"That was easy," Tabitha said with satisfaction.

"After I figured out what I was doing wrong," Harry agreed. "It really was.

"Now for something a little different. Tabitha, I want you to lower Harry's ball to the floor. Harry, you do the same with Tabitha's doll."

Harry nodded, and pushed his senses to interact with the magic. His astral aspect reached for the doll and his hand passed right through it. He tried again with similar results. Nothing he could think of could affect the doll in any way.

What was going on?

Harry returned his attention to the here and now, and found Tabitha to be as confused as he was.

"I couldn't touch Harry's ball!" Tabitha said.

"And Harry couldn't touch your doll, could you Harry?"

"No, what did we do wrong?"

"You didn't do anything wrong Harry, nor did you Tabitha. When you locked your toys into a magical state, you isolated them from magic," Samantha said. "Whenever we do magic, we put a little bit of ourselves into the act, no matter if it's something as simple as levitating a ball or as complex as changing one thing into another. Once one of you do something, no other Witch or Warlock can change what you've done. Only Harry can unlink his ball from that spot, and only Tabitha can lower her doll."

"Wow!" Tabitha said, while Harry nodded in agreement.

Suddenly there was a burst of flame and a beautiful gold and red bird appeared in the Steven's family room.

Samantha's eyebrows lifted in surprise. "Well, hello there, we don't often get visits from a phoenix. I'm Samantha, this is Harry and Tabitha. Are you looking for anyone in particular?"

The phoenix trilled a song that took the children's breath away. Samantha laughed, and reached out to stroke the phoenix's neck. "Well, that's good to know. You found the right house then. You've brought the message you mentioned?"

The firebird lifted its left wing and ducked its head underneath, pulling a roll of parchment from... somewhere before turning to present it to the young witch.

"Thank you," Samantha said before unrolling the scroll and beginning to read as the children crowded around the immortal firebird to stroke its feathers and ask it questions about its life.

HOGWARTS SCHOOL of WITCHCRAFT and WIZARDRY

Headmaster: ALBUS DUMBLEDORE

(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf. Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)

Dear Mrs. Stevens,

I do hope that the appearance of my Phoenix Companion Fawkes did not come as too much of a shock. He is a mischievous old bird, with a biting sense of humor. That said he jumped at the opportunity to be the one to visit you, as young Harry's birth mother was one of his favorite students during her time with us.

It has come to my attention that the young man who was born Harry Potter has been adopted into your family, and that you have had an unfortunate confrontation with the American authorities over my request that they be on the lookout for him. It was never my intention to alarm anyone, it was simply to locate young Harry and ensure that he was in fact safe and cared for.

The circumstances surrounding the death of his birth parents did bring a certain level of anxiety to that concern as you might well guess.

With your permission, I would like to secure an interview with you to discuss Harry's inheritance and his future in his birth parent's society.

Yours sincerely,

Albus Dumbledore,

Headmaster

Samantha's brow furrowed. Did she want Harry to have anything to do with the Wand Users and their form of magic? She knew that Harry had that kind of magic within him, alongside his true magic.

Still, would it be right to deny the boy she loved as if he was of her body his heritage? Truly, he was of both worlds, but what would that bring?

"Did you know that the man Dumbledore thinks that you are his companion?" She asked the firebird. "Or that he thinks you're male?"

The Phoenix offered the avian equivalent of a shrug with an expression that asked 'What can you do?'

"You can return to Dumbledore and let him know I'm considering his request."

The bird nodded and trilled another song.

A smile quirked at the corners of Samantha's mouth. "That's true. Good journey to you."

The Phoenix disappeared in a flash of flame.

"Now then you two," Samantha said to her children, "that's enough goofing off with the visitor, back to work."

---oooOOOooo---

Deluded Musings
FanficAuthors.net

imagining things, how dangerous could these two women really be?

They could not be, could they? Severus ran his hand through his unruly curls and his mouth went dry as he watched the tall blonde in her disgusting Muggle clothing walking along with the older woman on her arm. She was... She *was* dangerous. There was no longer any doubt in his mind. This woman was...

“Sevie, Sevie such a whinging bitch,” a much hated voice broke into his contemplation of the two strangers. “So full of himself he makes me itch!”

“Peeves!” Dumbledore thundered, seemingly enraged that the poltergeist would intrude on a meeting of such importance. “You will...”

“Peeves?” the older woman gasped.

The effect of the woman’s words on the incarnate spirit of distraction was as immediate as it was amazing to Severus. The poltergeist froze in midair before slowly rotating in place to face the old woman.

“Lady?” the specter asked incredulously before moving to the woman’s side and taking her hand in both of its. “Our Lady has returned?”

“I’m only here to visit,” the woman said. “This is my niece Samantha. Samantha, this is Peeves, one of my happier accidents.”

“How do you do, Peeves?” the tall blonde asked as if speaking with poltergeists was an everyday occurrence. “I’m always happy to meet one of Aunt Clara’s friends.”

Severus blinked and again attempted to gain control of his hair. The insufferable ‘geist was somehow the responsibility of this strange old woman ‘Clara’?

“How have you been Peeves?” the old woman asked.

“Peeves is doing well, in everything he tries,” the ‘geist answered in rhyme as it so often did. “Defending Hogwarts, Peevesey is, and fighting all the lies.”

“What lies?” the blonde asked.

“The lies they tell of Master Salazar,” Peeves answered. “Lies that have been told so long and spread so far. They tell that Slytherin struggled with the others of the four, and that he and Godric fought a war.”

“What? How could anyone believe anything so incredibly foolish? Salazar and Godric were like brothers, they died side by side, each defending the other,” the woman named Clara asked incredulously.

“The living only believe what they have read,” the ‘geist said sadly, “and never listen to the dead.”

That thing with Peeves had so flustered the witch, Minerva could hardly concentrate.

Then yet another surprise piled on when the Sorting Hat chimed in. "It's about time you came back."

Minerva could see that Dumbledore's shock at the hat's unsolicited comment. She knew that the hat was not always silent between sortings, however, it rarely spoke unless it was first addressed.

"Whatever it is you want to speak about, it will have to wait, Hat," Albus said quietly.

The hat contorted its shape to offer the impression of a face. "I wasn't speaking to you Albus."

"I thank you for coming Mrs. Stevens," Albus said as he settled into his own chair, clearly perplexed by the hat's comments. "I appreciate the chance to discuss Harry's inheritance and his future in his birth parent's society."

The name 'Harry' pulled Minerva from her daze. There was only one 'Harry' Albus ever spoke about. These people had Harry Potter?

"Potter?" Snape sputtered, while pushing his hair from his face. The Head of Slytherin House had obviously made the same connection. "This is about Potter? You are actually negotiating to get that pampered princeling to attend Hogwarts?"

"I don't care for your attitude sir," the blonde woman said in an ice-cold tone. "My son is neither pampered or a princeling." She turned to Dumbledore and continued. "Who is this ill-mannered oaf, Mr. Dumbledore, and why is he here?"

"I apologize for my associate's lack of manners Mrs. Stevens," Albus said with a hopeful smile. "Allow me to introduce Professor Minerva McGonagall, my Deputy and Hogwarts' Transfiguration Mistress, and Professor Severus Snape, Hogwarts' Potions Master and Head of Slytherin House."

Minerva found herself nodding to the young woman while Severus simply glared as Albus continued. "I assure you that Severus does not represent Hogwarts in this discussion."

"Yet he is still here," Stevens noted.

"Head of Slytherin House?" the older of the visitors asked. "Truly? Salazar would be crushed to learn that the guiding aspects of his life have come to be so ignored by those who claim to honor his name."

"How dare you Madam?" Severus demanded standing from his chair.

"Sit down Snape," the Sorting Hat interjected. "You have no idea whom you are speaking with."

Again, the Hat inserting itself into the conversation shocked Minerva. Something very odd was happening, but she was not sure what. "I do apologize for my colleague's reaction."

“I must say Mr. Dumbledore, none of this is doing anything to convince me that this culture has anything to offer my son.” The blonde said simply. “You present to me a grown man who is driven to unthinking insults by the mere mention of a child’s name, and then you tell me that not only is he a teacher at what purports to be Britain’s finest school of wanded magic, but he holds a position of some higher authority? He then screams at a guest in your office and it falls to an enchanted hat to chastise him, and to your deputy to offer a rather limp apology while you do nothing, and still the belligerent oaf remains.”

“You have to understand Mrs. Stevens, Severus’ position requires...”

The Headmaster’s justifications were interrupted by a new voice. “If this is one of your lies Peeves,” that new voice echoed, sounding almost corroded by the lack of use, “your suffering will be horrific.”

Each of the people in the Headmaster’s office were looking to the stone wall where the voice was emanating as Peeves the Poltergeist passed through the wall followed closely by a glowing form in ethereal chain mail and a battle helm, the ghost’s armor was covered in a silver ichor that was quite obviously the spectral equivalent of blood. Once the specter was fully in the room, it faced the headmaster. “Peeves tells me that My Lady is back with us,” that damaged voice boomed in the enclosed space.

“Hello Gemmel,” Clara said quietly.

The ghost focused its attention on Clara, its eyes blazing from deep inside the helm. In a smooth motion, the Bloody Baron of Slytherin house removed his helmet and knelt before the woman. “My Lady!” the ghost whispered.

Minerva glanced over to Severus and saw that he was amazed as she. Never before had she heard the Bloody Baron speak, much less kneel before anyone.

The woman called Clara rose from her chair, and reached out for the ghost, somehow touching him. She raised his head gently so that she could see his face, “Rise, Gemmel of Malmesbury. You do me honor in serving so well, for so long.”

“I failed you in the last task you assigned me, My Lady,” The ghost rasped, refusing to meet the woman’s eyes. “That is why I remain tied to this plane. It is my penance.”

Again, the living inhabitants of the room were treated to a flare of brilliant silver light when yet another ghost entered the Headmaster’s office. The Grey Lady of Ravenclaw stood before them, the usually taciturn ghost seemed to hesitate, and then she raised her left hand to her mouth.

“Mother?”

Clara blinked. “Helena? Oh, Helena, it has been so long.”

Minerva stared open-mouthed as the Ravenclaw House ghost and the inexplicably odd woman embraced both the living and dead in tears, murmuring to each other.

understanding. “Ah, yes. I encountered that phrase in the 1920s on a visit to New Orleans. I think that it was simply a chance duplication of a phrase. When we say ‘Muggle’ we refer to those who sadly, have no access to magic, and ‘Muggleborn’ are those who, as you put it Mrs. Stevens, spontaneously manifest magic. Our use of the term long predates the slang term for cannabis.”

“That’s where I encountered the term as well,” Samantha smiled. “I wonder if we might have crossed paths back then?”

His eyes twinkling, Albus shook his head. “I like to believe I would recall a young woman as attractive as yourself Mrs. Stevens.”

Snape snorted at that. Dumbledore ignored his Potions Master and continued. “You were saying Lady Ravenclaw?”

“I blame myself for what Salazar the younger became,” the old woman said with her eyes downcast. “He was so very powerful as a child I came to believe that he might be a newly emerging Elder, so I took him aside and taught him separately from the other children in the castle. I was wrong, his skills plateaued rather early, but he was still quite powerful for a wand user, his parents’ son after all. As he grew older, he decided to believe that the newer magic users ‘taking his magic’ caused his limits. He wanted them banished if not destroyed outright.”

“And the founders disagreed?” Minerva asked. “All of the founders?”

“Yes, of course. The whole point of the school was to train young magicals so that they weren’t a danger to themselves or others. Most of the major witchhunts of the time were sparked by a young child suddenly manifesting their power,” the old woman’s eyes focused in the distance, as if she was straining to see the events she was describing. “The arguments between father and son escalated, until Godric joined in on his oldest friend’s side. The younger became infuriated at that, and one day when both Helga and I were away, he attacked the castle. When Helga and I returned, we found that he had killed both his father and my beloved Godric.”

“Oh, my!” Minerva murmured.

“Helga moved to avenge our men, while I tried to understand what had happened. I was never all that quick to deal with emotional distress you see, and while I was shocked into inaction Helga was slain by her son.”

“So, what happened?” Dumbledore asked.

“I’m ashamed to say that I allowed my anger at the loss of my husband to overwhelm me. I destroyed Salazar the younger utterly,” the old woman said quietly. “I destroyed the son so thoroughly as to not even leave a body. So I am likely to blame for the destruction of the father’s reputation over the years.”

Silence reigned in the Headmaster’s office for several moments before Clara once again spoke. “I never expected this old castle to affect me so. If you will excuse me, I believe I would like to

explore my old home for a while, and speak with my daughter and her betrothed. There is still the reason for our visit to deal with after all, and Samantha is Harry's mother now."



Samantha waited until her aunt had left the office before speaking. "Your note asked for an opportunity to discuss Harry's inheritance and his future in his birth parent's society, but your staff here both seem to think that your goal is to convince me to have Harry attend your school."

"Harry's inheritance is my primary reason for my asking for this meeting, I assure you Mrs. Stevens," the old man said, his eyes twinkling. "And I believe that his association with his birth parents' society could best be served by his attending Hogwarts, as his inheritance provides for."

"And why would he need to attend this school?" Samantha asked.

"Why, for the education of course," Minerva responded. "Harry will need to know how to discipline his magic before it can do harm to himself or others."

"Our school system back home is wonderfully well rounded, far more so than what you offer here," Samantha pointed out. "And I have arranged for my children's magical education with some of the finest tutors available today. Given what I have seen here," she paused to glare at Snape, "where you inexplicably employ a man who is prone to raging insults at the mention of my son's name, this is not something you can offer."

"Hogwarts," Minerva said stiffly, "is without peer, we are the finest institution of magical education in the world."

Samantha locked eyes with the other witch. "You don't understand do you? You've accepted that Aunt Clara was your Ravenclaw, but you haven't made the connection to what we are. Amazing. Fine, I suppose I will have to show you," the blonde woman checked her watch and then raised both her hands to shoulder level. "You will notice, I am not holding a wand?" and she twitched her nose.

The foursome found themselves in another place. All three of the wand users tried to go for their wands, only to discover that other than their heads, they could not move.

"This is my family room, at my home in Westport Connecticut," Samantha said quietly. "In our current states we are quite invisible and intangible. My mother is about to start a lesson for my two eldest children, Harry and his sister Tabitha. The children are unable to see or hear us, though my mother is quite capable of both, though she will likely ignore us and carry on with her lesson. Watch and listen, then you can tell me if your Hogwarts can match the education Harry will get with us."



"Today," Endora announced, taking her cue from Samantha's explanation and paying no attention

“Oh, Albus, no, that wouldn’t be a good idea,” Sirius smiled. “The issue of course would be Seventh year girls... I keep getting older, but they stay the same age...”

Albus blinked and seemed almost to choke. Sirius silently congratulated himself for shocking the old man. “The most interesting thing I’ve heard recently is that just over six months ago, you met with the people who have Harry Potter.”

“Sirius...”

“People I don’t know have my godson,” Black said simply. “This is unacceptable. The son of James and Lily Potter needs to be with people who care for him.”

Dumbledore looked pensive for a moment, “I think perhaps that honesty is called for today.”

“Honesty Albus?” Sirius asked, unable to resist tweaking the old man. “How unusual.”

“Harry is with relatives.”

“No, he isn’t.” Sirius said dismissively. “You forget that James and I are related in half a dozen ways. Harry is not with any of the relatives that James would have ever acknowledged, nor is he with Lily’s family. I’ve checked.”

“Sirius...” the old man sighed. It was obvious that Dumbledore was trying to decide what he could tell Sirius. “Harry is with relatives from James side, and please, trust me when I tell you, Harry couldn’t possibly be any safer anywhere in the world.”

“You’ll pardon me if I don’t find that comforting,” Sirius responded. “As I recall, you offered the same assurance about the Fidelius charm.”

“And I was as wrong then as I am correct now,” Dumbledore said. “Sirius, would you say that I am a powerful wizard?”

Sirius’s surprise at this change of topic showed in his face. “Of course.

“And if I were to tell you that the people raising Harry since that horrible night were powerful enough that I am less to them than a first year student is to me, would you believe me?”

“You’re talking about the Elders?” Sirius asked incredulously.

“I am,” Albus admitted. “I’m surprised that you know of them.”

“My mother used them as Bogeymen, she was always telling me that the Elders would come and get me. So now you’re telling me that they are *real* ?”

“Very real,” Albus confirmed.

“But...” Sirius’ mind was racing. “What is their interest in Harry? Was it the way he killed

“Yes,” Samantha agreed. “Doggie Man.” This had gone on long enough. It was time to do something about this particular stray.

“Hungry fella?” she asked of the dog. “Why don’t you come on into the garage and we’ll see if we can’t get you something to eat.”

The dog cocked its head to one side, seeming to consider the offer before following the attractive woman into her garage. As the woman passed through the doorway leading inside the house, she slapped the control that caused the garage door to start to close.

The dog jumped at the sound of the motor starting, but stayed where it was, waiting patiently. After a few moments, the woman returned without her youngest child, but also without the promised food.

“Well, here we are,” she said as she crossed her arms under her breasts. “Do you really think you’re fooling anyone?”

The dog cocked its head again, as if trying to understand what she was saying and the woman sighed. “If you insist I can force you back to your natural form. I’m told that if I do it, the transformation will be spectacularly painful, and you may lose the ability to transform on your own.”

The aspect of the dark haired man in what appeared to be expensive robes of a type Samantha had not seen worn since the 1400s suddenly solidified in front of her. It was odd, that the dog aspect took on the look of a spectral flare. “What gave me away?” he asked.

Samantha smiled. “You mean other than the astral aspect of your human form that flares over your dog’s body?”

“You can see the magic behind an Animagus transformation?” the man asked incredulously.

His only answer was a single raised eyebrow. The man hesitated, it was clear he was intimidated. “My name is Sirius Black.”

“Nice to finally meet the real you Mr. Black. I was starting to wonder what kind of pervert was hanging around the neighborhood watching my children. Given your reputation, and how I heard you participated in the death of eldest son’s birthparents, why shouldn’t I be doing horrible things to you before handing you over to the police?”

“I am Harry’s godfather.”

Samantha was not sure what she had been expecting the man to say, but she certainly had not been expecting that. “Are you really? Odd that Lily Potter’s sister didn’t know about that.”

“You’ve spoken with Petunia?”

“Of course I have. We aren’t barbarians Mr. Black. We didn’t kidnap Harry. I approached Petunia

By the time Tabitha made her way into the kitchen having spent several minutes finishing her conversation with her friend Lisa before coming inside, Harry was already at the table working hard on his first math problem, trying very hard to resist counting the addition out on his fingers.

“The weirdo dog guy is gone,” Tabitha noted as she grabbed a cookie for herself before sitting down at her own seat at the kitchen table.

“Good,” Harry said as he finished with his first problem. “He was starting to freak me out.”

“Why?” Tabitha asked as she started on her own homework. “I mean, sure it was creepy the way he was always staring at us, but I just figured he was here to make sure we didn’t let the neighbors know that we’re witches and warlocks.”

“That can’t be right,” Harry noted. “I mean, if he was here to see what we were doing, why did he leave a ghost of himself over the dog? No one else does that. There was something... weird about his magic.”

Tabitha considered that for a moment, “I hadn’t thought of that,” she admitted before looking over at Harry’s worksheet. “What did you get for the first one?”

“There you two are,” Samantha noted as she came into the kitchen. “Harry you have a visitor.”

Harry had been about to take a bite out of a cookie, but he paused in a bit of confusion. “A visitor? Who? No one said they were coming over.”

“Hello Harry,” Sirius said as he stepped into the Stevens’ kitchen. “My name is Sirius Black.”

“Hey,” Tabitha noted. “You’re the dog guy, only now you’re a guy dog.”

“The observant young lady is my daughter Tabitha, Mr. Black,” Samantha explained.

“Hello Mr. Black,” Harry said hesitantly, clearly wondering who this adult was and why the man wanted to speak with him. “Have we done something wrong? Is that why you’ve been watching us?”

“No, you’ve done nothing wrong,” Sirius said shaking his head. “I’ve just been looking for you for a very long time.”

“Looking for me? Why?”

Sirius sighed. This was not the way he imagined this meeting with his godson. For some reason he had expected the boy to recognize him and leap into his arms. “Harry, I’m your godfather.”

That explanation got him a pair of blank looks from the two children. “Mr. Black, we don’t really use the whole concept of godparents in our family,” Samantha pointed out. “You had best explain what you mean.”

Sirius nodded and tried to think of the best way to explain himself. “James Potter was my best friend in the world, and he married a wonderful woman, Lily Evans. After a while, James and Lily had a son. You.”

Harry nodded. “Grandma Clara has told me about how she found the bad guy trying to hurt me and she messed him up real good. That’s how I got here.”

Sirius paused, wondering at the power of this Clara woman to have dealt with Voldemort so casually. “Your Mum and Dad asked me to look after you if anything happened to them; they named me your Godfather. I was the third person to hold you after you were born, after your Mum and Dad. I lifted you up, looked into your eyes and promised you that I would do whatever I had to do to make sure you were safe. And then you peed on me.”

Tabitha started giggling, while Harry blushed. “Sorry,” he murmured, his eyes down.

“Don’t be,” Sirius laughed. “We had a deal, you and me. I was going to protect you, and you were going to keep me from getting a big head. Then that ‘bad guy’ your grandmum told you about attacked your family one Halloween night. James and Lily were killed and you disappeared. No one could find any trace of you, so I went hunting for the person who betrayed your family to the evil wizard, thinking he had you. I got into a bit of trouble over that, but believe me; I never stopped looking for you.”

“So, what does all of this mean Mr. Black?” Harry asked quietly. “Are you taking me away?”

“Merlin! No!” Sirius exclaimed. “I can’t even imagine what your mother might do to me if I tried, or what Lily would do to me once your mum was done with me and I was on the other side. All I want is a chance to be part of your life.”

Harry nodded and looked up smiling. “That sounds ok, if it’s ok with Mom and Dad.”

“Of course it’s ok Harry,” Samantha assured the boy. “We would like nothing more than for you to know of your birth family.”

“Cool,” Tabitha grinned. “We’ve got a new uncle. That means more presents for birthdays and Christmas!”

“Tabitha!” Samantha scolded.

“Mr. Black?” Harry asked.

“Sirius Harry, call me Sirius. When I hear ‘Mr. Black’ I feel like I’m back in school about to get a well-earned detention.”

“Sirius…” Harry said, as if trying out the name for the first time. “I don’t remember anything other than living here, but I remember sort of stories that Tabitha doesn’t know. The stories all have a big deer, a wolf, a rat and a big dog in them. The big dog I remember looks a whole lot like your dog form. Does that make any sense?”

“Hey,” Remus protested. “That was an excellent cake.”

“It was,” Sam admitted, “and that’s part of the problem. That ‘Honeydukes’ bakery you use makes the most delicious chocolate cake I’ve ever tasted and somehow manages to get twelve pounds of sugar into a two pound cake. All twelve of those kids were literally bouncing off the walls in a sugar rush. I actually felt sorry for the ponies.”

“I never had ponies at my birthday parties,” Sirius pouted. “My dear mother always had snakes at all of our birthday parties, to see if any of us could talk to them.”

“For the love of god why?” Darren asked.

“The ability to speak to snakes is considered by some to be the sign of a powerful dark magic user,” Remus supplied. “She was probably hoping Sirius was an up and coming Dark Lord.”

“You didn’t miss out on much Sirius,” Samantha said as she took her seat on the sofa. “Snakes almost never have anything interesting to say. Mostly they complain about the weather and how far away everything is. Occasionally you’ll find a real orator who complains about how unfair it is that they don’t have any way to manipulate the world around them that doesn’t involve putting things that taste bad in their mouths, but for the most part, blah blah blah.”

Remus and Sirius just stared at Sam for a few moments. “Sometimes, it’s so easy to forget you aren’t what we would consider a ‘normal’ witch Samantha,” Remus noted. “And then you say things like that that point out just how much more powerful you are.”

Before Samantha could respond, there was a soft musical chime and next to her on the sofa was suddenly a woman who could have been her twin with dark raven hair. “Sorry, I’m late,” the newcomer said, her arms laden with brightly wrapped gifts. “Today’s other party ran long. Where is the birthday boy?”

“Hello Serena,” Samantha sighed. “Harry is in bed, it’s almost 10 o’clock.”

“Oh, poo!” the beautiful woman pouted. “I wanted the kiddies to have a chance to see their favorite Auntie.” It was then she spotted Sirius and Remus. “Well, hello there,” she said with a predatory gleam in her eyes before turning back to Sam. “How do you do it Cuz? First Darren, then that delightful Cottontop, and now these tasty little morsels? Oh, my,” Serena gasped before shooting Samantha an evil grin. “They’re wand users, you naughty girl.”

“I’m right here, Serena,” Darren pointed out.

“Of course you are, Darren,” she said shoving the gifts in her arms onto Samantha’s lap and rising to her feet. “Take care of those for me won’t you Cuz? I need to meet your guests.”

“Remus, Sirius, this is Serena,” Samantha sighed while trying to balance the collection of giftwrapped packages. “My cousin.”

“Oh, don’t get up,” the raven-haired woman said as she slid onto Sirius’ lap and combed the

Deluded Musings
FanficAuthors.net

Harry Potter and the Elder Sect

Chapter Three - Negotiations

March 1 1991

“Damn it Moony,” Sirius whined, his wand in a constant blur of motion as he cast every healing charm he knew, “You can’t do this to me.”

“If it’s my time,” the Werewolf whispered, “it’s my time. No regrets Padfoot, I’ve had a good run.”

“Bullshit!” the dog animagus opined. “You owe me two galleons from when I paid for dinner last week. You aren’t stiffing me!” Sirius’ heart broke when his oldest friend slipped into unconsciousness.

Serena popped into being next to Sirius. “You were supposed to meet me for breakfast Lover,” she said wrapping herself around him. “Isn’t it a bit late to be playing hard to... what happened?”

“Remus is hurt, badly,” Sirius answered distractedly as he tried again to close Remus’ wounds.

“Well, get him to one of your healers,” Serena suggested, moving to the other side of the bed to take Remus’ hand.

“He’s too weak to move,” Sirius said, tears in his eyes. “It wouldn’t matter anyway, his wounds are cursed, and they won’t close.”

“Oh, hell, you Wand Users,” Serena said before standing upright and looking toward the ceiling. “Calling Dr. Bombay! Calling Dr. Bombay, Emergency! Come right away!”

Sirius paused from what he was doing to stare at his girlfriend as if she’d gone mad, until two people suddenly appeared in the center of the room. The man was dressed in a Muggle top hat and tails, while the woman was in a shimmering blue gown that hugged every curve of her extraordinarily female body. Atop her auburn hair was a nurse’s cap.

“We have tickets to the Opera, so let’s get to this, shall we?” the man asked as he doffed his hat depositing a pair of white gloves into it before handing the hat to his nurse and producing a black doctor’s bag from nowhere. “Where is my patient?”

Serena gestured toward the stricken man on the bed, before moving out of the way to stand next to the nurse.

“Cursed wounds? I haven’t seen those since Medical School,” Bombay said after he waved a small silver instrument over Remus and somehow read its output.

“Can you help him?” Sirius asked hopefully.

“Can I help him? Can I help him?” Bombay asked incredulously. “I’ll have you know sir, I am Hubert Bombay, Physician, Healer, cum Laude graduate of the University of Wagadou, back when that still meant something! And you ask can I help him?”

“Can you?” Sirius asked again.

“Of course I can old boy,” the Doctor answered, digging into his black bag for a moment and producing a small orange pill. “This will have him right as rain in a jiff.”

Bombay leaned down and placed the pill between unconscious Remus Lupin’s lips, and then he stepped back from the bed and pulled a pocket watch from his waistcoat. “Wait for it... Three, two, one.”

As if on cue, Remus arched his back and light issued from every orifice and from each of his bloody wounds.

---===oooOOOooo===---

“Serena,” the nurse said as she watched the doctor work from across the room. “Which one is your new mortal beau? Or is it both of them?”

“Pull in your claws, Candice;” Serena sniffed. “I hardly ever do that anymore. The cutie with the beard has been mine for the last few years.”

“Hmm. Tasty,” Candi opined. “What about the other one? Once you get past the blood and scars, he’s awfully cute in a rumpled sort of way. Is he seeing anyone?”

“Remus? Free and single,” Serena nodded. “He’s something of a man of mystery too. He has some big secret that neither he nor Sirius will talk about, but this isn’t the first time he’s been hurt, just the worst.”

“Hmm.”

“Am I detecting trouble in paradise?” Serena asked, getting her own catty dig in as the room flooded with the light of Lupin’s healing. “I thought you and Hubert were together?”

“I caught him ‘interviewing’ a new nurse last month,” Candi explained. “He’s never been one to settle down for long... and of course, neither am I.” She paused as the light died and she got a good look at the stricken man for the first time. “Ooh. Cleaned up, he’s even cuter. Yum, yum, get me some.”

---===oooOOOooo===---

Remus woke to find Sirius hovering over him. He had felt himself dying, then oblivion, and then... he felt great. What the hell had happened? “Wha?” he began.

“Lay still young man,” a stranger in Muggle eveningwear said, while examining a silver

implement of some kind. “Odd, your wounds seem to have been self-inflicted, as was the curse laid into them, and you have a reaction to silver...” The stranger’s eyes went wide for a moment as he turned to a large black leather bag and dug around for a moment before emerging with a large brass tuning fork. “One moment please,” He struck the fork on the headboard of Remus’ bed, then grasping the newly healed man’s left foot, he raised the leg to almost vertical and placed the shaft of the vibrating fork into the back of Remus’ knee.

“Turn your head and stick out your tongue please,” The Doctor commanded. After a moment of indecision, Remus complied.

“Good God man,” the Doctor said as he released Remus’s leg and put the fork back into his bag. “Are you aware that you have partially realized lycanthropy? I haven’t seen a case like this for 83 years.”

“Fully realized,” Remus corrected. “Since I was six.”

“Preposterous, you are no more a fully realized lycanthrope that I am. If you were, you would not have done yourself such damage. Sit up.”

Remus complied with the instructions. Whoever this man was, he was obviously one hell of a healer. The werewolf could not remember ever feeling so... well. Certainly not since Greyback had turned him. He watched as the healer removed his jacket and hung it on... nothing. It just hung suspended in midair.

That was when the realization hit him. This fellow must be one of Sam’s people.

Now the healer was behind him, with both arms under Remus’, his hands locked behind the werewolf’s neck in a full nelson hold. “Both feet flat on the floor if you will,” the healer said as he twisted Remus’ torso to the left, and then pushed forward until his left shoulder touched his right knee. “Very good. My other patients could take lessons from you in following directions. Let us see if you can keep it up. Grab each earlobe with the opposite hand.”

That did not make much sense, but he was still feeling good so Remus complied. “Very good,” the healer said by his right ear. “Now, take a deep breath and hold it.”

As soon as Remus had taken that deep breath, the healer twisted Lupin’s torso to the right violently.

Remus screamed.

----===oooOOOooo===----

Serena tried to ignore the man’s screams by telling herself that Dr. Bombay was the best in the world, which was why the family used him exclusively. Still, in the almost three years she had been dating Sirius, she had come to quite like the quiet studious Remus Lupin. Hearing his pain was heart wrenching to say the least.

Finally, the screaming stopped and Remus was on his hands and knees on the floor. “What the hell was that for?” he rasped.

“Your magical core was slightly twisted by the early stages of your condition, old boy. I had to straighten it so that you could access the fullness of your gift.” Bombay said in his normal jovial tone.

“My gift?”

“Indeed,” Bombay agreed, pulling yet another tool from his bag. “Time for you to change. And this time, do try and do it right, would you?”

“Change?” Remus thundered, his mild mannered personality submerged by the pain he had so recently endured. “I can’t change, not without the moon, and I wouldn’t change around people.”

“The moon has nothing to do with it old boy,” the doctor said dismissively, “that is pure superstition. You need to change to keep your core from twisting again. Concentrate on the wolf and do it.”

“I can’t!” Remus declared.

“I was hoping it wouldn’t come to this,” Bombay sighed, as he jabbed the golden object into Remus’ shoulder. Again the man screamed.

“The pain stops when you change,” Bombay said.

“What the hell are you doing?” Sirius moved to stop this newest attack on his friend, only to find himself unable to move and standing next to his girlfriend.

“Let the Doctor do his job Lover,” Serena whispered, “He knows what he’s doing.”

Before their eyes, Remus changed. Not to the wolf form that Sirius was familiar with, but to something else. Easily seven foot tall, broad shouldered, and covered with a deep auburn fur, his head changed, but still more human than the wolf, he raised his eyes to the ceiling and his screams became a howl.

Bombay withdrew his device while showing no concern about his patient’s new form. “Feeling better?”

Serena saw Candice suddenly become weak in the legs, having to grab hold of a chair to keep from falling to the floor. The young witch’s eyes were dilated and her stare unblinking as she licked her lips as if she was a starving woman who had just spotted her next meal.

Serena had to smile. Candi was a bit of a furry? Who knew?

---===oooOOOooo===---

Remus stared at his hands. He had changed, but it was not the same. Then he realized he was thinking. There was no beast, it was him. He watched as the healer busied himself with putting away his instruments and then putting his jacket back on.

“A full recovery. Now that you know how to do the change, you have full charge of your gift old boy. No more baying at the moon for you... unless you’re into that sort of thing.”

“I’m... I’m still... me.” Remus rumbled, his voice very different in this form.

“Of course you are. When Bombay heals you, you stay healed. Now then, think about being human again.”

Remus closed his eyes for a moment, and then he opened them he was human. No pain, no stress, just moving from one form to another. “Thank you,” he whispered.

“No worries, you’ll get my bill, that will be thanks enough.” The man turned to his companion. “Ready to go Candice?”

The redhead crossed the room, removing her nurse’s cap as she did so, handing the cap to the Doctor when she got to his side. “Hubbie, I quit.”

“Candice?” the Doctor asked.

“I feel the need to go into private nursing,” she said, as she moved next to Remus, causing his tattered clothing to change to sapphire blue lounging pajamas and levitating him back to his bed, that was suddenly covered in silk sheets.

Bombay shook his head and sighed. “I lose more nurses this way.” And he was gone.

----==oooOOOooo==----

July 31 1991

“Harry,” the blonde woman said as she led the boy into the room, gesturing for her son to sit down at the table across from the Headmaster. “This is Professor Dumbledore, he’s the Headmaster of Hogwarts School for Wizardry and Witchcraft.”

Albus watched as Harry Potter... no, Harry Stevens he corrected himself, carefully settled himself in the chair and placed his the strangely oversized leather glove and an equally oversized silver metal beater’s bat on the floor next to his chair. Harry was dressed in a blue tee shirt and denim shorts, with an odd cap atop his head. It was obvious that the boy did not want to embarrass his mother in front of company. “Hello sir.” The boy said, “It is nice to meet you, I’ve heard all about Hogwarts. It sounds like a great school.”

“Good afternoon Harry and a happy birthday to you. I’m sorry for interrupting your game.”

“That’s alright sir, the game was almost over anyway,” the boy responded with a shrug and a

smile.

“I’m surprised you’ve heard of Hogwarts,” Albus said quietly, trying to get a feel for the boy. “Did we impress your mother that much?”

Harry took on a confused expression for a moment, before looking toward his mother. “I didn’t know she had ever been there sir, I mostly know of your school from stories I’ve been told by my Godfather and Uncle Remus, and the tour Auntie Endora took us on last year.”

Dumbledore looked up in surprise, wondering about the ‘tour’ the boy claimed to have had. “I knew that Sirius was looking for you, but I was unaware that your mother had allowed him contact with you, or that Remus even knew where you were.”

“Sirius contacted me wanting to reconnect with Harry several years ago,” Samantha Stevens interjected. “And where Sirius goes, Remus is never far behind.”

“That was true, even when they were boys,” Dumbledore said with a smile.

“They are both lots of fun to hang out with,” Harry said. “Almost family, but you do not want to go into the back yard at night and find Uncle Remus and his new girlfriend playing Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf.” The boy shuddered at the memory, “trust me on that one.”

“I see,” Dumbledore said when he clearly did not.

“They, Remus especially, have told me what classes you offer at Hogwarts,” Harry continued, “and in all honesty Professor, unfortunately, nothing of what your school teaches will help me in what I want to do when I grow up.”

“A Hogwarts education opens the door to an endless variety of occupations Harry,” Albus said gently. “What is it you would like to do?”

“I want to be an Astronaut, I want to go to Mars,” the boy said with a small smile that spoke of dreams, “to do that I need math and science, and a good grounding in English, US and World History and other general studies. From what Sirius and Remus have told me, a Hogwarts education doesn’t really teach any of those things.”

Dumbledore put aside his confusion at the boy’s stated goals and unfamiliar terms for the moment and tried another argument. “In my experience, the career goals of an 11 year old, no matter how impressive, have a tendency to change radically by the time he becomes an adult.”

“Oh, I know that Professor,” the boy nodded. “My sister laughs at me all the time about it, telling me if I want to go to Mars, I should just do it. But I want to do it the right way, and I don’t want to have to, you know, not talk about it.”

It was only his experience in politics that kept Albus from showing his amazement at the casual way the boy referred to ‘going to Mars’. It could not truly be possible to do such a thing... could it?

“I think I would like to get to know Hogwarts,” the boy said wistfully, “I’d really like to know where my birth parents came from... and see what has happened to the place Gran helped build after a thousand years... but to be away from my family for ten months of the year... I wouldn’t want to do that.”

“I see...” Dumbledore nodded, at something of a loss having never heard this reason when he had made home visits. In fact the usual response he had received had been enthusiastic acceptance. “Perhaps your family could be convinced to move to...”

“No, Professor,” Samantha Stevens said with a small grin. “That isn’t an option.”

“You accept day students?” Harry said perking up.

“Well, not normally,” Albus temporized. “Exceptions have been made in the past, but...”

“Great!” the boy enthused. “Then I can do both!”

“Do both?” Samantha asked suspiciously. “What do you mean?”

“Auntie Endora taught Tab and me temporal transfers last year. I can go to Hogwarts and then loop the day so that I can go to real school.”

Dumbledore found himself distracted momentarily from deciphering what a temporal transfer might be by the suggestion that Hogwarts might not be a ‘real’ school, and then started putting the words together.

“Time travel?” He gasped. Time travel in the hands of an eleven year old?

“Well, that would make for long weeks, but it could work, I suppose...” Samantha nodded. “As long as you keep up with your chores and your grades don’t start to slip. Your father and I will need to discuss it of course.”

“Time travel? You can’t serious be contemplating putting a time turner in the hands of a child.”

Samantha and Harry turned to look at the Headmaster.

“Time turner?” Harry asked.

“Is that some sort of time travel device?” Samantha asked. “No, Harry would do it normally. My mother made sure he knew the mechanics of the act. It isn’t hard, and as long as he doesn’t go outside his lifespan there shouldn’t be any significant issues, and attending your school shouldn’t require that.”

“But what about isolation? What protections would there be to prevent him from coming into contact with himself?” Albus asked desperately. “What if his time displaced self is seen?”

“Why shouldn’t I come into contact with myself?” Harry asked.

“You can’t change what has happened; you must not cause a paradox.”

“Professor,” Samantha said gently. “The act of time travel inherently causes changes. On a quantum level blocking a single sun beam is as important an event as killing your grandfather.”

“Why would I want to kill my grandfather?” Harry asked. “I’ve had myself over for sleep overs a couple of times already. Sometimes we plan an ambush on Tabitha and the later me knows if it’s going to work.”

Again, Dumbledore found himself astounded at the power levels these people were so casual about using. Still, if it would get the boy to Hogwarts so that Tom would not have a chance to win when he came back... There was nothing to do but accept what had fallen into his lap.

“So,” Albus said trying very hard to not think about the power level he was inviting into his school, “We can expect you at Hogwarts on September first?”

---===oooOOOooo===---

Harry, Tabitha and Adam entered the family room to find their parents waiting for them. Gran was there as well, along with Auntie Endora, Harry noted. Then both Uncle Maurice and Uncle Arthur popped into the room.

Oh oh . Harry thought. Uncle Maurice really did not like Uncle Arthur. It would take something really serious to get the pair of them into the same room. *Ok* , Harry told himself as he took in the expressions the adults’ faces. *Not a surprise party then* . Had his decision about Hogwarts made everyone angry? Then it struck him that he hadn’t yet mentioned his plans to Tab... how was she going to take it?

“Sit down kids,” Darrin instructed.

The three children took their seats. Tabitha openly curious as to what was going on, seven year old Adam not sure what was going on, but happy to be included, and Harry just wondering if he had made a mistake.

“Twelve years ago,” Uncle Maurice said his voice quiet, yet somehow still filling the room, “a young woman was looking for a job teaching at the Wand Users’ school in Britain. To get that job she made a false prophecy. That manufactured prophecy ended up focusing the attention of a criminal on our Harry.”

Tabitha and Adam looked to Harry in concern.

“Is that how Gran found me?”

“It is Harry,” Gran Clara said with a nod. “I felt my grandson pass in violence. I when to where he had died to investigate and I arrived to find you about to be attacked.”

“You came to us, and we were thrilled to have yet another member of our family among us,”

Uncle Maurice continued. “We learned of the false prophecy when Clara and your mother went to speak to the head of the Wand User’s school. The Wand Users believed the prophecy to be valid, both the man you met today, and the villain who attacked your birth family.”

Harry nodded. Dumbledore’s interest in him as a student suddenly made a little more sense.

“The villain?” Tabitha interrupted. “I thought Great Aunt Clara took care of him.”

“I did,” Clara admitted. “But I didn’t kill him. I separated his soul from his body.”

“The evil so and so has been living ever since possessing random animals and the occasional mortal silly enough to believe his promises of power and treasure,” Uncle Arthur explained. “If you want to call that living.”

“Once Clara and your mother heard of the Wand Users’ prophecy, they went to the Witches Council to consult with our Book of Prophecies.” Auntie Endora continued the story. “There they learned that the one the Wand Users had invested so much time and effort into was false, but their belief in that lie brought about a pair of true prophecies that the council holds.”

Harry felt a chill at that news while Tabitha and Adam both took his hand, one on each side. “What do they say?” he asked.

“The first says that you and the villain will end up facing each other in glorious battle, whatever that is,” Uncle Maurice explained. “And the other is a bit more obscure, but the gist of it is that you will defeat him no matter what he tries.”

Harry paused for a moment, considering what he had been told. “I don’t want to kill anyone.”

“Harry,” Uncle Maurice said quietly. “None of us want you to kill anyone. Prophecies are not written in stone, you know that, I’ve covered it in tutoring sessions in the past. The magic of the world will try to bring the prophesied events about, but we, at least, are not slaves to the magic.”

“We waited to tell you about the outstanding prophecies because we didn’t want to influence your decisions about learning about the Wand Users in your heritage,” his mother explained. “Now that you’ve made your decision to attend their school, you need to know.”

“Harry,” Darrin Stevens said, speaking for the first time in this gathering. “I don’t know anything about these prophecies, or what is real or important in these situations. I do know that you are Harry Stevens. The Stevens family doesn’t go looking for fights, but if someone else starts something, we finish it. Your mother and I have discussed your idea about going to both schools, and frankly it sounds crazy to me, but if it’s what you want to do, I support you. And if, while you’re over there this evil magician comes after you, don’t give him a chance to hurt you. Use what you’ve been taught and take him down, hard.”

---===oooOOOooo===---

The discussion went on for over two hours before the children were dismissed so that the adults

could continue to argue over minor points. Adam made his way to the television room upstairs to catch a favorite show, while Tabitha followed Harry into his room.

She closed the door behind her, and without warning, slugged Harry in the arm as hard as she could.

“Ow!” Harry said backing away rubbing his left arm. “What the heck?”

“You asshole!” she spat. “You decided you were going to school in England just like that? You didn’t even talk to me about leaving us?”

“Hogwarts is in Scotland,” Harry corrected her. “And I’m not leaving anyone. I’m going to loop the days and stay here for 6th grade with you. That way I can do both.”

Tabitha’s eyes narrowed. “You’re going to get older than me.”

“No I’m not, that’s not the way it works and you know it,” Harry pointed out. “Even if I do manage to get a bit older, I’ll still look like a kid, you know that. Mom said that she was almost two hundred before people thought she was old enough to drink.”

“Hmm.” Tabitha said suspiciously.

“I just want to know where I came from. When we visited Hogwarts being built last year we both had fun, and I want to see what the school is like now that it’s built. It will be fun to meet the hat again, and hey, I might learn something.”

“I’ll be visiting, don’t think I won’t.”

“Tab, I’d be hurt if you didn’t. Bring Adam, we’ll have fun.”

---===oooOOOooo===---

August 22 1991

“I’m telling you Sirius,” Remus Lupin said as he slumped into his chair, a cup of coffee grasped in his hand. “She’s trying to kill me. All she wants is sex, sex, sex. No relationship, no commitment, no arrangements. Just sex.”

Black stirred uncomfortably in his chair. He hated this sort of conversation. The only thing he hated more than being forced to talk about his feelings was listening to another man talking about HIS feelings. “This sounds like a conversation you should be having with Candice, Moony,” he ventured. “I mean, why are you telling me?”

“Why am I telling you?” Lupin responded with a small grin. “Hell Sirius, I’m telling **EVERYBODY**.”

Sirius regarded his friend with a gimlet eye. “I hate you. Here I thought you were going all girly

with feelings and you were bragging about your sex life.”

“Forgive me, Sirius,” Lupin laughed. “This is just the longest relationship I’ve ever had. I never even guessed that there were people out there with a werewolf kink.”

“There are people with a kink for everything,” Sirius said with a dismissive wave of his hand.

“I guess so,” Remus laughed. “When is Harry supposed to be here?”

“Any minute now,” Sirius answered before sighing. “We’re taking our boy out to buy his school supplies. I wish James and Lily could have seen this.”

“Yeah,” Remus agreed, feeling the mood of the room start to sink into grief. “Still, sex, sex, sex.”

“Do you have to keep going on about your sex life?”

“If I’d had your luck with the ladies, probably not,” Remus grinned. Bad mood broken, mission accomplished. “But this is all still new to me.”

“Well, don’t strain yourself,” Sirius offered condescendingly.

“Oh, it’s no strain. Seven, eight times a night seems to keep her happy.”

Sirius blinked. “Seven or eight times *a night*?”

“Well, yeah,” Remus nodded. “But I’ve been tired recently; she keeps me up all night after all.”

“Every night?”

“Look,” Remus protested, “I know I’m not as experienced as you are Padfoot, but I do the best that I can.”

“Remus,” Black sighed, “I’m not trying to insult you. You’re serious? Seven times a night?”

“More if I’m rested,” Remus said defensively.

“Is this some kind of weird Werewolf stamina thing?” Sirius asked.

“Werewolf stamina?” Remus repeated, clearly confused.

Sirius rolled up the left sleeve of his robes and extended his arm toward his friend. “Bite me? Please?”

“What?”

“Come on, just a quick bite... Not too hard now.” Sirius made a show of looking away.

“Sirius!” Remus exclaimed, “I’m not going to bite you!”

“Oh come on!” Sirius demanded. “Just a little one. Share the wealth!”

“Sirius, I’m not even infectious anymore!”

“Damn it Moony! Bite me!”

“You two are so weird.”

Sirius and Remus froze where they were to find Tabitha and Harry standing in the doorway looking more than slightly disturbed by what they had witnessed.

“Weird about covers it Tab,” Harry agreed. “I don’t know what is going on here, or why Sirius wants to be bitten, and I’m pretty sure I don’t want to know.”

“Ah, Harry, Tabitha...” Remus began.

“We were just goofing around,” Sirius protested, “Not crazy, just having a laugh.”

“Yeah, sure,” Harry agreed

“So weird,” Tabitha said shaking her head.

---===**oooOOOooo**===---

Remus looked up from the list, “Well that’s about everything.”

“Just your wand left to get...” Sirius noted while staring uneasily at the storefront.

“Ok, what’s going on?” Harry asked.

“What?” Sirius asked innocently.

“Every other shop we’ve been to, you both have just rushed in, telling us stories about your first visits a thousand years ago, but now...” Tabitha noted. “It’s pretty obvious that you don’t want to go in there.”

“Hardly a thousand years Tabitha...” Remus huffed, before taking on an embarrassed expression. “That obvious is it?”

“It’s not that we’re in trouble with Ollivander or anything, it’s just that he... He...” Sirius said grasping for the words.

“He creeps us out,” Remus admitted. “He did when we got our wands the first time, and both times I’ve had to speak with him since, he just keeps doing it.”

Harry just stood and looked between the pair and decided that they were being honest with him or if this was one of their jokes. “Would you feel better if Tab and I went in alone?”

“Oh, that would be great!” Sirius enthused.

“We’ll order lunch while you’re in there.” Remus agreed.

“Ok,” Harry sighed.

“Hey Remus!” Tabitha called.

“Yes Tabitha?”

“No biting!”

---===oooOOOooo===---

An old man was standing before them, his wide, pale eyes shining like moons through the gloom of the shop.

“Hi there,” Harry said regarding the man with interest, wondering just what the man did to so freak out a pair of jokers like Sirius and Remus. Most of the shop keepers in this Diagon Alley seemed to be unique characters. Harry could hardly wait to see what this one did.

“Ah yes,” said the man. “Yes, yes. I thought I’d be seeing you soon. Harry Potter.” It wasn’t a question. “You have your mother’s eyes. It seems only yesterday she was in here herself, buying her first wand. Ten and a quarter inches long, swishy, made of willow. Nice wand for charm work.”

The old man, Mr. Ollivander moved closer to Harry. Harry started wishing the old guy would blink. Remus was right, this guy was creepy, those silvery eyes...

“Your father, on the other hand, favored a mahogany wand. Eleven inches. Pliable. A little more power and excellent for transfiguration. Well, I say your father favored it ... it’s really the wand that chooses the wizard, of course.”

My name is Harry Stevens Sir,” Harry said quietly. “And it has been since I can remember. While I appreciate stories of my birth parents, I don’t really think of them as my mother and father.”

Ollivander had come so close that he and Harry were almost nose to nose. Harry could see himself reflected in those misty eyes. “I see, a healthy attitude Mr. Stevens, I approve.

The old man touched Harry’s forehead with a long, white finger, tracing what seemed to be a Zee shape on the unblemished skin. “I’m not sure why, but for some reason I expected to find a scar on your forehead Mr. Stevens. I’m sorry to say I sold the wand that I thought to have done it,” he said softly. “Thirteen-and-a-half inches. Yew. Powerful wand, very powerful, and in the wrong hands... well, if I’d known what that wand was going out into the world to do...”

He shook his head and then, to Harry’s relief, spotted Tabitha.

“My word...” his silver eyes going wide and then he glanced back and forth between Harry and his sister. “You don’t need a wand” He said in an almost accusing tone.

“Not as such, no,” Harry admitted. “But having one is required by the school.”

The old man swallowed noisily. “I’ve never had Elders in my shop.”

“There wouldn’t really be much point of that would there sir?” Tabitha asked. “Harry is special; he has both kinds of magic.”

“Hmmm,” Ollivander said, clearly apprehensive. “I find myself concerned. A wand is a delicate instrument...”

“Well sir,” Harry interjected, more than a little please that the tables had been turned and the old man was now the one creeped out. “As you said, ‘it’s really the wand that chooses the wizard,’.”

Ollivander blinked, and then nodded. “Well said Mr. Stevens.” He pulled a long tape measure with silver markings out of his pocket. “Which is your wand arm?”

“Well, I’m right-handed,” said Harry.

“But he can switch hit,” Tabitha said helpfully.

“Indeed?” Ollivander said, clearly having no idea what being able to ‘switch hit’ meant. “Hold out your arm... your right arm. That’s it.” The old man set his charmed tape measure loose on Harry, and it began moving about his body on its own, measuring Harry from shoulder to finger, then wrist to elbow, shoulder to floor, knee to armpit and round his head. As Harry was measured, Ollivander explained, “Every Ollivander wand has a core of a powerful magical substance, Mr. Stevens. We use unicorn hairs, phoenix tail feathers, and the heartstrings of dragons. No two Ollivander wands are the same, just as no two unicorns, dragons, or phoenixes are quite the same. And of course, you will never get such good results with another wizard’s wand.”

“That will do,” Ollivander said, causing the tape measure to crumple to the floor. “Right then, Mr. Stevens. Try this one. Beechwood and dragon heartstring. Nine inches. Nice and flexible. just take it and give it a wave.”

Harry took the wand and waved it around a bit. The wand seemed to buck in his hand, and issued forth a golden shaft of energy that cut through the ceiling of the shop, leaving a jagged slash whose edges still glowed in the odd golden color. The shaft of energy died out instantly when Ollivander snatched the wand out of his hand.

“Oh... My.” Ollivander gasped.

“Was it supposed to do that?” Tabitha asked innocently while poking at the still glowing residue with a conjured stick. “That was kind of like a light sabre.”

“Dear me, young lady, absolutely not,” the old man seemed to steel himself for that might come

next and offered Harry another wand. "Maple and phoenix feather. Seven inches. Quite whippy. Try..."

Harry lifted this new wand, and unbidden a flood of crimson energy issued forth, puddling at his feet before dissolving the floor and disappearing in a general downward direction. This wand too, was snatched back by Mr. Ollivander.

"No, no, no," He said desperately, "here, ebony and unicorn hair, eight and a half inches, springy. Go on, go on, try it out."

Harry tried. This wand spurt out three green sparks, then smoke issued from the tip, and a burning smell filled the shop.

Ollivander gingerly took the wand from Harry's hand and examined it closely. "The core is burned out. I've never heard of such a thing..." Mr. Ollivander offered another wand, and another, and another. The pile of tried wands was mounting higher and higher on the counter top, and the destruction of the old man's shop was approaching becoming catastrophic. But the more wands Ollivander pulled from the shelves, the more concerned he seemed to become.

"No one has ever..." Ollivander swallowed nosily. Tricky customer, eh? Not to worry, I've never failed to the perfect match for one of my customers. The proper wand is here...somewhere. I wonder, now... yes, why not... an unusual combination. Holly and phoenix feather, eleven inches, nice and supple."

Harry took the wand and he felt a sudden warmth in his fingers. He raised the wand above his head, brought it swishing down through the dusty air and a stream of blinding white energy shot from the wand and sliced through the shop's ceiling and walls causing the severed section of the building to slide into the street.

"Smooth move, Ex-lax" Tabitha teased her brother. "Maybe the wand chooses the wizard, but none of them seem to particularly like the warlock."

Ollivander cried, "Oh, bloody hell!" as he snatched the wand back from Harry and carefully returned it to its box. "Mr. Stevens, this is your best match, you felt it did you not?"

"Yes sir," Harry said truthfully. "It felt like it was part of me."

"Your power level is far too high to actually use this wand. You would wreck untold destruction before you learned to use it. You need to own a wand to attend Hogwarts... but..."

"Sorry," Harry said as he put the shop back together with a gesture.

Ollivander's eyes widened as he yet again witnessed the boy's power, this time in a controlled manner. The man went behind his counter and rummaged around for a moment before returning with yet another wand.

"This is a pine dowel I use to teach the basics of wand construction to my apprentices," the old

man explained. "It has no magical properties at all, and as such should be safe in your hand. Making it appear to be your wand should be trivial for someone of your abilities. I will sell you both the wand that matched you and this dowel for seven galleons. This will allow you to have the wand that Hogwarts requires and one that you can use without bringing about Armageddon."

Harry grinned and nodded. "Sounds fair to me I guess."

---===oooOOOooo===---

September 1 1991

"Now that is one beautiful train," Darrin said with awe in his voice. "I didn't know any of these beauties were still in service."

Tabitha shook her head at the cluelessness of adults in general. "It's just a train dad, you ride them every day."

"Give your father a break Tabitha," Samantha admonished. "Harry, you're looking very nice in your robes."

"Looks like a dress," Adam suggested, repeating the jab that Tabitha had been using on Harry for the last two weeks.

"Why did I ever think this was a good idea?" Harry asked looking to the sky.

"The price of family Harry," Darrin laughed. "They're always embarrassing. So, you've got your things?"

"Despite people stealing my stuff, yes," Harry frowned as he felt his pockets for his dowel wand. Tabitha knew that she had been particularly vicious about the wands, and had taken to following Harry around with a conjured stick topped with a sparkling five pointed star. 'Bibbity Bobbity Boo!' became the term used to bug Harry from both his brother and sister. As much as Adam idolized his big brother, she was fairly proud of that she had been able to corrupt him like that.

"Good. I guess we'll see you tonight."

"Bye Dad." Harry said.

"Good luck sweetheart," Samantha said as she fused with Harry's hair. "Remember, I know the temptation will be huge, but try not to show off. You're going to be around young impressionable children, you demonstrating just how limited they are would not earn you any friends."

"I know Mom. See you tonight for dinner."

"Bye Harry," Adam chirped. "See if you can get me some Wandie toys ok?"

"I'll see what I can do squirt."

Tabitha stepped up in front of her brother. “Don’t forget who you are dum dum. I won’t be there to keep people from walking all over you.”

“Tab, you’re a pain. We’ll see each other tonight; you won’t even have time to miss me.”

“Hmm.” She said. “If I have to come rescue you, I’ll never let you live it down.”

“Love you too Tab.”

---===**oooOOOooo**===---

The hat settled down over his eyes and Harry waited.

“Welcome back to Hogwarts, young Master Harry.”

“Hi Hat,” Harry responded. “How have you been?”

“Quite well thank you,” the hat responded. “So it’s only been a year since your visit from your point of view?”

“Yeah, we wanted to come back, but Auntie Endora said that she didn’t like looping into times she had multiple visits to. Something about being embarrassed by some of the outfits she wore.”

“So, you intend to attend Hogwarts and your Muggle school at the same time?” the Hat asked.

“Yeah,” Harry admitted. “I got in the advanced math class; we’re going to learn Algebra this year.”

“A subject I know nothing about, so no coming to me for help with your homework young Master,” the hat laughed. “Time to sort you. Do you have a preference between the houses of your Grandparents?”

“No,” Harry said with a shake of his head. “I don’t want any special treatment. Sort me like you would anyone else.”

“And so I shall, young Master,” the hat said. “An excellent mind, driven to learn... Ravenclaw would suit you. And so ambitious... Salazar’s house would be a good home for you; you might even reintroduce the concept of honest ambition to the House of Snakes.” The hat paused before continuing. “Helga’s house would be like home, and Godrick’s would learn to follow your example...”

Again, the hat paused before continuing. “Despite your power, you are driven in your desire to prove yourself beyond your magic. I see your Muggle father in that. He is a good man; you would do well to emulate his example. It is your ambition that will make you what you will be young Master Harry.”

Then, speaking aloud for the first time since being placed upon Harry’s head the hat shouted. “It

had better be... Slytherin!”

---===oooOOOooo===---

Severus Snape settled into his chair with three fingers of firewhiskey.

A Potter in Slytherin? How did this happen? And what was he going to do about it? With a wave of his wand he activated the mirror in his quarters that allowed him to observe the going ons in his house’s common room. The upper forms had already assembled for the traditional hazing of new students, while the fifth year prefects were busy ensuring the first years would be horribly lost once they set foot outside their dormitories by leading them there by a most circuitous route.

Tradition. He smiled to himself. Then he remembered what happened to halfbloods like the Potter boy. What was he going to do? What would the Potter boy do if provoked?

The first years, looking small, confused and frightened were finally led into the common room. Ten of them, four witches, five wizards... and Potter.

---===oooOOOooo===---

The common room was dark, far more so than normal. The Seventh year prefects stood on either side of the hearth waiting, cloaked, their features hidden in the darkness of their hoods. They waited until the firsties were herded into the room and began.

“More than a thousand years ago, the four most powerful witches and wizards in the world came together, each with their own view of the future. Hufflepuff the weak came seeking to cultivate others of her ilk, to offer them a semblance of structure. Ravenclaw the pretentious came to claim that everything could be learned from books. Gryffindor the arrogant came simply because it was in front of him. And the greatest of them all, Slytherin the bold came to lead us all into the future,” the female prefect said.

“The others were jealous of Slytherin and his vision, and together they did everything they could to marginalize him and his destiny. Ultimately they drove him out, and stated telling the lies that he left after being defeated.” The male prefect concluded.

“We live with that lie every day.” The female Prefect took up the spiel. “The others in this school fear and suspect us at every turn, both students and staff. Simply because you were sorted into Slytherin house you are now considered to be evil by the short sighted fools we share this castle with. Our allegiance to one another is the only protection we have against the prejudices and ignorance of the lessor houses.”

“So, now, for the first time, look upon our founder,” the young woman said, pulling opened the drapes over the hearth to reveal an animated portrait of Salazar Slytherin.

The man in the portrait was ancient, dressed in green and silver robes, his bald head reflecting some out of frame light source, sitting in some sort of ornate chair, his long thin finger steepled

before his mouth, unmoving, but the portrait's eyes reflected intelligence and indeed life.

“Prepare to present yourself to the Greatest of the Founders, but before you do, you will be sorted by your blood status. Purebloods to the left side of the room, full and half-bloods to the right.” The cloaked woman said while waiting expectantly.

There was a short pause while students separated themselves along the lines defined by the prefects, with two of the young girls forlornly making their way to the side of the room noticeably more sparsely furnished their heads hanging in shame, while the rest of the youngsters made their way to the opulent side.

Except one.

“Is there a problem Mr. ...?”

“Stevens,” Harry said having not moved. “I’m not real clear on what pure, full and half-blood means, or why we would be segregated by that status.”

“Yank? Why are you here?”

“I was offered a place here, and accepted, just like everyone else I would suspect. What is all this blood stuff?” Harry asked patiently.

“If your great grandparents are all magical, then you’re a pureblood.”

“Ah, ok. Nope, not a pureblood then,” Harry paused while he considered if he should claim his biological heritage or that of his family. Family, he decided “What are you if your mother is a witch and your father is a normal mortal?”

“A mudblood!” the male prefect hissed, stepping forward menacingly.

“Mudblood? Seriously?” Harry grinned showing no fear.

The female prefect laid a hand on the shoulder of her counterpart. “No, it is for the founder to decide. Step forward Mudblood Stevens, step forward and be judged by the greatest of the founders.”

“Ok,” Harry said with a shrug.

“Wait!” the blond kid with the perfectly styled hair shouted. “I am Draco Malfoy, and no Malfoy ever follows a Mudblood.”

The two prefects exchanged a look until the female shrugged. “Fine Malfoy, present yourself to the founder of our house.”

Harry watched as the blond bigot moved to the indicated place in front of the portrait. Obviously prepared, the boy bowed at the waist. “Greetings great Slytherin. I am Draco, son of Lucius and

Narcissa, grandson of Abraxus and Evelyn on my father's side, and Cygnus and Druella on my mother's. I present myself, Pureblood and proud for your evaluation."

The portrait made no indication that it had heard the blond's presentation.

"I present myself, Pureblood and proud for your evaluation."

"Calm down, Malfoy," the male Prefect said quietly. "The founder speaks perhaps once a generation."

"He can't ignore me!" The blond shrieked, "I am the heir to House Malfoy!"

"Sit down, you idiot," the Prefect hissed. "Now Mudblood, you've been shown the proper forms, do you think you can emulate the example offered by House Malfoy?"

"I should have taken notes," Harry said with a grin, as he went to the portrait. "Greetings great Slytherin, I am Harry, son of Darrin and Samantha, grandson of Adam and Phyllis on my father's side and Maurice and Endora on my Mother's. I present myself, evidently with muddy blood and great shame for your evaluation."

"Hello Harry," the old man in the painting said with a smile.

"Hi Uncle Sal, it's good to see you again."

"How is your grandmother? Still among the living?"

"She is, I saw her just yesterday," Harry grinned. "You've learned modern English?"

"I may not speak to the current crop of students, mostly because they quit listening to me centuries ago, but I still listen to them. I spend more time in this frame than any of my others. There is something about the conversations of the young that keep me interested."

"Did I ever visit the castle again?"

"Sadly, no. So you've been sorted into my house? I can't wait to tell Godrick and Helga, They will be so jealous."

The occupants of the Slytherin common room stood staring at Slytherin's portrait. "Enough of this foolishness," the portrait continued. "If one is sorted into my house, he or she is a Slytherin, regardless of who the parents are."

Every student of the upper forms stood in silence, shocked that the portrait, which hadn't spoken in living memory was now speaking. Speaking and defending a mudblood? Speaking of a mudblood as... family?

"I guess I'd best let you get on with the evaluations Uncle Sal, we can talk later."

With that the boy moved to sit with the two girls separated from the others by blood status. “Hi there,” he said as he sat between them. “I’m Harry.”

“Millie,” the larger of the two said.

“Tracey,” the shorter added. “How did you do that?”

“Do what?” Harry asked.

---===oooOOOooo===---

When the portrait started to speak, Severus Snape spilled his drink into his lap.

The portrait of the founder was speaking, AND disclaiming blood status? Severus had never been so glad that he had decided early in his stint as Head of Slytherin House to allow the Seventh year Prefects to run the induction ceremony. He did not know how he might have reacted to the way the universe had just changed.

Potter. A Potter sorted into Slytherin had caused this... somehow.

With a shaking hand Snape refilled his drink. He needed to decide how he felt about this.

---===oooOOOooo===---

September 12 1991

Madam Hooch draped her arm around a whimpering Neville Longbottom and turned to face the class.

“None of you is to move while I take this boy to the hospital wing!” She said, her eyes flashing. “You leave those brooms where they are or you’ll be out of Hogwarts before you can say ‘Quidditch.’ Come on, dear.”

Longbottom, his face tear-streaked, clutching his wrist, limped off with Madam Hooch.

As soon as Hooch and Longbottom entered the castle Malfoy burst into laughter.

“Did you see his face, the great lump?”

Harry frowned when several of his fellow Slytherins started laughing.

“Shut up, Malfoy,” snapped the Gryffindor Patil. Harry tried to remember her name... Parvati? Something like that.

“Ooh, sticking up for Longbottom?” Pansy teased, “Never thought *you’d* like fat little crybabies, Parvati.”

“Look!” said Malfoy, darting forward and snatching something out of the grass. “It’s that stupid thing Longbottom’s gran sent him.”

A glass sphere glittered in the sun as he held it up.

“I think I’ll leave it somewhere for Longbottom to find... how about... up a tree?”

“Do you have to be such a dick all the time Draco?” Harry asked with a sigh. “I mean seriously, why mess with the kid? He’s hurt.”

There was a pause while most of his housemates suddenly seemed to be a bit embarrassed. “Since the first night in the common room, you’re all been complaining about how Slytherins are abused and blamed for everything that happens, and now, what happens the first time we end up with kids from another house and no teachers are around? Draco pulls a dick move, and you’re all giggling like six year olds. What the hell?”

“You aren’t in charge here Stevens! A Muggle loving nothing like you shouldn’t even be in Slytherin!” Malfoy thundered, his eyes narrowing. “Maybe after today, you won’t be.”

Harry smiled. “Threatening me Draco? Ah, I am stung and oh so frightened. You have wounded me with your caustic wit and repartee.” He held out his hand. “Quit being such a jerk and give me Longbottom’s thingee.”

Malfoy pivoted to throw the sphere against the wall of the castle, no doubt wanting to damage or destroy it. Harry speeded his perception of time and plucked the glass ball from his housemate’s hand before he could complete the throw.

“God you’re a dick Draco, worse than that, you’re an ineffectual dick.” Harry said as the blond stumbled when he found himself suddenly throwing nothing. Harry crossed the gap between the groups of students. “Hey, Parvati, right?”

The girl nodded suspiciously, and behind her a redhead suddenly had his wand out and was pointing it into Harry’s face.

“Calm down Red, I’m trying to be nice” Harry sighed. “Here’s Longbottom’s whatever it is.”

“Rememberall,” the bushy haired brunette at Parvati’s left said.

“Thanks, Longbottom’s Rememberall. Could you get it to him?” Harry reached out and lifted the pretty girl’s arm and placed the glass ball into her palm.

“Ok,” Parvati whispered starting to blush.

“Thanks,” Harry said turning away to return to his housemates, then paused and smiled. “Remember, Slytherins are just kids like everyone else here. We hardly ever have human sacrifices down in the dungeons anymore.”

Absolute silence was his only answer, in fact several of the Griffs paled.

“That was a joke,” Harry pointed out.

The students from his Grandfather’s house stayed silent.

“Oh, come on!” Harry said shaking his head, and returning to the Slytherin side of the brooms.

“Great Googaly Moogaly, what’s wrong with you people?”

---===oooOOOooo===---

October 31 1991

Quirrell came sprinting into the hall, his turban askew and terror on his face. Everyone stared as he reached Professor Dumbledore’s chair, slumped against the table, and gasped, “Troll — in the dungeons — thought you ought to know.”

He then sank to the floor in a dead faint.

There was an uproar. It took several purple firecrackers exploding from the end of Professor Dumbledore’s wand to bring silence.

Excerpted from Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone

Minerva stood from her chair and wand in hand incanted a headcount charm. Her eyes widened as she read the number that formed from the smoke issued from her wand. Nine unaccounted for students. She felt her blood chill. She almost missed Albus making an announcement.

“All students will proceed immediately to your dormitories,” the Headmaster intoned authoritatively. “Prefects take charge of your Houses.”

“Excuse me Headmaster,” a single voice called out from the Slytherin table.

Suddenly every eye in the Great Hall was on Harry Stevens. “Since Professor Quirrell said quite clearly that the troll was in the dungeons, wouldn’t your last instruction put both Slytherin and Hufflepuff houses at risk for running into the big guy?”

Several of the staff all suddenly seemed to make that same connection. Minerva shook her head, why had not she seen that?

“For that matter shouldn’t someone be checking on Professor Quirrell?” the boy continued, while gesturing toward the fallen man. “I mean we can’t just leave him lying there, he’s liable to end up trampled if people had to go anywhere. Just because we’re getting a little excitement tonight that doesn’t mean we need to panic does it?”

---===oooOOOooo===---

“I’m glad you said something,” Pansy whispered to Harry from across the table as they watched the staff start to scurry about. “I don’t think anyone else made the connection.”

Harry shrugged. “It just seemed logical to me, besides who really wants to see a troll? They smell terrible.”

“You’re scared!” Draco mocked from the other side of Pansy.

“Who in their right mind wouldn’t be frightened by a troll Malfoy?” Ted asked. “Quit being such a dick.”

Harry fought to keep the grin off his face. It was not every day that someone could interject an entirely new insult into a culture. The red headed Gryffie had called Draco a dick after that first flying lesson, and one of the Ravenclaw Patil had done so the previous afternoon in the face of some of Draco’s stupidity. All he needed now was for a Hufflepuff to call Draco a dick. The Hufflepuffs were the only ones not to have done so yet and Harry really wanted the complete set.

“What you call fear, Draco,” Harry said reaching for another roll. If they were staying here, why not finish his meal? “I call common sense. A troll is large enough to give Hagrid a run for his money and they’ve been known to kill and eat people.”

“I know I wouldn’t want to run into one.” Millie said with a shudder.

“You’re probably just afraid that you’ll run into a relative, Bulstrode,” the Malfoy scion said thoughtlessly.

Silence filled the first year section of the Slytherin table for several seconds.

“You know Millie,” Harry said, breaking the silence, “If you want, I’ll hold him down while you pound on him for a while. Sometimes a good beating is the only cure for someone with an alligator mouth connected to a tweety bird ass.”

“Tweety bird ass?” Millie asked, Harry’s offhand comment burning through her fury toward the Malfoy twit. “That’s a good description for him, thanks Harry. Smacking him around wouldn’t do any good; he’d just go whinging to his father.”

Malfoy started sputtering, but Harry interrupted him before he regained the power of speech.

“Seriously? You’d run to daddy to tell on us?”

“My father would...”

“I take it back,” Harry said quietly, trying with all his might not to laugh, “You’re not a dick at all. A dick would at least have balls. You’re just a puss.”

A ripple of laughter passed across the first year section of the Slytherin table, while Draco went nearly incoherent with rage. Whatever response he was working on was interrupted when the

Gryffindor ghost approached the table.

“Mr. Stevens?”

Harry looked up to the ghost while most of his classmates cringed away. They always did, which struck Harry as odd, considering as witches and wizards they had grown up being able to see and speak with wandering spirits. Wand Users were just weird. “Hello Mr. de Mimsy-Porpington, what’s up?”

“One of mine is in trouble with that damned troll, and while I have dispatched some of my departed brethren to inform the staff, they are unlikely to make it to the upper floors in time.”

Harry frowned. “Upper floors? I thought the troll was supposed to be in the dungeons.”

“Indeed,” the almost beheaded ghost agreed. “However it appears the beast is not. The Baron suggested that I inform you. The young Gryffindor is far too young to join us here in this old Castle.”

“A Gryffindor?” Draco sputtered, having finally regained his voice. “Why would we lift a finger to help a...”

“Shut up Puss,” Harry said off handedly. “Where’s your Gryffie at?”

“Fourth floor girl’s toilet,” the ghost replied appearing to be as relieved as any dead person could be.

“Crap,” Harry said shaking his head. “I knew I should have just gone home for dinner.”

Before any of his classmates could ask what he meant by that, Harry vanished from his seat.

The first years exchanged confused looks.

“Did he just apparate?” Vinnie asked.

“You can’t apparate inside Hogwarts,” Tracy pointed out.

“Then what did we just see?” Millie asked.

----==**oooOOOooo**====--

Hermione Granger was shrinking against the wall, feeling as if she was about to faint. The troll was advancing on her, knocking the sinks off the walls as it went.

This was it. She was going to die, and she was going to die at the hands of a huge monstrosity that no sane person would believe even existed. She was going to die alone and friendless and no one would care...

Would they even tell her parents?

The troll raised its club; Hermione found herself drawing a breath, needing to scream about the unfairness of it all, when a small boy suddenly appeared between herself and the troll.

“Alright,” he said loudly. “That’s enough. Just stop it.”

The troll froze at the command. That was it? All she had to have done was to tell the huge creature to stop? That made no sense.

Some unintelligible noises came from the troll’s huge maw. The boy between them cocked his head to one side. “I don’t care who told you to do what, you’re going to stop before you really hurt someone, or I’m going to stop you. I think we both know you don’t want that.”

The troll lowered its club and hung its head, offering the appearance of shame. More noises came from the creature.

“Hey,” the boy said turning around to face her. “She says she’s sorry for scaring you.”

Hermione blinked. It was that yank Slytherin who had returned Neville’s Remberall, and he had sat with her in a few times Potions before Snape had instituted assigned seating. Harry something.

“You can speak to trolls?” she asked rhetorically.

“Yeah,” He admitted. “It’s a family thing. You ok?”

“I think so,” she looked around for a moment, trying very hard not to look at the troll. “What a mess.”

“Yeah,” the yank agreed. “Could you close your eyes for a second?”

That was an odd request, but he had just saved her life... was he going to... kiss her? “Ok,” she said. Heroes did that sort of thing, her books had said that many times.

“Ok, you can open your eyes now,” the boy said after one or two of the longest seconds of her life.

Hermione opened her eyes to find the room completely repaired, and the troll no longer stank like one of the filthy privies from her father’s favorite camping grounds. He had her close her eyes to clean the room? Somehow, she felt somewhat... disappointed.

The troll made more noises.

“Oh, hush, you’re just clean,” Harry admonished the creature.

“How...” Hermione goggled as she looked about the pristine toilet. “What... It’s cleaner than it was before that... troll got here!”

“Thanks,” Harry said. “I’d appreciate it if you didn’t tell anyone; I’m not supposed to show off. That would be bad for morale or something.” He shrugged.

“Ok...” the dazed Gryffindor agreed before looking up at the troll again and then suddenly looking away.

“What’s wrong?”

Hermione leaned closer to the Slytherin and whispered, “She’s naked.”

The Stevens boy looked up, his eyes going wide “Wow, you’re right. Without all that gunk on her, it’s really obvious isn’t it?” He gestured and the troll was suddenly wearing a bright yellow sundress with matching shoes. “What do you think?” he asked the troll. “That’s the kind of outfit my sister likes.”

The troll looked down and ran its hands along the fabric, then made the sounds that Hermione was coming to associate with Troll-Speech.

“What do you mean it’s not your color?” Stevens asked incredulously.

The troll spoke again, its lower lip quivering in a manner Hermione found to be somewhat disturbing.

“Fine,” the boy muttered as he gestured again and the troll’s outfit changed to a mottled green. “Better?”

The troll sounded her acceptance of the change.

Harry shook his head, “Girls. They’re all crazy.”

“Getting your outfit to suit your natural colorings isn’t crazy,” Hermione protested before looking up at the troll. “You look very nice. A woman has the right to know what she wants.”

“A few minutes ago she wanted to eat you,” the Slytherin pointed out before sighing. “We had best get you to the teachers. Nearly Headless Nick said that he had informed the staff that you were in trouble, so they’ll be looking for you.”

The boy started for the door, and made two steps before he noticed the girl wasn’t with him. “What’s wrong?”

“I’m still... I was so frightened... Could you...” she extended her hand.

It took a second, but the Slytherin realized what she was asking. He sighed again and took her hand. “Ok now? Let’s go.”

Then the troll spoke again, and extended its hand.

-----oooOOOooo-----

Life had prepared Severus Snape for many things. His training as a Potions master made him immune to the feelings of squeamishness that most people experienced when confronted with the more visceral aspects of life. His time as a servant of the Dark Lord had given him a tolerance of pain that few could equal. His time as an agent of Albus Dumbledore had given him utter emotional control and the clear thinking that control came with.

When a ghost had appeared and informed Minerva that the troll was not in the dungeons, rather it was on the fourth floor and was threatening a Gryffindor first year; Severus felt the tiniest bit of disappointment. The Granger girl had had potential, even if she had been sorted into Gryffindor. The loss of potential was always a bad thing.

In unspoken agreement, the four heads of house abandoned the search and made their way to the fourth floor. The girl was undoubtedly dead by now, and would need to be avenged.

It was when they were on the moving staircase between the third floor and the fourth when they saw the girl, and the troll.

Between the two, hold the girl's hand and with his other hand wrapped around one of the troll's massive index fingers stood a quite clearly embarrassed Harry Stevens.

"Is that troll... wearing a dress?" Filius squeaked.

"It... She is," a dumbstruck Pomona Sprout agreed. "That color really looks good on her."

"It does," Minerva agreed, "Earth tones suit her."

Severus and Filus exchanged bewildered looks at that exchange.

No, Severus told himself. Nothing in his life had prepared him for this.

-----oooOOOooo-----

A clearly upset Harry appeared in the Stevens Kitchen.

"Hello sweetie," Samantha said as she handed the last dish to Darrin who was filling the dishwasher. Then she spotted her eldest son's face. "What's wrong?"

"Girls," Harry said simply. "They're crazy. All of them. Holding hands in front of people and having to have the right colors. Crazy!"

With that, the boy turned and exited the kitchen.

The room filled with silence for several seconds, until Sam broke it when she turned to Darrin. "Perhaps you should deal with your son?"

“And do what, exactly?” Darrin asked with a grin. “Congratulate him on his clarity of thought? I mean I was twice his age before I figured that out.”

Samantha frowned. “Have you been changed into anything recently?”

“I’m going, I’m going,” Darrin laughed, “but you know, you’re just proving his point...”

----===oooOOOooo===----

November 1 1991

Quirrell rushed into his classroom after yet another abortive attempt to get past that damned three-headed dog. Voldemort was beyond angry. This did not bode well for Quirrell’s night.

“Hello,” a young voice chimed in, breaking Voldemort’s concentration. Unable to see through the fabric of the turban, he silently directed Quirrell to turn and face the speaker.

“Mr. Stevens,” Quirrell noted while wondering why the boy was coming to him now. There had not been any classes since the excitement with the troll the night before, why would the boy be in his classroom at this time of night?

“Good evening Professor,” the boy said, his eyes shining in the gas light. “I’ve only got a few minutes; I’m heading home for dinner, and Mom hates it when I’m late. I just thought it might be a good idea for me to talk with your friend and get this whole thing out of the way.”

“My friend, Mr. Stevens?” Quirrell asked hesitantly, wondering what the boy meant by ‘heading home’. “I’m not sure what you mean.”

“The guy on the back of your head Professor,” the boy explained. “His aura stands out like a beacon, you know. Nothing like your aura, so he’s pretty obvious. I’m guessing he’s that Voldemort guy, right?”

“Let me speak to him...” Voldemort rasped.

“Master, are you sure?” Quirrell asked, “You are so weak!”

“I am strong enough to deal with a boy,” the Dark Lord said.

Quirrell reached up and began to unwrap his turban, turn after turn of fabric until the head covering fell away. Quirrell shook his head for a moment, and then he turned slowly on the spot.

The boy remained where he was sitting on top of one of the student desks, swinging his legs idly. Voldemort stared at the boy he blamed for his loss of body for several seconds before whispering. “Harry Potter...”

“Harry Stevens,” the boy corrected, showing not the slightest bit of fear.

“Do you see what I have become?” the Voldemort asked. “Mere shadow and vapor... I have form only when I can share another’s body... but there have always been those willing to let me into their hearts and minds... Unicorn blood has strengthened me, these past weeks...”

“Yeah, that sucks,” the boy interrupted flippantly. “Listen, letting that troll into the castle was a real dick move, so what I wanted to talk to you about is what we’ve got to do to get our prophecy stuff out of the way. I know we’re supposed to be fated to some awesome epic battle, but like my Dad always says, ‘It takes two to fight’ and hey, you really don’t stand a chance against me. So if you’re willing to mellow out a bit, stop being such a dick and quit killing people, I figured I could just, you know, leave you alone.”

“What?” Voldemort sputtered.

“Both Mom and Dad said that I shouldn’t, you know, show off while I’m here, and I can see their point, plus I’m really having fun, you know? Meeting new people, learning about how they live and how my family lived in this society and all that.”

“I will destroy you boy,” Voldemort ranted, “then I will regain a body of my own and...”

“Were you planning on using the Philosopher’s Stone Professor Dumbledore is pretending to have stashed in that hidden room under the dungeons?” The boy asked.

“What?” Voldemort choked, “how did you know about that?”

“Dumbles said that no one should go to the third floor thing unless they wanted to die,” the boy shrugged. “I just had to look after he said that. There’s this door that’s only barely locked, a three-headed dog who acts all vicious but is really just a big puppy, a real creepy vine plant that tries to grab you, some flying keys, a giant chessboard with an attitude problem, another troll, and a logic problem with some fire. After you go through all that, you end up in an empty room with a kind of raised platform in the middle of the room, like something is going to be put there eventually, but it isn’t there yet. So, I had to go looking for whatever the Headmaster was hiding. It turned out to be a Philosopher’s Stone. Professor Dumbledore has it stashed in his desk drawer in his bedroom wrapped in a purple sock.”

“Are you claiming to have done all this in only two months?” Quirrell asked from where he stood facing away from the boy.

“I did it that first night before I went home Professor,” the boy said looking around Voldemort’s face to catch his Defense Professor’s eye. “It wasn’t like it was hard or anything.”

“Once I have the stone...” Voldemort said, plans rushing through his mind.

“Once you have the stone, you would experience extreme disappointment,” the Potter child said. “It’s a fake.”

“What?” Voldemort thundered.

“Well, calling it a fake isn’t fair. It’s a real Philosopher’s Stone, it’s just that ‘real Philosopher’s Stones’ don’t actually DO anything. When I first found it, I was wondering if someone had managed to actually make one that works, then I found the note from Nicolas Flamel, so I knew it was a joke.”

“What do you mean?”

“Nick is an Elder, he’s been running this scam for about 600 years,” Potter explained. “He hangs out with my great uncle Arthur, and they’re always laughing about the stupid wand wizards believing that some rock could do everything that a Philosopher’s Stone is supposed to do. His wife Perenelle thinks that it’s a cruel joke, but she goes along with it.” The boy leaned forward and continued in a manner that suggested he was sharing a confidence “Personally I think he’s a kind of a jerk.”

Voldemort blinked, “Elders are real?”

“Oh sure,” the boy nodded. “There aren’t a lot of us, but we’re real.”

Shaking his head, Voldemort consciously ignored the fact that the boy had identified himself as a member of the Elder Sect. “It doesn’t matter, I will get the stone and if it doesn’t work, I will find some other method of to regain a body.”

“A body is all you want?” the boy asked while gesturing with his left hand. “There you go.”

Voldemort stumbled as he suddenly found himself staring at the boy from a slightly different perspective. Quirrell collapsed, and Voldemort was stunned to find himself looking down at the body he thought he was sharing, before looking down at the body he was now wearing. A mirror shimmered into existence to hover before him. Voldemort stood gaping at an image very familiar to him. He was staring at his own body, the body he still saw himself wearing when he pictured himself in his mind. The body he had owned before the rituals, before the sacrifices, before it all. He was looking at sixteen year old Tom Riddle. How was this possible?

“Professor Quirrell will be ok in a few minutes,” the boy said returning the mirror to wherever it had come from. “I’m pretty sure it was just the shock of having you yanked out of him. So, is it a deal? I got you your body back, and you quit being such a asshole. No more killing people, alright?”

Before Voldemort could answer, an older man suddenly appeared behind the boy. “Harry,” the newcomer said quietly.

“Uncle Maurice?” the boy asked, cringing slightly. “What are you doing here?”

"Language is a tool, young man, a tool a gentleman uses with skill and finesse. This person may well be a giant anal sphincter, but a sophisticated man does not use that type of language to point out the obvious. We will have to discuss the language you've been using in front of the young ladies in your class later."

“Yes Uncle Maurice, sorry,” the boy murmured, hanging his head.

The man smiled and ruffled the boy’s unkempt hair. “Not to worry Harry,” he turned his attention to the gaping Voldemort. “So, this is the one the prophecies claim to be your opponent eh?”

The man called Maurice strode up to the newly re-embodied Dark Lord. “I have been directed by the Witches Council to monitor young Harry’s performance in completing his prophecy. How he goes about it is his choice, and frankly, I disagree with his letting you live after all you have done. However, the choice is his to make, and I would never presume to override his choices. He has offered you a chance. I would suggest that you grasp it with both of your pathetic wand waving hands and hold on for dear life.”

“He destroyed me!” Voldemort responded, wondering as he did so just why he was speaking his mind.

“Who told you that?” Harry asked. “I was less than two, what could I have done?”

“It was the boy’s grandmother Clara who dealt with you when you threatened him,” Maurice explained patiently. “Considering what she did to you, it isn’t really surprising you don’t remember. In truth, you should be thankful that my sister-in-law was the one who prevented you from harming young Harry. Had my dear wife been the one to find you threatening the boy, you would still be paying in pain and terror.”

“Not the boy?” Voldemort asked. “But the prophecy...”

“Prophecies, old boy, prophecies. There are at least two, and real ones, not the twaddle offered by a charlatan in search of a job that you believed in. They say that you and he will face each other in battle. Given that our Harry is a fully realized Elder, and you are...” the man said with a tone of utter contempt, “not. On the very best day of your life, you did not stand a chance against him. He is showing far more mercy that you would find from anyone else in the family. You attempted to subvert the false prophecy you believed in by attacking him before he could harm you. You failed. Now young Harry is attempting to subvert the prophecies he knows by offering you a chance to walk away. I would suggest you take it.”

Voldemort nodded dumbly.

The grey haired man leaned down until he was eye to eye with the Dark Lord. “Knowing what my grandnephew faced, I did a little research on you Tom Riddle. Historically, your first response to someone you could not control was to go for their family. I would suggest that you do not make that mistake. There is but a single member of young Harry’s family who is unable to destroy you with a glance. Should you somehow manage to harm that single vulnerable individual you would find yourself subject to the tortures of hell. Be a smart little wizard and run away.”

The man turned to walk away, and then paused. “You have followers I believe, Harry’s injunction against murder extends to them as well. You will pay for their crimes in your name.”

Voldemort watched as the older man placed his hand on the Potter boy's shoulder.

“Come now Harry, we had best be off. I have not tormented your father in far too long.”

“Yes Uncle Maurice,” the boy nodded happily. “Goodbye Mr. Voldemort. I hope we don't see each other again. You'd best take Professor Quirrell with you.”

The boy gestured and Voldemort suddenly found himself somewhere else with Quirrell still laid out at his feet.

Such power. How could those people have such power? Voldemort needed that power, wanted that power. There had to be a way to take that power for his own use... The Dark Lord kicked at this sole remaining minion. “Quirrell, get up. We have plans to make.”

---===oooOOOooo===---

Harry Potter and the Elder Sect Exposure

The Dark Lord kicked at this sole remaining minion. "Quirrell, get up. We have plans to make."

"Master?" Quirrell asked, his eyes blinking as he returned to consciousness. The man then focused on his reborn lord. "Master?" He asked again. "You're so..." Before he could complete the sentence, Quirrell's eyes rolled up and he once again lost consciousness.

"Young is the word your minion is searching for."

Voldemort spun to face the new voice, his eyes widening when he found the speaker. A man dressed in a suit of dark blue velvet with a blindingly white ruffled shirt, lounging on a blood red chaise. "Who are you?"

The man leaned on his elbow, a smile playing upon his lips, "You can call me Arthur, Tommy, everyone does," this 'Arthur' looked around the room. "Such a lovely place you've got here. So marvelously... unique.

It was only then Voldemort recognized the room he was in. This was the sitting room of the main house of the Riddle estate. He had murdered his father and paternal grandparents in this room, he had not returned since that night, and he had no idea why he was here now.

"And when I say 'unique' I mean dank and tacky of course," the man Arthur continued with a jovial laugh.

"The women of the family expected Maurice to make sure you understood where you stand," Arthur continued, "and I thought he did an excellent job of explaining your place in the universe, I really did, but here you are, not fifteen minutes later, plotting away. In all honesty, you're acting just as I expected you too, because I know men like you." The man laughed again, "I enjoyed a bit of pillaging and plunder when I was younger as much as anyone... Ah to be young again, standing on the deck of my ship, the Raging Queen, hoisting the Jolly Roger on some unsuspecting Merchant..." again the laughter erupted from the man, "and leaving port the next morning before he wakes up..."

"But I'm drifting off subject aren't I?" Arthur asked rhetorically with a sigh. "Our people trend toward hedonism, you know. Most of us are born, we reach maturity, very occasionally we have a child, and then we move into a very long lifetime of the pursuit of pleasure." Again the smile

stretched the man's mouth. "I must admit, I am far further into that pursuit than most. But our children, as rare as they are, are precious to us. My niece Samantha, well she's a wonderful girl. She's had two of her own, and is raising my Grand Nephew as her own, and you... you threatened and orphaned the boy when he was less than two, and now you're plotting against him again. You are plotting against him even now. Plotting against one of our children. Plotting against a member of my family..." The smile darkened and the man's eyes lit with barely restrained power. "You've manage something no one has done in most of a thousand years... You've made me angry little wizard."

"Who are you?" Voldemort repeated in a desperate attempt to understand what was happening.

"I'm the Warlock who is going to make you regret those evil thoughts you've had since my Grand Nephew so graciously gave you a second chance in life," Arthur responded.

The man rose from his chaise and raised his left hand. Voldemort felt the strongest magic he had ever experienced roiling about the room feeling all the world as if there were hundreds of thousands of ants crawling all over his body. The Dark Lord's mind raced. While this unknown man held no wand, no weapon at all that Voldemort could understand, he had no doubt that this unknown man was about to kill him. What could he do to defend himself? He had no wand and he...

Arthur's eyes went wide and he stepped back in shock. "That scamp," he said with a tone of wonder, the fury of seconds before gone from his voice, the magic infesting the room vanishing as if it had never existed. He lowered his left hand and leaned forward to more closely examine the nearly panicking Voldemort, a large magnifying glass appeared in his right hand and Arthur peered through it seeming to examine Voldemort in minute detail. "That little scamp. You spend hours with them trying to explain how the world works, but you just know they aren't listening, that you're wasting your time, and then the boy turns around and does something like this." Arthur shook his head and knuckled away a tear from his right eye. "I'm so proud of him I could just burst! He's like me...not just another pretty face; he has brains to go with his devastating good looks"

"What are you talking about?" Voldemort squeaked. "What did he do to me?"

"Why, Our Harry has given you what you've always wanted," Arthur laughed. "Near immortality. He's given you an Elder's lifespan."

"I'm... I'm an Elder?" Voldemort gasped.

"No, don't be silly," Arthur said laughing and waving his hand, the magnifying glass vanishing. "He's given you an Elder's lifespan, not the power to go with it. You're still a wand wizard, as limited and weak as ever, you just aren't mortal anymore. And there's a catch."

"A catch?" Voldemort asked his voice breaking.

"You're going to be fourteen, for the rest of your life, with all that entails," Arthur smirked. "Every

time you have one of your evil thoughts, your face will break out. I think Harry got that idea from one of the older boys in his neighborhood, the one they call 'Craterface'. I'd invest heavily in facial scrubs if I were you Tommy."

"What?" Voldemort gasped. "But I saw what I look like, I was..."

"Oh, Harry brought you back as your own mental image of yourself as you were when you were 16, but you've been regressing since then. You've settled in at a nice simple fourteen. Have you ever imagined being an adolescent forever? Well, now you won't have to imagine it. Every pretty thing you see will give you an erection, but you won't be able to speak to him..." Arthur leaned forward again, "Or are you one of those weirdoes who like girls? Anyway, you'll always be hungry; your limbs will constantly ache from the growth spurt that isn't actually happening... and there's more," Arthur said with a shake of his head. "But I'll let you discover that for yourself. Our Harry may not want to kill you, but he's certainly not averse to seeing you suffer."

"What?" Voldemort asked, wincing as his voice broke, and still not believing what was happening to him. "What has he done to me?"

"It's a surprise," Arthur laughed while swinging an arm around Voldemort's shoulders. "Come on Tommy, let's find you a dermatologist while I tell you about my Grand Nephew, maybe we'll get mannipeddies and a massage while we're out. Those are just marvelous for relieving stress. Don't worry about your little minion, he'll sleep until we get back." Arthur glanced down at the sleeping man, "Seriously though, you could do better."

"I..." Voldemort stuttered. "I... You..."

"No Tommy, not me," Arthur smiled. "I said you could do better, not that you could do fabulous. I'm not sure how your old minions are going to react to the 'new you', but you can never be too rich or too young," Arthur's laugh again erupted.

"But I..." Voldemort said, struggling to gain control of the situation.

Suddenly the man was serious. "I just crack you up, don't I?"

Voldemort had no idea what to say to that.

"Did I tell you what Harry's done to your minions?" Arthur asked regaining his mirth. "You'll just have to wait to find out. The boy is a genius, and I should know, I taught him everything he knows about the fine art of revenge. Did I mention that I'm so proud of him?"

----==oooOOOooo==----

2 November 1991

"Is there something wrong Severus?" Dumbledore asked while wondering why his Potions Master was in his office. He and Severus normally greeted each other over breakfast in the Great Hall.

"My mark," the sallow man said grasping his left arm. "I woke this morning to find it was back... and changed."

The headmaster stood from his desk and crossed the room to his potions master. "It's back? But... it cannot be. The stone is still untouched." The old man frowned, his mind obviously racing. "You said that the mark was changed? How is it different?"

With a grimace, Snape rolled up the sleeve that covered his left forearm before offering the arm to Dumbledore.

Albus took hold of the arm and bent to examine the new mark closely.

Where before there had been a skull and snake intertwined, now there was a yellow disk with dots for eyes and a half circle for a mouth. Albus tapped his glasses with his wand to activate their magic divining abilities. The magic imbued in the mark had at very least tripled in complexity, and the original Dark Mark had already been one of the more complex magical constructs known to wizarding kind.

Dumbledore moved to probe this new mark with his wand in hopes of starting to understand the magics involved when the yellow form blinked its dot like eyes at him, dodged away from the probing wand, and then blew a raspberry with a very three dimensional tongue and very real saliva that splattered the old man's glasses.

Albus backed away from his potions' master in shock as music filled the air and the yellow circle began to sing;

" I love you

You love me

We're a happy family

With a great big hug and a kiss from me to you

Won't you say you love me too? "

"It won't stop!" Severus moaned piteously. "It just won't stop!"

"Oh, come on Sevvy," the yellow mark called out, *"You know the words, sing along!"*

" I love you

You love me

We are friends like friends should be

With a great big hug and a kiss from me to you

Won't you say you love me too? "

"Remarkable," Albus said as he watched the mouth form the words with was singing.

Snape quickly rolled down his sleeve, and the voice continued but was somewhat muffled. "After a few moments in the dark it goes quiet, but is anything touches my entire forearm, it starts up again.

"Second verse," the now hidden mark called out from inside the sleeve. **"Same as the first, Scottish accent all the words!"**

"Merlin," Snape whimpered, "If Minerva hears it doing that horrid accent, she'll kill me."

"This is an amazing feat of magic," Dumbledore said as he retook his seat. "But what does it mean? The Dark Lord has not taken the Stone, I am sure of that, what could he have done to regain the power needed to activate your mark, much less make such an inexplicable change to it? Are you the only one so affected?"

"I don't know, and I've no idea how to find out," Severus said shaking his head. "I can't exactly floo call any of my old associates and ask if their Dark Mark is singing to them. If it is, they'd likely deny it, if it isn't they'll think me insane."

"True," Dumbledore acknowledged before looking up suddenly. "Azkaban! Investigating the Death Eaters in Azkaban would be the easiest way to find out."

"But that won't tell us what it means," Snape pointed out as the enchanted tattoo on his arm began yet another verse. "What does it mean?"

---===oooOOOooo===---

Millicent Bulstrode looked up from her class notes to see Harry Stevens making his way from the doorway that lead to the boys' dorms to the table where she and the rest of the first year Slytherin girls sat.

This boy was very odd. Easily the most magically powerful of their cohort, easy going and friendly to everyone from all four of the houses, Stevens was not what she had expected to find inside Slytherin house.

As a half blood, Millicent had been under no illusions as to what sort of treatment she was to expect when sorted into her father's house. Then, this unknown boy from America showed up claiming a witch for his mother and a Muggle for his father and started talking to the Founder's portrait and calling the painting 'Uncle' and the portrait actually responded as if this Harry was one of his own.

That had caused a lot of the House to start examining their positions. As a result, Millie had found herself, for the first time in her life, if not welcomed, then at least accepted by anyone outside of her immediate family. Millie was surprised at how much she enjoyed this simple acceptance.

"Ladies," Stevens said as he arrived at the table.

"Morning Stevens" Tracey Davis said from Millie's left. Davis was the other half blood among the Slytherin first years, and though she had not said anything, Millie was sure that Tracey was enjoying the unexpected acceptance as well.

"Look," Stevens said with obvious embarrassment, "I need to talk to all of you this morning, and I'd like to do it without the guys around. Is now a good time?"

All of the first year girls looked to Pansy Parkinson. Pansy had somehow ended up being the leader of the girls. "Of course Harry," Pansy said with a rare smile.

Since Stevens had prevented the Slytherins from wandering into the path of the troll two days before, as far as Pansy was concerned, Stevens could do no wrong, Millie knew. For that matter, she quite agreed. The American's common sense along with his unwillingness to take any of Draco's crap had endeared the boy to Millie as well. Perhaps it had been the offer to hold the Malfoy boy down so that she could pound on him a bit that had done it.

"OK, thanks. I need to apologize to all of you for my language over the last few days," the boy said, his face reddening a bit more. "When I got home last night my Uncle read me the riot act on how I was choosing to speak in front of you."

Millie noticed that she was not alone in glancing to the portrait of the great Salazar Slytherin. Harry's Uncle had not liked the language he was using in front of them? He had called the founder's portrait 'Uncle Sal'... what other uncle could possibly know how the Stevens boy spoke around his house-mates?

No. That was impossible.

"Anyway, my Uncle is bound and determined to make me into a gentleman whether I like it or not, but I guess he's right. I'm sorry for how I was speaking in front of all of you, and I promise to try and keep it under control, ok?" Harry asked hopefully.

The girls simply nodded, which seemed to satisfy the boy. "OK, great. I'm going to head up and see what they have for breakfast. See you when you get there."

-----oooOOOooo-----

"His uncle?" Pansy asked, voicing the question that they were all thinking.

Daphne was openly staring at Slytherin's portrait. "It couldn't be... could it?"

"Of course not," Tracey said with a shake of her head. "When he spoke with the Founder, it was clear that they hadn't seen each other in a long time."

"He hadn't seen the portrait," Millie pointed out. "That doesn't mean that he hasn't seen the subject."

"For Salazar Slytherin to still be around to have scolded Stevens, he would be over a thousand years old," Daphne pointed out.

Now Pansy was staring at the portrait. The painting noticed and nodded to her with a small smile. "What would be more unlikely?" She asked. "That Salazar Slytherin could live for more than a thousand years, or that Stevens is old enough to have known him? What other Uncle could possibly know what he is saying here in the common room?"

"He did ask if he had ever returned to the castle..." Tracey noted. "How could he not know if he had?"

"Salazar Slytherin cares how Stevens speaks around us? Cares that he... that Harry was being ungentlemanly?" Millie asked.

"Bloody hell," Pansy breathed. "Who is this Harry Stevens anyway?"

---===oooOOOooo===---

Dean Thomas rolled out of his bed and stretched, yawning as he did so. Then the Muggle born wizard heard something he never expected to hear inside his dorm.

"Meow," a man's voice said.

Immediately Dean started looking around in confusion.

"Meow meow meow meow!"

Neville Longbottom returning from the showers in his dressing gown heard the meows. "Who is that?"

"Meow meow meow meow!"

Seamus Finnegan stuck his head out from behind his drapes. "Bloody hell, who thinks he's funny?"

"I've heard this before," Dean said, a look of confusion on his face.

"I think we've all heard people saying 'Meow' before Dean," Neville said as he continued to search for the source of the voice.

"Meow meow meow meow meow meow meow meow !"

"No, this exactly, a song sung by someone saying 'meow'," Dean said. "Two years ago we visited cousins in the US. This was a cat food ad on American telly."

Neville and Seamus exchanged a glance, both wondering what 'telly' might be, and why it would add cat food... For that matter, what was it adding cat food to?

"It's coming from Ron's bed," Neville pointed out.

Seamus emerged from his bed and joined the others at the dorm's fourth bed.

"Meow meow meow meow!"

Dean reached up and yanked open the drapes around Ron Weasley's bed. This revealed the pajama-clad red-head sitting up in his bed holding his pet rat and staring at his pet in open-mouthed confusion.

"Ron?" Neville asked.

"It's Scabbers," Weasley said, "I think he's gone bilingual."

"Meow meow meow meow!"

The 'meows' were definitely coming from the rat. The four dorm-mates exchanged looks and then shrugged and returned to their morning rituals. They went to a school of magic after all; odd things were a routine occurrence.

None of them noticed that Scabbers the Rat did not seem overly pleased with his new vocalizations, nor that rather than coming from Scabber's mouth, the meows were coming from the rat's front left leg.

-----oooOOOooo-----

"Warden!" the Auror shouted as he entered the main Azkaban administration offices. "Warden!"

Warden Timothy Jensen looked up from the Wizengamot proclamation he was reading and sighed. Biggers had not been assigned to the Azkaban Guard Detail long enough to yet understand that there was absolutely nothing urgent enough to get excited about on the island.

"What is it Biggers?" the older man sighed.

"It's the Special prisoners sir," Biggers said, using the in house code for the imprisoned Death Eaters. "They're singing."

"Singing?" Jensen asked. That was a new one. The Death Eaters had never done that before.

"Well, not really," Biggers admitted. "More like they're lip-synching."

Jenson raised his eyebrows with an unspoken question.

"It's a Muggle thing," Biggers explained. "It's where you pretend to sing to a prerecorded song." Before the warden could ask his next question, the Auror continued. "We can't find the source of the music but the Death Eaters are dancing in their cells, and pretending to sing."

"What are they singing?"

"That's the weirdest part," Biggers said. "They're singing... or pretending to sing, Muggle songs. They started with Jailhouse Rock, then Bellatrix did Crazy Train with the rest of them singing backup, and when I left to report to you, all of the Death Eaters are doing Someone to Love. Bella is a bass... who knew?"

Jenson sat silently for several seconds waiting for the punch line to this obvious joke. When none came, he rose from his desk and pulled on his cloak. "Let's go Biggers. I swear to Merlin, if this is some kind of joke..."

At his door, Timothy Jensen stopped dead in his tracks. From the bowels of his prison he could clearly hear music, and a woman's voice rang out:

"In the jungle, the mighty jungle, the lion sleeps tonight,

In the jungle, the quiet jungle, the lion sleeps tonight... "

Then a chorus of male voices started up:

"Wimoweh, wimoweh, wimoweh, wimoweh

Wimoweh, wimoweh, wimoweh, wimoweh

Wimoweh, wimoweh, wimoweh, wimoweh

Wimoweh, wimoweh, wimoweh, wimoweh "

"Bloody hell!" the warden exclaimed. "What is going on here?"

----==oooOOOooo==----

"Afternoon Tracey," Harry said as he took a seat at one of the many study tables in the Great Hall joining his house-mate.

Tracey Davis looked up from her charms assignment and nodded to the boy. She was trying very hard not to think about the puzzle named Harry Stevens. Trying to understand the reasons he did the things he did usually gave her a headache.

Still... what had he meant by...

No! She told herself, she was not going to do that to herself.

Later, while nursing a headache, Tracey realized that her mistake was looking at the Stevens boy and being shocked that rather than the heavy text she had, his was slimmer, the cover seemed somehow more flamboyant, and somehow the book seemed... new.

The pages were a blinding white; the text was uniform across the page, with colorful charts and photographs on the pages she could see. The photos were static and unmoving.

A Muggle book? In Hogwarts?

Tracey swallowed. Her curiosity building until she could no longer stand it. "What are you reading?" she asked.

Stevens looked up from his notes... paper, she noted, his scribbles in pencil no less. "Oh, I've finished all my homework for Hogwarts..." he said while turning the page of his textbook. "I got distracted last night and forgot to finish my Algebra homework, so I hoping to get it done during this free period."

"Algebra?" she asked, the odd word felt strange in her mouth. "What is that? And what class is it for? We're in all the same classes and I don't remember anything about anything called Algebra."

"Oh, it's not for Hogswarts," Harry said as he copied some sort of structure from the text to his notes. Whatever he was doing was upside down to Tracey's perspective, but was it a word? There were letters, but there were also numbers. What was he doing? "This is for my Mortal school... No, not mortal, that's not right. What do you call people without magic?"

"Muggles," Tracey said puzzled that he honestly seemed not to know.

"Right, Muggle school. Yeah, this is due tomorrow, and I've still got a pile of English notes to review tonight for a test tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? She asked.

"Well, for me," he grinned. "For you it was due this morning. I'm looping you see."

"Looping?" she asked weakly

"Yeah, looping the day," he said as he made some marks on his notes and rewrote the not word, not maths problem in front of him. "After the last class today, I head home for Dinner. After dinner and the cleanup, then I loop back to yesterday after dinner and then hang out with me, my brother and sister for a couple of hours, finish my homework, go over it with my Dad, and maybe catch some TV, then we hit the hay and tomorrow Muggle school. Or this morning from your perspective."

Tracey was feeling a bit dizzy from that explanation despite the fact that she was sitting down. The only thing she had understood from his 'explanation' was that he intended to go home for dinner, and hang out with his brother, sister, and... himself? A concerned look crossed Stevens' face.

"I don't think I was supposed to tell anyone about that," he said in a contrite tone. "Mom and Dad are always on me not to show off. I didn't offend you or hurt your morale or anything did I?" he asked hopefully.

"I... I don't think so..." Tracey answered wondering what the Stevens boy was talking about.

"Good," Stevens said, his easy grin returning to his lips. Then he frowned looking at his text. "I don't suppose you know anything about the Distributive Property do you?"

"No," she admitted while wondering what property the boy was concerned might need distributing.

"Well, crud," he said, rubbing out his previous work and rewriting it. The rewriting did not seem to satisfy him in the slightest.

Try as she might, Tracey just could not return to her own assignment. Stevens and his muttering over whatever he was trying to do seemed to absorb her entire attention.

"I need some help," Harry sighed. He glanced around the room looking for anyone who might be able to offer the assistance he sought. Tracey looked about as well. Other than a table of first year Hufflepuffs, they were alone in the Great Hall. "Crud," he repeated. "Well I guess I'll need to call someone."

Tracey watched as the boy raised his left hand and then hesitated. "Wand," he said, "can't perform magic without a wand you know..."

The boy reached down and pulled his book bag onto his lap. "Uh... Potions," he said as he pulled his Potions text from the bag, then dug deeper, "My Gameboy! I wondered where I left that!" Stevens said as he placed a plastic box on the table next to his books and parchment. "Ink, pencils, pens, stupid feathers... Ah, there it is!"

His wand was on the bottom of his book bag. How could his wand be at the bottom of his book bag? Hers was stored in its proper place, in the sleeve pocket designed to store and protect the precious focus. Tracey tried to remember the last time she had seen Stevens with his wand... and was a bit shocked that she was unable to picture him with it in his hand.

Stevens repacked his book bag and raised his wand, his face took on a look of concentration for a moment, and then he waved his wand and chanted "ridiculam senex,"

Suddenly standing beside the table was an old man, clad in heavy trousers, some sort of heavy cloth jacket and a knit hat. The old man seemed understandably startled by his sudden appearance in the Great Hall, looking around wildly before his eyes settled on the Stevens boy.

"Ah, Harry, of course," the old man said, a smile crossing his lips. "What can I help you with today?"

"Hi Professor," Stevens said happily. "Sorry to bother you, but I'm having some problems with my Algebra homework."

"Oh, no bother Harry," the old man said pulling the knit hat from his head, revealing a mass of white wild hair to match the ebony thatch of the boy. Unbuttoning his jacket, he settled into the chair next to Harry. "Hello Miss..."

"Oh, sorry Professor, this is Tracey Davis, she's a classmate of mine, but she isn't taking any math. Tracey, this is Professor Einstein."

Tracey really did not know what to say to a man who had just somehow done the impossible for anyone not named Harry Stevens and appeared in the middle of the Great Hall, so she nodded and tried not to stare.

The old man seemed quite used to people being stunned into silence around him because he smiled. "Miss Davis, it is a pleasure to meet one of Harry's friends. So Harry," he said turning to the boy at his side, "this is your new school? Hogwarts?"

"Yes sir," Harry nodded.

"Amazing. A school of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The manipulation of quanta via force of will and stick waving," the old man shook his head. "I'm certainly glad I didn't know about that possibility when I was working on Relativity. I would never have gotten any sleep. So, Harry, show me where you are having problems."

"Yes sir," Harry said, offering the old man his papers. "I think the real problem is that I don't really understand the Distributive Property."

"Recognizing the problem is the first step to fixing it, Harry," the old man said as he looked over Steven's work. "And you are quite correct, you do not understand the Distributive Property."

"All my answers are wrong?" Harry asked. "All of them?"

"Sadly, yes," the Professor concluded. "Not to worry though, we'll soon have you knowing the basics." The old man placed a fresh sheet of paper in front of the boy. "Let us start at the beginning."

"Yes sir," Harry sighed.

"Don't take it so hard Harry, you'll get it, you always do. You know," he said as Harry copied the first equation onto his paper. "I heard the most marvelous rumor about myself the other day."

"You did?"

"Oh, yes. It seems that there are those going around saying that I failed maths class when I was a child."

Harry grinned. "I'd heard that, but it didn't seem likely."

"Not likely?" the old man laughed. "If I had brought home a failing grade in any subject, my mother would have tanned my backside. Alright, let's see how you would go about simplifying the equation..."

----==0000000000==----

Two tables away Susan Bones blinked when she saw the old man suddenly appear in the Great Hall.

"I thought that wasn't supposed to be possible..." she said shaking her head.

"What?" Hannah Abbott asked from her left.

"That man just apparated to the table those Slytherins are at," the red-head pointed out the newcomer.

"That isn't possible," Ernie Macmillan sniffed in that somewhat superior way of his. "You must have been distracted when he approached the table. It's a well-known fact that you can't apparate inside the Hogwarts Wards."

Susan and Hannah exchanged a look and shook their heads. Hufflepuffs were team player and they supported each other, but there were times when the bulk of the Hufflepuff first years would gladly support Ernie into a concussion...

Justin Finch-Fletchly's eyes widened as soon as the old man across the Great Hall removed his knit hat. "Bloody Hell!"

"What's wrong Justin?" Sue asked.

"That old fellow," the Muggleborn said. "He looks like Albert Einstein."

"Who?" Ernie asked with the rest of the Hufflepuffs sharing his look of confusion.

"A famous Muggle physicist," Justin explained. Then he noticed the blank looks he was getting from his house-mates and sighed. While he had been trying to learn everything he could about Britain's magical society, he was constantly amazed at how those already members of that society were so very ignorant of the larger world around them.

"A scientist," He said trying again, only to be rewarded by blank looks once again. "A researcher?" He asked, trying again.

That word they knew. "What does he research?" Ernie asked.

"Well..." Justin tried to think of the best way to explain what little he knew of the great scientist. "The universe really. How everything works. What keeps everything from flying apart."

From the far table the words of the Slytherin first year drifted over. "Oh, sorry Professor, this is Tracey Davis, she's a classmate of mine, but she isn't taking any math. Tracey, this is Professor Einstein."

"Well spotted Justin," Ernie nodded. "It is your Einstein chap. Perhaps he is being allowed to study magic, Imagine how uplifting that would be for the poor common Muggle."

"Well... I don't know... maybe. But that can't be Einstein."

"Why not?" Hannah asked.

"Albert Einstein is dead. Has been for decades." Justin explained.

Those words focused the Hufflepuffs attention to the Slytherin table. "Interesting," Ernie said, stroking his chin. "I've never seen a Muggle ghost before. This specter appears to be substantially more solid than the ghosts I've known."

Justin shook his head. There was no getting through to these people on some subjects. But that couldn't be Albert Einstein...

Could it?

---===oooOOOooo===---

The Slytherin common room was awash with noise as the various forms blew off steam after a day of classes. Draco Malfoy sat at the smallest table in the room, isolated in a dark corner. This afforded him the privacy he needed for this task.

Nothing about his time at Hogswarts had gone as planned so far, and it was all the fault of that Muggle loving half-blood Stevens. Draco was supposed to have taken his place as a leader of Slytherin house, only to be blocked at every turn. He had not figured out what the Yank had done to the Founder's Portrait to keep it from speaking to Draco and force it to speak to the Half-blood.

Father:

I apologize for how long it has been since my last letter, but I have been busy with my studies, and attempting to deal with what has come to be an insult to the name of Malfoy.

Draco paused. There was an art involved in getting his father to react properly. First, you had to make sure he knew you were behaving as you should as a Malfoy, and then make the issue at hand sound like the family name was being insulted. He dipped his quill into his ink-pot and continued.

As I reported earlier in the year, my cohort in Slytherin house has been sullied by the presence of a Half-blood product of an American witch and some Muggle. I regret to report that the house has failed to rally to show this poser his place. Seemingly, they are all dazzled by some trick the Yank employed to fool the founder's Portrait into speaking with him rather than with someone more suitable, such myself as the current representative of House Malfoy. As a result of this trickery, not even the upper forms are holding to the standards that made Slytherin house great. Half-bloods now stroll about, never even thinking about giving way to their betters.

That was a good start, but he would need to do better. Draco wanted his father to ride in like a war-mage of old and teach that insufferable mudblood Stevens a lesson.

---===oooOOOooo===---

"Mistress?"

Narcissa Malfoy glanced up from her novel. "Yes Sippy?"

The cowering elf hesitantly extended her arm with a familiar envelope clutched in her hand. "A letter from the Young Master, Mistress."

Narcissa accepted the envelope with a small nod. "Thank you Sippy, return to your duties."

She waited until the elf had left the room before carefully opening her son's letter.

Typical. Not even a hello to his mother; she read through the letter and sighed. Draco was so like his father, and not in the good ways. Narcissa marked her place in her book with a silver bookmark, a gift from Lucius from their days in Slytherin house.

She sighed again at the memories of what had been and rose from her chair to deliver Draco's letter to his father. Lucius' library was across the hall from her sitting room, but a knock at the door showed he was not there. How very odd, she reflected. He had not mentioned having an appointment out of the house today. By this time of the morning, Lucius was always in his library. He was not in the dining room either. Lucius was a man who defined himself by his schedule. For him not to be where he was supposed to be suggested something strange was afoot.

Concerned, Narcissa returned to the main hallway where she noticed something out of the ordinary. Music was playing.

Lucius hated music, her husband considered it a frivolous waste of resources, and only allowed it in the house during the social gatherings, balls, and parties expected of those of their station. And even then it was begrudged.

Concerned that the music might be a sign of a possible intruder in the manor, Narcissa drew her wand and made her way up the stairs, finally reaching Lucius' bed chambers, where she stood in shocked silence as the scene she found through the open doorway, her wand almost slipping her fingers.

Lucius was cavorting in front of his full-length mirror, naked other than the white dress shirt he was pulling on as he danced.

"I'm too sexy for my love. Too sexy for my love. Love's going to leave me. I'm too sexy for my shirt. Too sexy for my shirts So sexy it hurts!"

Narcissa's eyes widened in shock. Lucius was singing? No, there were two voices. Her eyes searched the room for the other singer as she stood in the doorway.

"Ah, Narcissa!" Lucius called out over the music and the unknown singer, but still moving sensuously within his shirt. "Isn't it wonderful? A gift from the Dark Lord, Narcissa! He knows me so well!"

Then she watched as he rejoined the singing, moving his dancing to focus toward her, while still focusing on himself in the mirror.

"And I'm too sexy for your party! Too sexy for your party! No way I'm disco dancing, I'm a model you know what I mean, And I do my little turn on the catwalk, yeah on the catwalk on the catwalk, yeah. I do my little turn on the catwalk!"

"Lucius!" she shouted over the music. "Stop this! This isn't you!"

The music stopped suddenly.

"And I'm too sexy for my hat," Lucius continued a Capella, *" Too sexy for my hat, what do you think about that..."* Noticing that the music had stopped and raised his left arm and peeled the sleeve of his shirt back to expose his Dark Mark. "What's wrong," he asked the magical tattoo. "Why did you stop?"

"Your wife wants to speak with you," the voice that had been singing along said. "Hi Cissy!"

"What is this Lucius?" Narcissa asked, finding the idea that the Dark Mark now spoke to be more than slightly disturbing.

"The Dark Lord has returned," Lucius said almost in a state of joyous hysterics. "And he has gifted me with this wonderful enhancement of my Mark!" he enthused, turning his arm so that she could see the Dark Mark.

Narcissa gasped, rather than the Skull and Snake that had been on her Husband's forearm for most of two decades, there was now a yellow disk, which winked at her and smiled, exposing a mouthful of seemingly very real teeth. Before the disk smiled, its appearance had reminded her of a type of decoration she associated with the Muggle born of Hogwarts from her school days.

With a trembling hand, she extended Draco's letter. "A letter from Draco, with information he feels you should know."

Lucius snatched the letter away from her, and Narcissa backed out of his chambers. By the time she reached the stairs the music had started again.

Narcissa made her way to her sitting room as quickly as she could. After seeing what she had, she really needed a drink.

----==000OOO000==----

5 November 1991

Lunchtime was in full swing, and the constant buzz of conversation gave Tracey the chance she had been waiting for since Harry had somehow caused a Muggle man to appear in the Great Hall, and caused him to disappear half an hour later. "Harry," Tracey said softly to the boy on her right. "Can I ask you a question?"

"You just did," Harry snarked, looking up from his sandwich. "Sure, go ahead. I might even answer it."

"That man the other day," Tracey said hesitantly. "You said he was named Albert Einstein?"

Harry nodded and took another bite.

"I've looked him up...," she continued, trying to stay calm and get her information. In doing so, her voice climbed out of her traditional soft murmur. "He's supposed to be dead."

The pronouncement of death got the attention of the Slytherins sitting around the pair.

"Well... sure. Now," Harry said reaching for his goblet. "I picked him up from 1953. He was on a winter vacation near Lake Placid, New York back then, and I think he was kind of bored, because he never has a problem taking a few minutes to help me out once I explained what I had done. Good soup today."

Tracey had to remind herself to breath at the boy's casual dismissal of the impossibility of what she had seen him do.

"You..." she swallowed, trying to calm herself. "You brought a Muggle man forward in time 38 years to help you with your homework?"

"I don't do it all the time," Harry said defensively. "I've only called him five or six times, and only when I'm seriously stuck. I wish I could go back and see him instead of bringing him to me, but you know how much trouble that is."

Tracey felt the beginnings of what she had taken to calling a 'Harry Headache' form behind her eyes. "No, I don't. Until I saw you do it, I didn't believe anyone could do what you did."

Harry looked up, startled. "You can't?"

"No." She confirmed.

"Can't do what?" Millie Bulstrode asked.

"He," Tracey said, gesturing toward Harry with her fork, "apparited a dead Muggle from 1953 into the Great Hall."

"What?" Ted Nott demanded. "Why would you do that?"

"How did you do that?" Daphne Greengrass asked. "Remote apparition is impossible. Remote apparition of a corpse is even more so."

"It's not what it sounds like," Harry responded defensively.

"The Muggle is dead now. He was living in 1953," Tracey tried to explain. "He somehow apparited

a living version of a dead man through time and space into the Great Hall, and seems to think we can all do it."

"Are you sure you can't do it?" Harry asked. "I mean it's really simple. I showed you, I used a wand and everything."

"And don't get me started on the wand that you never use," Tracey said crossing her arms across her chest.

As one, the rest of the Slytherin first years blinked, then each of them tried to think of any time that they had witnessed Stevens use a wand.

"You're a squib!" Draco declared loudly, his voice overriding the murmur of the dining students, attracting attention from throughout the Great Hall. "A squib in Slytherin? Oh, when my father hears about this..."

"Shut it Puss," Ted snapped. "We've all seen some spectacular magic done by Stevens, so stop being such an idiot. My sister told me about a pair of women who appeared in the Great Hall during the Halloween feast her second year. From her description what they did when they arrived was a whole lot like what you did when you left to help the Griffie on Halloween."

Tracey watched as Harry fought against a smile. That was when she realized just how much the boy was enjoyed it when the Malfoy abuse he had started spread through the house.

"Draco's stupidity aside," Tracey said quietly. "You have some explaining to do Harry."

Harry looked up and sighed. "Look, I'm not supposed to talk about it."

"Come on Harry," Greg said, while Vinnie nodded at his side. "Tell us what's going on."

"You aren't hurting our morale," Tracey said, recalling what had worried him before. "We aren't stupid, Harry. We've all seen you do things you shouldn't be able to do, and half the time you don't seem to know you aren't supposed to be able to do them. What could possibly be worse? You tell us what's going on, or what we might come up with if we keep imagining what's you're up to?"

"Ok, fine." Harry paused for a moment, as if collecting his thoughts and then continued. "There are different kinds of magic in the world you know? The native Aussies have their own magic; the Mayans have theirs and most of the magicals in Europe and Asia use wands..."

"And Africa," Greg interjected.

"That's mostly in northern Africa and a result of Roman colonization, the same thing that happened here in Britain to the native Magical traditions when Rome invaded."

"Wands were better," Millie nodded.

"Not better, exactly." Harry corrected. "My Uncle Maurice says that the Wands were faster and

easier, that's why they pushed out the older traditions. My people come from an older tradition still, one that... well, the magic is everything. It's hard to explain."

"Try," Daphne demanded.

"Our people don't need a focus or a chant or anything like that. We want something, we concentrate on it, it happens. It's that simple," Harry paused again. "And that's the problem really. It's simple. We have to be careful, or you can get to the point where you don't appreciate things. My sister keeps me honest. Every time I've gotten to feeling like I'm the king of the world or something she busts my chops so that I realize what I was doing. And I do the same for her."

Tracey digested that for a moment. "Why are you here? Not for the schooling obviously."

"Ah, well, I'm different. A long time ago, my Gran married a wand user, and all her kids were wand users, their kids, and their kids. Somehow the Wand User side of the family got winnowed down to just my birth father, and then to me. When my Birth Parents died, I was less than two. My Gran came for me and discovered that I had more than just the wand magic, I also had her Elder magic."

"Elders?" Millie gasped.

"No way!" Ted echoed.

"Yeah," Harry sighed. "Anyway I happily grew up doing magic and hearing stories from my godfather about the things he and my birth father got up to at Hogwarts. Then on my birthday, Professor Dumbledore shows up and tells me I have a place reserved here. I have both kinds of magic. I can use a wand, but I don't need it. I thought it might be fun to learn about where I came from you know?"

"You said something about your Godfather?" Ted noted before asking, "Who is he? Anyone we would know?"

"Sirius Black," Harry said. "He's a big goof, a lot of fun."

"The head of House Black is your Godfather?" Draco asked incredulously. "You're a Black? We're related?"

"Oh God, Puss," Harry said pushing his unfinished soup away. "Way to put me off my lunch. No, I'm not a Black. My birth family name is Potter."

A shocked silence washed over the first year Slytherins. Millie broke it. "You're Harry Potter?"

"No, I'm Harry Stevens," Harry said simply.

"You defeated the Dark Lord," Ted whispered.

"I did not," Harry protested. "I don't know where people get this stuff. I'm not rich, I don't have a

magical scar, and I didn't fight a dark wizard while still wearing diapers. I wasn't even two yet, I didn't do anything. It was my Grandmother who offed the chump."

"You did!" Daphne insisted, "Everyone knows you did."

"Then everyone is an idiot," Harry said dismissively. "I didn't even kill him when I gave him back his body on the first."

"What?" Tracey gasped. "You gave him his body back?"

"Well, yeah. When my Gran messed him up, she disembodied him. He's been drifting around possessing squirrels and stuff. He latched on to Professor Quirrell and..." Harry's expression brightened and he laughed. "Wow, I didn't know I was doing that, from squirrel to Quirrell... Funny huh?"

"Harry!" Tracey said.

"Ok. Ok. Sheesh. So anyway the Voldemort guy was sort of latched on to the back of Professor Quirrell's head, he told me he was still pissed about losing his body so I gave him a new one, and then to keep him from causing trouble I sent him and Quirrell to Voldemort's old house... Now that I think about it, that's probably why DADA has been canceled since the 2nd. No teacher."

----==oooOOOooo==----

The doors to the Great Hall slammed open, drawing everyone's attention away from Harry's confession. Along with the rest of the students, Harry found his attention drawn to the man who strode into the room as if he owned the place.

This newcomer was tall, with long blond hair and sculpted features, the man looked for all the world like an older Draco Malfoy.

"My father is here," Draco drawled with a tone of deep satisfaction. "You're in trouble now, Potter."

"My name is Stevens, Puss," Harry responded with a shake of his head. "Did you really tattle to your daddy on me? Seriously? You're more of a puss than I gave you credit for."

"Ah, Lucius," Dumbledore called as he rose from his place at the staff table. "When I reported to the board that I was going to need to find a replacement for our missing Defense against the Dark Arts Professor, I hardly expected to receive a personal visit."

"I'm not here about your staffing problems, Albus," the elder Malfoy said with a superior sneer. "I am here in response to reports I have received about certain students showing disrespect toward some of our most important traditions."

Harry shook his head again, certain that he was the subject of those reports. Draco's smug smirk confirmed this for him beyond any doubt.

The only question is what was he going to do about it.

"Certain students, Lucius?"

"One in particular," the man confirmed. "Perhaps we should meet in your office to deal with the Stevens boy's expulsion."

Dumbledore blinked. "Perhaps we should. Mr. Stevens? Meet us in my office if you would?"

"Yes sir," Harry responded as he rose from his seat at the table. He noticed that while his fellow students were now all watching him, the staff were all focused on the Headmaster. Taking advantage of this he reached over and dope slapped the back of Draco's head. "If I end up expelled Draco, I'm going to hurt you. Just so you know."

"You can't..." the blond protested.

"Watch me," the Warlock said as he disappeared.

---===oooOOOooo===---

Harry popped into the Headmaster's office, inspiring gasps of surprise from the Portraits that hung on the walls of the room.

"Greetings Young Master Harry," the sorting hat called from its place on a shelf. "What brings you to the Headmaster's office?"

"Hi Hat," Harry responded. "Evidently I've made a board member angry by calling out his son every time the little creep tried to throw his father's weight around. He says I'm going to be expelled and the Headmaster sent me to his office, to get yelled at, I guess."

"I find it unlikely that the Headmaster will allow you to be expelled, Master Harry, though I expect the Headmaster expected you to wait outside his office," the hat observed.

"He should have been clearer with his instructions then," Harry grinned. "Thanks Hat."

"Well, I have sent for the Baron," Phineas Black said from his frame. "If an heir of one of the founders is to be expelled there will be a reckoning."

Harry smiled, "Thank you Headmaster, but 'Heir of the Founders'? Seriously? After a thousand years I would think that most everyone who has a pureblood somewhere in their ancestry could make that claim."

The portrait returned Harry's smile. "You are correct of course, but I am aware of no others who count one of the founders as living family. That alone makes you special, and when you consider you are also a member of my old house..."

Fawkes squawked from his stand, so Harry crossed the office to where the firebird waited, and

began scratching the ancient bird on the back of his head. Fawkes crooned his appreciation of the attention. "I guess I'm in trouble, eh Fawkes?"

The phoenix responded with a long twittering call.

"Well, I guess," Harry agreed grudgingly. "But I'm still going to end up being yelled at."

That had the immortal bird laughing at him.

"Laugh it up, Feather Head. No one yells at Phoenixes," Harry grumped. "But yelling at kids, that's ok. Everyone does it."

Fawkes fell off his perch laughing. Harry sighed and took a seat directly in front of the Headmaster's desk; it was probably going to turn out to be one of those days.

The phoenix was still rolling on the floor laughing at Harry when the door leading to the hallway opened. "Now calm yourself Lucius, I'm sure we can come to an accommodation that will satisfy everyone," the Headmaster was saying.

"I don't particularly care about satisfying everyone Albus," the elder Malfoy sniffed. "What I care about is the great traditions of Slytherin house, and the fact that this... half-blood is walking all over them."

"Harry?" Dumbledore said as he stopped in the doorway, causing Malfoy to run into him.

"Hello Headmaster," Harry responded.

"You allow the boy free run of your office?" the blond asked incredulously. For the first time Harry found he understood the saying 'the apple doesn't fall far from the tree'. Draco's dad was a massive dick. He had never really liked being talked about while he was in the room. Or being referred to as 'boy'.

"Mr. Stevens was invited to my office, Lucius. I was simply surprised he arrived before we did." The old man made his way to his desk and sat down. "So, what are your concerns about Mr. Steven's continued attendance at Hogwarts?"

"You remained seated when Headmaster Dumbledore and I entered the room boy," the man said as the expression on his face seemed to say that Harry was something he was likely to scrape off his shoe.

Harry managed to restrain himself from congratulating Draco's dad on his excellent skills of observation. He understood that this was one of the times in life where being a smart mouth probably was not a good idea. "Yes sir, I did."

"Didn't your *mother*," the man said the word as if it tasted bad, "teach you to rise in the presence of your betters?"

"My mother," Harry responded, trying very hard not to get angry, "taught me that I had elders, but not betters."

Lucius leaned down until he towered just above Harry. "Perhaps I should visit your mother, and show her how she erred when she chose to bind herself to your mongrel father."

"Lucius!" Dumbledore said in a manner that was clearly a warning.

Harry brightened. "Oh, yes sir that would be great! I'd pay money to see that."

"What?" Malfoy asked, shocked at Harry's reaction.

"Do you have any idea when you'll be there? I wouldn't want to miss it. Do you need our address?"

"Mr. Stevens, you aren't helping." Dumbledore sighed.

Harry pasted an innocent expression on his face and waited silently while wondering why the Headmaster would think he wanted to help.

"And Lucius, if you dare to threaten one of my students again, you and I will have to see if your skills approach mine," Dumbledore continued knowing that the man was unaware that his life was being saved.

"If you must, Albus..." Lucius responded. "All right boy, explain the trick you used to make the founder's portrait speak with you?"

"Trick?" Harry asked, honestly perplexed. "There wasn't a trick, I presented myself to the portrait like the prefects told me to, and Uncle Sal said 'hi'."

The gaslights in the Headmaster's office flared as the Bloody Baron entered through the wall behind the Headmaster's desk. "What fool," the ghost rasped, "believes that Salazar Slytherin could be forced to do anything, in life or as a portrait?"

Lucius Malfoy goggled at the sight of the Slytherin house ghost. "You speak?"

"Of course I speak," the specter responded. "And I remember you, Lucius Malfoy, a whining brat with delusions of privilege; your son is no better."

"Indeed," a new voice interjected. The attention of the living people in the room was immediately drawn to Phineas Black's frame. Instead of the infamous former Headmaster, the frame now contained the image of Salazar Slytherin. "Who are you to question the right of the heir of two of the best people I ever knew in life to be in my house?"

"How are you doing this boy?" Lucius demanded spinning to face Harry.

"I'm not doing a thing," Harry said, becoming angry again. He had never liked being called 'boy', especially by some jerk adult who he didn't know.

"Don't lie to me, boy!"

"Headmaster, do I have to put up with this? Who is this guy anyway?" Harry asked, taking advantage of the fact that the visitor had not been introduced.

Lucius grasped Harry's chin with his right hand, forcing Harry to look at him, and raised his snake head cane in his left. "You will answer my questions boy," he hissed. "Or I will beat the answers out of you!"

Harry broke free of the man's grip and was on his feet when over the shouts of the Headmaster, Bloody Baron and Salazar Slytherin; a new voice entered the conversation.

"What kind of zoo are you running here Dumbledore? And why are you allowing this dead man to manhandle my Grand Nephew?"

---===oooOOOooo===---

Lucius Malfoy spun in place to face the new speaker, drawing his wand from his cane as he did so, only to drop both the wand and the cane when his hands started to change, and feathers sprouted all over his body. A silver white peacock stood in the middle of the Headmaster's office and let loose with a mournful call

"AAAAAAA-HAAAAA!"

"Auntie Endora!" Harry protested. "I was doing ok, I didn't need to be saved."

"I'm not here to save you Harry," the red-head seated in the ornate throne that had appeared with her said with a smile. "I'm here to prevent you from leveling this castle and killing that feathered fool. Doing either would certainly be something of a public service, but my sister is quite attached to this old pile of stones."

Harry sat back down in his chair, and crossed his arms over his chest. The family always seemed to want to treat him like he was still little and wasn't in control of his powers. It was so frustrating sometimes.

"Madam," Dumbledore said as he rose from his chair, warily keeping an eye on the peacock that was still coming to terms with being a peacock. "I am Albus Dumbledore, the Headmaster of this school. And you are?"

"I know who you are Dumbledore," Endora sniffed. "You're the one who allowed this pretentious nothing to lay hands upon my Grand Nephew. I am Endora of the Elder Sect. Harry's mother, my daughter would be here herself, but she is currently tied up dealing with the fall out of another presumptuous young man laying hands on Harry's sister."

"Tabitha?" Harry asked suddenly alert. "Is she all right?"

"Tabitha is fine Harry, the young idiot somewhat less so," Endora said softly before winking at her

favorite nephew. "She broke his nose."

"Good," Harry nodded.

Endora looked over to the portrait of Slytherin. "Salazar, you're looking well for a dead man."

"Lady Endora," Slytherin said with a nod. "I wondered when you would be visiting us as soon as I saw Harry was sorted into my house."

"So Dumbledore, explain."

"The Malfoy family has long been accustomed to getting what they want. Lucius perhaps more than those who came before him," the Headmaster explained, before pausing as the Peacock began squawking in panic as what had happened to him finally filtered through his new bird consciousness. Fawkes added to the din by falling off his perch, once again in laughter.

"I suppose there is some boring reason why I shouldn't just kill him and be done with it?" Endora asked as she silenced and froze the panicking bird with a gesture.

"Explaining his death would be inconvenient..."

"It always is," Endora sighed. "Harry, don't you have a class to get to?"

"Yes Ma'am," Harry stood up, disappointed that as usual, he was going to miss out on the Auntie Endora going all medieval on someone.

The pair waited until the door closed behind the student before Endora continued. "Let me be clear Dumbledore. Our children are valuable to us. My daughter explained this to you when you came to her asking to enroll Harry in your school, and still you allowed this fool to lay hands on the boy. Harry's anger was spiking rather rapidly when I arrived and he was quite likely going to kill the man, and I wasn't exaggerating about his destroying your castle in his fury."

"Surely not?" Dumbledore asked.

"Just as with your people, our powers are fed by our emotions, and anger is perhaps the strongest of them all," Endora sighed. "Many of history's greatest disasters were the result of one of our young going into a rage. Atlantis, Vesuvius, Krakatau, Tunguska I could go on."

Dumbledore swallowed. What had he brought into his school?

"Well, as fascinating as this is, I must be off," Endora said as she sat back in her chair.

"Remember what I've said Dumbledore, and keep your idiots away from my grandnephew."

"And Lucius?" Dumbledore asked gesturing toward the peacock.

"If I must," she sighed again and gestured, in the peacock's place stood a disheveled Lucius Malfoy. "The old man saved your life, fool; if there is a next time I promise you an eternity of

pain."

Dumbledore blinked and the woman was gone, along with her throne.

"What... what are they?" Lucius gasped.

"Elders Lucius, they are Elders," Albus said. "And you've managed to anger them."

"The Ministry must be alerted," Lucius said. "If the Elders are coming for us, we need to prepare! The boy must be captured and... and... and used against them... somehow."

"An excellent plan Lucius," Dumbledore nodded. "I can only add a single improvement."

Lucius looked up hopefully. He thought the old man a fool, but he was perhaps the most powerful wizard in the world. "What is it Albus, what else can we do?"

"Obliviate!" And Albus Dumbledore set about removing the memories of the day from the mind of Lucius Malfoy. He carefully constructed memories of Lucius coming to Hogwarts to consult with the Headmaster over disciplinary issues with young Draco, and made sure to install an aversion to the idea of approaching Harry Stevens in particular, and red-headed women in general.

Albus stepped back from the presumably former Death Eater to inspect his work. He then raised his wand again for a final addition. Lucius Malfoy in a burst of philanthropy would be replacing the school's aging brooms with new basic models. There had to be some penalty for nearly destroying the school.

Harry Potter and the Elder Sect **The Club**

It had taken weeks, but using Quirrell's ill-fitting wand, Tom had finally managed to duplicate the Dark Mark on his only remaining servant's arm completely from memory. His original notes on his Mark were no doubt still in his secure redoubt awaiting his return, but there was no way he was going to allow Quirrell to know his secrets.

Quirrell was still gasping from the pain of the installation of his master's mark when the barely pubescent Voldemort moved to call for his minions. Only to freeze in confusion when his mark changed from his carefully designed skull and snake to a smiling yellow disk.

"Hi ya, Fearless Leader," the disk asked. "How's it hanging?"

"You... speak?" Tom asked incredulously.

"You have a firm grasp of the obvious," the disk noted with an approving nod. "No wonder you're in charge. Were you looking to poke me in the eye with that wand, or did you want me to call your buttboys?"

"Call..." Tom hesitated, and swallowed noisily. "Call my followers."

"Okey Dokey Bossman," the disk's eyes narrowed in a manner than suggested both a squint and concentration. "And done. Do you have any requests?"

"Requests?" Tom and Quirrell echoed.

"No problem, Cap'n," the disk laughed, "We'll just pull out an oldie but goodie!"

Tom blinked at that announcement before locking eyes with Quirrell. "Was a call sent?" he asked.

"I don't know..." Quirrell whispered. "I didn't feel anything."

A musical chime filled the air and the room filled with his marked Death Eaters, including those supposed to be imprisoned in Azkaban Prison. Tom suddenly realized he was standing alone, and that Quirrell was among the others.

The Death Eaters had obviously been summoned with no forewarning. Bellatrix was standing in her decayed prison robes with a handful of something held to her mouth. Lucius Malfoy was

naked, covered in soap, with a shower cap upon his head and a scrub brush in his hand. Peter Pettigrew appeared in his rat form only to change to human, who stood blinking owlishly before taking his place in the back of the crowd.

The involuntarily transported Death Eaters milled about for several long seconds until the Dark Marks all began speaking in eerie unison.

"All right you lot," the yellow disks on each of their arms said. "Where is your dignity? Show your master all the respect he is due!" Instantly each of the Death Eater's left arms presented the immortal two-finger salute known to British schoolboys everywhere.

"Ah one," the disks called out, "Ah two! Ah one, two three!"

On cue, the grouped Death Eaters threw their arms about their neighbor's shoulders, their upper torsos manifesting identical white cotton jumpers with their first names emblazoned in glossy black letters. Before the shock of this new change could sink into anyone in the room, marching music swelled from nowhere, and they all began to sing:

"Who's the leader of the club," they chorused ,

"Who's enslaved both you and me?

V-O-L-D-E-M-O-R-THey! there, Hi! there, Ho! therePurebloods are as stupid as can beV-O-L-D-E-M-O-R-T"

" Voldemort! " The assembled group shouted,

" Dumbledore !" a quiet voice that sounded suspiciously like that of Severus Snape, if the potions master had been huffing helium for some reason, argued,

" Voldemort! "

" Dumbledore !" Snape supplied, continuing with his contrary, if highly pitched, ways.

"Forever let us hold our dark marks

High! High! High! High!

Come along and sing a song

And join the murder spree!

V-O-L-D-E-M-O-R-T

Lord Voldemort's club

We'll have fun

We'll hide our faces!

Hide! Hide! Hide! Hide!

We'll do things and

We'll go places

All around the world

We'll go pillaging!

Who's the leader of the club

Who's enslaved you and me

V-O-L-D-E-M-O-R-T

Hey! there, Hi! there, Ho! There

Purebloods are as stupid as can be

V-O-L-D-E-M-O-R-T

Voldemort!

Voldemort!

Forever let us hold our Dark Marks

High! High! High! High!

Come along and sing a song

And join the murder spree!

V-O-L-D-E-M-O-R-T

As quickly as it had begun, the music died, and the assembled Death Eaters broke from their poses.

"Master?" Evan Rosier asked incredulously. "You're so... young."

"Master!" Lucius Malfoy shrieked girlishly as he threw himself to the floor and began kissing the hems of the boy's robes. "You've returned to us, thank you for your gift, you know me so well."

"I have returned," Tom said, stating the obvious and trying to kick Malfoy away from him before the man managed to soak his shoes with the saliva of devotion. The sight of Bellatrix in the white

jumper suddenly captured his attention... had she always been so... Tom was suddenly very happy that the robes he wore hid so much.

"You aren't the Master!" Gregory Goyle Senior spat. "You're nothing but a spotty brat!"

The rest of the Death Eaters appeared to have only noticed Tom's age when Goyle mentioned it. The majority drew their wands, while a minority, including Lucius and Bellatrix, continued to gaze at their returned Dark Lord in undisguised adulation.

For his part, Tom was far too busy staring at Bellatrix's chest to notice. A very minor part of his mind, the only part not finding heaving sweater puppies fascinating to the exclusion of all else, was devoted to wondering why his salivary glands were now working overtime.

"ello, 'ello', 'ello'," the yellow disks on the arms of those aiming their wands at the spotty teen said in a horrible Hollywood version of the stereotypical British Bobby, "Wat's all this then? Are you lot threatening your liege-lord? We can't have that. Assume the position lads!"

As one, the threatening Death Eaters stood rigidly upright, their feet shoulder width apart. Panic filled their eyes as each of their left arms rose to shoulder level and their left hands formed a fist, then with all their strength, each of the offenders savagely punched themselves in the crotch, once, twice, three times.

As one, the offending Death Eaters fell to the floor in agony. The moaning finally tore Tom's attention away from Bella's chest. "Wha?" he said intelligently as he covertly wiped his chin.

"The troops got out of line Boss," the disk on Quirrell's arm said. "We just enforced a little discipline."

"Ok," Tom agreed, "good. Good."

"Would you like Bella to do some star jumps, Boss?" the disk on Bellatrix's arm asked.

"Oh, yeah," Tom nodded. "That would be great!"

---oooOOOooo---

"Warden!" the Jason Biggers shouted as he entered the main Azkaban administration offices. "Warden!"

Warden Timothy Jensen sighed. "I know Biggers, the Special Prisoners are singing again. They've been singing for a month, it's not big news anymore."

"No, sir," Biggers gasped. "They're gone."

"What do you mean 'they're gone'? Who is gone?"

"The Special Prisoners, sir." Biggers said. "All of them."

Jensen paled. "Gone? What do you mean gone?"

"Their cells are empty. The doors are still locked and still intact, the prisoner map can't find them, and worse yet, the Dementors on duty in the Special area are panicked."

"Panicked? How can a Dementor panic?" Jensen demanded.

"They're all milling about bumping into each other, trying to get as far away from the empty cells as possible and... and..." the young auror hesitated.

"What is it man? What are they doing?"

"They're screaming," Biggers said. "It's a horrible sound. Whatever happened to the Special Prisoners has terrified the Dementors."

"Merlin!" Jensen exclaimed, trying to imagine what could possibly frighten a demon like a Dementor.

---oooOOOooo---

Meanwhile, a young blonde girl happily skipped through the cobbled streets of Diagon Alley. Spotting the gleaming edifice of Gringotts, she smiled and continued her way up the marble stairs to where the guards stood at rigid attention.

"Hi," she chirped, "I'm here to see the manager."

The two warriors shared a confused glance before redirecting their gaze at the air in front of them. The senior of the two had had this position for most of a century, and never before had any human spoken with him.

"Could you tell him I'm here?"

Neither guard spoke, for indeed they were forbidden to by tradition and regulation. The younger of the pair wondered if the punishment that would be forthcoming would be worth the sheer joy of punting the youngling human across the street.

"Oh, I get it, can't talk on duty. Ok, I'll go find him."

As each watched the idiot youngling enter the bank in his peripheral vision, both of the guards issues a small sigh. There would likely be blood... and they were going to miss it.

---oooOOOooo---

"I'm here to see the Manager," the human youngling said entirely too cheerfully.

"The Manager sees no one!" The Duty Floor Walker sneered. There was something special about disappointing humans. He tried to disappoint as many as he could every day.

"Oh," she pouted, "that's too bad. Maybe I can change his mind."

The Floor Walker blinked in amazement as the girl skipped toward the entry to the Staff areas. "Stop her!" he called to the guards at the portal.

The pair stood in the doorway, crossing their pikes as they had been trained, completely barring the way.

The Floor Walker blinked as he watched the girl passed between the guards as if they were not there. He moved to his security station at a run and slapped the crystal that would put the bank into lock down, warning the senior management of a security problem.

Hopefully, he would keep his head.

---oooOOOooo---

Ognar Flintshard moved through the tunnels in a foul mood. A human child had penetrated into the staff areas of the bank and no one could find it, even after an hour of searching chamber to chamber? Head would roll. The goblin that humans of Britain knew as Ragnock had not achieved his position by allowing things like this to happen.

He stormed past the guards standing post outside his office, closing the door behind him.

"Hi Oggie," a young cheerful voice called from his desk, where his chair was spinning around. "I figured the best way to find you would be to wait in your office. You've got a great chair."

"How did you get in here?"

"How else?" the child asked as she stopped spinning in the chair to face him. "Magic."

"Have you any idea how much trouble you are in?" Ognar thundered, wondering even as he did so just how this child had learned enough of his family name to refer to him in a diminutive. "Your family will be sued into poverty!"

"I kind of doubt that," the child laughed. "My uncle said that you've had dealings with him and that you'd likely jump at the chance to make a little pocket change."

"Your... uncle?" Flintshard asked suspiciously. There were a few humans who knew things that could embarrass him... humans he hadn't managed to have killed yet."

"Oh, yes," the girl smiled. "My Uncle Arthur."

Flintshard's blood went cold. This girl was one of them. One of that vile coven that held themselves apart from profit and loss. Arthur and his friend Flamel were exceptions with their Philosopher's Stone scam, but they only did it as a joke. The idea that anyone would use profit as a way to score a joke was so alien a concept it had taken Flintshard most of a century to understand it. "You are his family?"

"Yep," the small female agreed. "I need to make some sales, and Uncle Arthur said, that if any beings understood how to make a profit, it would be your people, and you in particular."

That caught Flintshard's ear. "Profit"?

"Oh, not for me, personally, but profit just the same," the girl nodded. "And a healthy cut for you and your people."

Flintshard's interest was most specifically piqued, but he was not about to let this slip of a youngling know that. "Why should I care? I'm running a bank; I don't have time for every half thought out plot you immortals come up with to pass the time."

The girl nodded. "Uncle Arthur said you would say that," a sly smile crossed her lips, "and Uncle Arthur told me about your weaknesses." From nowhere the girl produced a green and white rectangular box.

Flintshard caught the scent immediately. "No!"

"Yes," The girl nodded.

With trembling hands, he opened the package to confirm the presences of his treasure. The rarest of the rare delicacies. He swallowed noisily, "What do you want?"

She explained her plan in detail.

"Ten cases," Flintshard demanded.

"Five now," the girl smiled, "five upon completion of our arrangement."

---oooOOOooo---

The return of Azkaban's contingent of Death Eaters was as unexpected as their earlier exit had been. Warden Timothy Jensen tried to question the prisoners on their disappearance, but could not get a word in edgewise. The men were all busy singing drinking songs.

He did not have any more luck with Bellatrix Lestrange. The woman was not singing, but she lay on her pallet, covered in sweat moaning quietly about how much her breasts hurt.

---oooOOOooo---

Harry sighed as he left the castle. Telling people of his background had turned out to be a mistake. Now everyone was treating him differently, asking endless questions about the night he lost his birth family in 1981. A night he did not remember.

He had thought that a walk around the castle would allow him to sort things out. Doing so meant ditching a class, which generally meant that someone would be riding his butt about doing that. To avoid that confrontation, he created a doppelganger and sent him to transfiguration to take notes.

He wondered if anyone would notice.

Probably not, these wand wizards did not seem to be as aware of magic as his family was.

On some level, he knew that there was a lesson in all of this. Being capable of pretty much anything, of having pretty much anything, maybe it was good to be reminded that there were things he could not have.

Not that it meant that he had to like it.

Darkness came early to Scotland in December. The air was crisp, hovering just above freezing. It sort of reminded him of home. Connecticut's late fall was much like this some years. Not the getting dark this early of course, but the chill in the air.

Approaching the Grounds keeper's cabin, Harry turned to look back at the castle. All lit up, the school certainly was pretty... then a light caught his eye, past Hagrid's cabin and at the edge of the forest.

That struck Harry as odd. The forest was supposed to be off limits, but the light piqued his curiosity, so he made his way to see what was going on.

"KROUP CHAGSUP TCSHUP tea Trudy?"

Harry paused while he tried to parse what had been said. The speaker was human, female, and young, and she was trying to speak Troll. Languages were always an issue for Harry. The ability to speak to other beings was an innate skill, not unlike hearing or seeing. He did not need concentrate on the words to know what the other was saying, and his magic allowed him to be understood by the other being...

However, when someone was speaking in a language not their own, it was confusing. Harry was not sure, but he thought that the speaker had just offered someone named Trudie some more tea, which was odd, because Trollish did not have a word for 'tea' and Trudie was not a Troll name.

He entered the clearing to find it lit by blue flames suspended in midair. In the center of the clearing sat a table and a pair of chairs. Harry saw that the human speaker was that Hermione girl he had rescued on Halloween night, and seated across from her was the troll from that night, still dressed in her green sundress.

"Oh, hello Harry," Hermione called from her place at the table. "I was going to see if I could find you after my free period."

"Hi," Harry responded, hesitating for a moment before deciding that both the girl and the troll had seem his magic before and conjuring a chair for himself. "I thought I heard someone speaking troll."

"I found a book in the library on Trollish and managed to teach myself the basic syntax when Trudie and I became friends after you cleared up our misunderstanding." The girl blushed, "How's

my accent? Trudie says that I'm fine, but she's too sweet to tell me bad news."

"Ok, I guess. I could make you out, and the human throat really isn't built for Trollish."

That seemed to make her happy, so Harry carried on. "You two are friends?"

"Oh yes," Hermione nodded while the troll, whose name was evidently 'Trudie' voiced an affirmative. "And I was going to try to find you to see if you could do your clothing thing. Trudie loves her sundress, but its winter now and she could really use something more suited to the weather.

Trudie vocalized a 'please' as well.

"Ok," Harry said gesturing so that Trudie was cloaked in a dappled green snowsuit, complete with a fur trim on the cuffs and around the hood.

Almost immediately, the Troll began voicing her complaints.

"What is she saying?" Hermione demanded. "She's going too fast for me to keep up."

"It seems that she didn't want her sundress changed into winter gear," Harry sighed. "She wanted winter clothing as well. Harry gestured and a bundle wrapped in brown paper appeared next to the Troll named 'Trudie'. "There you go. Your sundress and a selection of other outfits."

The girls, both human and troll immediately began tearing at the paper to examine Trudie's acquisitions, while Harry contemplated just what had gone wrong in his life that had resulted in his becoming a fashion designer for trolls.

"Harry?" the Hermione girl asked hesitantly.

"Yeah?"

"I was wondering... I mean you don't have to, but it would be nice..."

Harry sat wondering why she could not just spit it out, and why she was blushing.

"Anyway," Hermione continued, "Trudie and I are friends, and our tea parties in the forest are sort of a club, and... I was, well, really both of us were wondering..."

"What are you wondering?" Harry asked.

"Could you make us some... matching outfits. For the club?"

Harry blinked. He certainly had not expected that.

---oooOOOooo---

Pansy blinked. She had looked up from her Potions essay to find a girl she did not recognize inexplicably dressed in Muggle clothing and standing in front of the Founder's portrait as if she has somehow just appeared there.

That of course was not possible. The only person who could possibly 'just appear' in the Slytherin common room was Harry Stevens... Potter... Harry. He was the only one who could do that, and it was Saturday. As a day student, Stevens was almost never around on weekends. Pansy nudged Tracey Davis who was sitting to her left.

"Who is that?" Pansy whispered. "The girl speaking to the Founder's portrait?"

"I don't know," Tracey replied in the same tone. "One second there wasn't anyone there, and then she just... appeared."

"Hi!" the stranger said as she approached the first years at their study tables, carrying a tray of... something. "Feel like a cookie? I mean biscuit? Free samples."

"Who are you?" Millie asked. "and how did you get into our common room?"

"I'm Tabitha, Harry's sister," the blonde said as if that explained everything, as indeed it did. "My Girl Scout troop is doing the annual cookie sale and Harry mentioned that he hadn't seen anything like that here, so I thought, vast untapped market, you know? Anyway, I'm going to be taking orders after lunch in your big cafeteria place... The place with the fancy ceiling, and I've got a ton of cookies to move, so I thought I'd start here with the free samples. Cookie?"

Millie hesitated, little of what the stranger said made any sense, but she said she was Harry's sister, so the large girl took one of the dark chocolate covered disks.

"Oh, take more than that," the blonde girl urged. "Don't worry about your figures girls, I've charmed these babies to be no calories, no fat, all taste. You could kill a case of them and still fit into your swimsuits this summer."

"What?" one of the fifth year girls asked from the next table. "Biscuits that are just *taste* ?"

"Yepper," the girl who was much more than a witch nodded. "With these, you keep the moment on the lips, and totally skip the lifetime on the hips." She waited as all of the witches in the Common room began to smile widely. "Free samples?"

Pansy reached out for the offered tray, which she noticed never seemed to run out of biscuits, and selected one of the more yellow disks. A quick nibble and she was astounded by the flavor of lemon filling her mouth. The biscuit was quickly consumed and she reached for another, only to have the tray jerked out of her reach.

"Free samples, eh?" Draco Malfoy said as he snatched the tray away. "I guess these are mine then."

"Ah," the Stevens girl said, her eyes narrowing. "You must be What's His Name, Boytoy."

"My name is Draco Malfoy. I'm surprised you haven't heard of me. Hasn't your brother has spoken of me?" Draco taunted. "Told you of all the times I've bested him?"

"Actually, he just described you as an overdressed sissy who spends way too much time on his hair," Tabitha corrected. "He may have also mentioned that you were a little dick with delusions of adequacy." The girl's nose twitched, and the tray Draco had stolen wrapped itself around his hands. "Didn't your mother ever teach you not to take things that don't belong to you?" She asked as Draco began to panic when he could not free his hands. "Don't even try to mess with me, Pretty Boy. Harry's the nice one, he'll give you chance after chance. Me, I don't do that, I can be an evil little witch when I set my mind to it."

"The sale will be up in your cafeteria, after lunch. Tell your friends." The blond girl called as she disappeared from the Slytherin common room.

---oooOOOooo---

The staff assembled to watch their students queuing up for the Stevens girl's biscuits.

"Purely out of curiosity Headmaster," Severus Snape asked, trying to get the memory of the amazing flavor of chocolate and mint biscuit out of his mind. How much was it the girl said that they cost? "Why are you allowing this?"

"I can see no harm from this," Dumbledore explained, not mentioning the twelve cases of those lovely 'Lemon Chalet Cremes ' biscuits currently in his office. "Besides, between the arrangement Miss Stevens has with the Goblins and her own considerable power, I'm not sure I could have stopped her if I wanted to."

"Indeed," Minerva McGonagall said, eyeing the line of students in front of the Gringotts' kiosk where the Goblin bankers were changing Galleons to Muggle Yankee Dollars. "I was amazed to find the girl handing out free samples in my common room before Lunch."

"Earlier than that, surely," Pomona Sprout asked. "She was in my common room handing out free samples just before lunch."

"No, she was in my common room," Filius Flitwick argued. "With some of the most delightful biscuits... peanut butter flavor she said."

"Let us just say, the Elders have a flexible association with time," Dumbledore sighed, clearly not liking the idea that those of an eleven-year-old girl dwarfed his fabled powers. "She was quite likely in all of your common rooms at the same time."

---oooOOOooo---

"Uh, two boxes of the Samoas," George Weasley said, looking over the available biscuits.

"Three of the Thin Mints," Fred interjected.

"Ohh, and two of the Do-Si-Dos," George finished.

"Just write your order down on the next free line of the order form," Tabitha directed.

"Why?" Fred asked.

"So I know how many to order."

The twins exchanged a look. "What do you mean, you'll know how many to order? You're selling off that pile right there," George pointed out.

"Which I only have," Tabitha said slowly, as if speaking to a young child, "because I knew how many to order."

Again, the twins exchanged a look, and filled out the form as the young blonde moved on to the next customer.

"And for you?"

"STEVENS!" Draco Malfoy screamed from across the Great Hall.

"Selling cookies now, I don't have time to play with you, Boytoy," she responded as she handed over the next order.

"Take this off me Stevens!" the first year Slytherin demanded brandishing the former platter that now trapped his hands together. "When my father hears of this..."

"Daddy dearest couldn't get that off of you on the best day of his life," Tabitha said conversationally. "Only two people in the entire world can, and I'm one of them." She handed her latest customer five brightly colored boxes. "And for the record, screaming at me like an idiot or threatening me with someone stupid enough to get my brother angry isn't going to convince me to take it off."

A pair of security goblins appeared between the fuming Malfoy and Tabitha, their bladed weapons at the ready. "Is this *person* annoying you, Mistress?"

"Him? Please guys, a retarded spider monkey could out think this little dick," the girl laughed. "And I've told you, you don't need to call me Mistress. I'm just Tabitha."

"And we have told you," the taller of the two security Goblins rumbled as he returned to his position. "As long as you are in a personal business relationship with the Branch Manager, you will be addressed as Mistress."

"What seems to be the problem?" Dumbledore asked as he approached.

"More Lemon Chalet Cremes, Headmaster?" Tabitha asked innocently.

"She," Malfoy shouted, gesturing with both of his hands, "put this on my hands."

Dumbledore examined the metal tray that had conformed to the Slytherin's hands.

"Amazing," he breathed.

"It's like a transfiguration," Minerva volunteered. "But rather than changing form, the metal changed shape."

"Drano liked my tray enough to try and... borrow it, without permission I might add," Tabitha explained as she filled her next order. "I thought that if he liked it that much, I would make sure he didn't lose it."

"Minerva if you would..." Dumbledore suggested.

The Transfiguration mistress drew her wand and cast. Frowning her brow, she cast again. And again. And again. "It won't change. I tried to turn it to cloth, to water, to vapor... it ignores magic."

"Indeed?" Albus asked, before pulling his wand and trying, only to fail as well. Dumbledore felt his blood go cold. His wand failed? His wand?" He swallowed noisily. "Miss Stevens if you would?"

"I'm a little busy here," she pointed out as she handed out five more boxes of biscuits.

"Please? Remove the tray."

Tabitha turned to see the smirk on the blond's face. He clearly thought he had won. Perhaps it was time for the lesson that Harry should have taught the boy long before. "All right," Her nose twitched and there was a loud clang as the changed tray fell to the stone floor.

"Thank you, Miss Stevens," Dumbledore said, his eyes twinkling, only to be startled as Draco Malfoy started Screaming.

All eyes in the Great Hall were suddenly on the first year Slytherin who was holding his arms in front of his body, staring at his wrists that were startlingly, not attached to any hands. Poppy Pomfrey rushed to the boy, her wand already in motion.

"It's like a splinching, but... different," the Matron said, her confusion evident. "Mr. Malfoy, are you in pain?"

"MY HANDS!" he screamed. "My HANDS!"

"Oh for God's sake," Tabitha sighed. "What a wuss. I hid Harry's whole left leg for three days and he didn't make as much of a fuss." Again, her nose twitched, and the magically warped metal tray leaped from the floor to reattach itself to the boy's wrists. "Go away, Dooby, you're distracting my customers."

"Miss Stevens..." Dumbledore began.

"Only two people in the world can remove that tray from his hands Headmaster," Tabitha said as she handed two more boxes over to their purchaser. "Dingleberry, and me. I'm not inclined to do it until I'm done with my sale." The girl made an odd face. "I knew I should have brought a few girls from the troop with me."

"And how does Mr. Malfoy go about removing it?" Poppy demanded.

"He needs to realize, understand, and actually believe what he did was wrong. He needs to understand that taking things that don't belong to him is wrong, and has consequences," the girl said simply. "Evidently, no one has ever taught him that fairly simple lesson. I learned it from my mother and father, and I am passing that lesson on to Dimson... free of charge, along with another, more important lesson."

"And what would that lesson be?" Dumbledore asked.

"That there is always someone more powerful than you, and you should be careful of annoying them."

"Be that as it may," the Headmaster said, "You cannot leave Mr. Malfoy like this."

"Sure I can," the girl disagreed. "It's easy to do."

"Perhaps I am not being clear," Dumbledore continued. "If you do not release Mr. Malfoy, and release him now, I will be forced to remove my permission for your sale."

"How is that fair?" the girl asked, accompanying the groans of the students still waiting to make their purchases.

"You will find with age, that fairness is not the only concern one has in these situations," the old man's eyes twinkled, "and in the hopes of reminding you of the lesson you want taught to Mr. Malfoy, " there is always someone more powerful than you, and you should be careful of annoying them.' If forced, I will inform your mother."

"Well," the girl said, pulling what appeared to be one of her sign-up sheets, only this one was completely filled out. "It doesn't look like you cut me off early, which means I going to give in. Would you allow me to teach my lesson to Durwood if the teaching of that lesson doesn't cause him physical or psychological harm?"

Dumbledore seemed to ponder the question for several seconds. "I suppose that is acceptable."

"Ok, cool," the girl said while twitching her nose. The tray trapping Malfoy's hands reverted to its original shape, and fell to the stone floor.

"My hands!" Draco said, staring at his fingers with tears in his eyes. "My hands are free. Thank you Headmaster, thank you."

"Not so fast," Tabitha said, twitching her nose again. Draco's clothing shifted from the standard Hogwarts robes to a green blouse and skirt combination. The blouse was topped with a khaki sash decorated with a single round cloth badge. Closer examination revealed the badge proclaimed its wearer "Enormous Loser".

"Ok, you're in uniform. As the Cookie Sales Committee Chair of troop 328, I hereby deputize you as an honorary Girl Scout. Welcome to the troop. Now, go sell cookies."

Draco's mouth open and closed a few times before he nodded and skipped happily to the table where the sales were being made.

"There," the girl said. "His hands are free, you're happy, I'm happy, Dusty has found himself, everyone's happy. Your students can enjoy the sweets without consequences and I can break all records in the cookie sale."

Dumbledore watched as the girl moved to join the Malfoy heir, and shook his head.

"Whatever she did to the boy has him happy now," Minerva said from his side, "but I doubt he will be particularly happy tomorrow."

"I fear you are right Minerva," Dumbledore agreed. "However, I have learned that sometimes one must be content with what is happening today and allow tomorrow to take care of itself."

---oooOOOooo---

Ognar Flintshard was rather proud of the fact that he showed absolutely no surprise when the girl, his designated remote teller and guard detachment appeared in his office with a musical chime.

He would schedule a nervous breakdown later, when there was no one to witness his reaction.

"Hi Oggie," the girl called out as they appeared. The Guard detachment offered their guild's traditional salute while fighting against displaying the amusement they all obviously felt, and the Teller presented his ledgers for inspection, nodded once and exited Flintshard's office.

Flintshard made a note to put a letter of reprimand in the teller's personnel folder for the excessive frivolity.

"I take it your sale was successful?" Flintshard asked once the guard detachment had exited as well.

"Very," the girl smiled. "It was a lot of fun, given the number of boxes I sold, I'm sure your teller made a fair profit on the deal."

"Today's dealings tripled this branch's normal daily profit in the currency exchange department," Flintshard offered.

"So, it was worth doing?"

"I would say yes," the Bank Manger nodded. "Yes it was."

"I didn't forget your final payment," the human said as she produced the promised five cases of thin mints. "You know, those are really good if you freeze them."

Flintshard's mind was racing. Where was he going to find a freezer?

---oooOOOooo---

Harry looked up from his breakfast to find three fifth year girls staring at him.

"Yes?" He asked.

"Rumor has it you're stupidly powerful," the girl on the right said.

"What Rebecca meant to say," the girl in the center of the group said, while elbowing her friend, "is that we've heard rumors that you've taken to making clothes for Trolls."

"Well, one troll," Harry admitted.

"And you've done it for free?" the third girl asked.

"Why would I charge for something like that?" Harry asked.

"Could you make this for us?" the center girl asked as she placed a magazine featuring a fashion photo spread in front of him.

Harry shrugged. "Ok," three brown paper wrapped packages appeared in front of the girls.

"Just like that?" Rebecca, the girl on the right asked.

"We never told you which one we wanted," the girl in the center asked. "Which one did you do?"

"Oh, you only wanted one? I did them all," Harry explained.

"All of them?" Rebecca looked a bit faint.

"Sized for each of you individually and in multiple colors," Harry nodded. "I only made the mistake of doing something in a single color once. I don't think I could stand another explanation of colors and seasons and stuff like that. All yours enjoy."

"Oh, thank you!" the girl on the right stood up and leaned across the table to take Harry's face in both hands and kiss him.

"Calm down Sarah!" the girl in the center laughed. "Thanks Stevens, you're all right." With that, the three girls gathered their new acquisitions and hurried from the Great Hall.

"What was that about?" Millie Bulstrode asked as she took her seat on Harry's right.

"Just more data in support of my Girls Are Insane theory," Harry said wiping his mouth on his right sleeve.

"Watch it Stevens," Daphne said as she took her seat across from him. "You may be some kind of super wizard, but we still outnumber you."

"Warlock," Harry corrected, "I'm a Warlock."

"Whatever," Daphne said dismissively. "What did you do to earn a kiss from a fifth year?"

"Oh," Harry said as he returned to his breakfast. "I made them some clothes like in a magazine they had."

That answer produced several seconds of silence, only to be broken by Pansy who had taken the seat on Harry's left.

"You make clothes?"

Harry looked up again to find all of his female classmates looking at him in a most predatory manner. "Uh... yeah," he responded wondering as he said it if that might have been the wrong answer.

"STEVENS!" Draco Malfoy shouted across the Great Hall, drawing the attention of everyone in it, staff and student alike.

Harry had never been so glad to see his blond classmate. "Sup Draco?" he asked when the other boy approached the table.

"I've written my father about what your sister did to me!" the blond continued to shout, despite being close enough for a normal conversation.

"Tabitha?" Harry asked. "When did you ever meet Tabitha?"

"She was here Saturday," Tracey explained from across the table. "Selling some marvelous biscuits."

"She was?" Harry asked. "How about that? Did her sale go well?"

"Very, she was in the common room passing out samples when Draco took her tray from her."

"Ah," Harry nodded. "Yeah, that would do it. So, my sister beat up on you for a while did she, Puss?"

"Your entire family will pay for what she did Stevens!"

"What did she do?" Harry asked, his imagination running wild.

"Well, first she wrapped the tray he stole around his hands and wouldn't let him go," Millie supplied. "Then when he whined to the Headmaster, she let him go and made him sell biscuits."

"She made me wear a Muggle Dress!" Draco screamed.

"A dress?" Harry fought and failed to keep from laughing. "Please tell me someone took pictures."

"No, sorry," Pansy laughed. "I don't think anyone thought of taking pictures."

"When was it? What time on Saturday?" Harry demanded.

"About 1:45, after lunch." Tracey said.

"Stevens I'm going..."

"Hold that thought for a minute Puss," Harry said. "I'll be right back."

Despite having seen it before, the Slytherin first years were amazed by the Stevens boy sudden vanishing.

Seconds later, a laughing Harry Stevens reappeared next to Draco Malfoy. "That was hilarious! Seriously, Puss," Harry threw his arm around the blond. "How do you manage to get on every person you meet's bad side so quickly? Did you learn that somewhere, or does it come naturally?"

"Where did you go?" Millie asked.

"I went to Saturday to see what happened for myself," Harry explained. He pulled his arm off Draco's shoulder and clutched at his abdomen with both arms. "I think I hurt myself laughing so hard."

This made Malfoy so angry that he could only manage to sputter.

"Draco, listen, all kidding aside. You do not want to make yourself the focus of my sister's undivided attention. Last year in the 5th grade, there was a guy who wouldn't leave her alone, always trying to bully her, to intimidate her, so she decided to mess with him. He was a sobbing mess in four days, and she didn't even use any magic. With you, the gloves would be off. You really don't want to mess with her."

Harry returned to his seat and his breakfast.

"So, Harry," Pansy said. "What's this about you making clothes?"

---oooOOOooo---

The last day of classes before the Christmas break dragged on and on. Harry was nearing the end of his rope. He settled into his normal place at the Slytherin table hoping against hope for a quiet lunch.

It was not the classwork, which continued to be fairly interesting. It was the girls.

Pretty much all of them, all the time. Request for Dresses, for trouser outfits, for hats, for shoes... shoes, so very many shoes.

He now understood that Tabitha and his mom had always taken it easy on him when he accompanied them on their shopping expeditions.

There were some things a man is not intended to know.

"Hello Harry," a girl said, breaking through his self-pity.

It was the Gryffindor Patil, with her friend Lavender in tow, the all too familiar shape of a magazine rolled up in the blonde girl's hand.

"We were hoping that you might be able to help us out with something Harry," the Patil girl said, her eyes fluttering. Was that supposed to be somehow attractive?

"This one here," Lavender said, pointing a photograph of a particularly attractive witch. If Harry was any judge, the woman in the picture was at least in her mid-20s.

"Isn't that a little old for you?"

"You sound like my father," Parvati sniffed. "Will you make it for us?"

Harry stood up and looked around the Great Hall. The room was full of students starting to dig into their mid-day meals. "Excuse me everyone?" he said in his normal voice that his magic amplified so that everyone could hear him.

"For the last couple of weeks, people have been coming to me for clothing," Harry paused and gestured. Throughout the hall, a sheet of paper appeared in front of every girl. "Those noted detail a complete list of ever article any of you have asked for. Each of you will find on your beds, a complete set of all of them in a variety of colors and patterns sized to fit you. I am officially done. The fashion consultancy is now closed. Don't ask for anything else, the answer will be no."

He sat back down and tried to ignore the looks he was getting from the young women at his table.

"You've been making them clothes?" Vinnie Crabbe asked with a grin.

"Should we be calling you *Mr. Harry of Hogwarts*?" Greg Goyle snarked.

"Would you two like to find out what it's like to be small and fluffy?"

"As opposed to big and burley?" Ted Nott laughed. "Give them a break Harry, it's funny."

A rat ran down the middle of the table. The four boys stared at it in amazement.

"Hey, Harry..." Greg began

"Don't look at me, I was planning on rabbits, not rats," Harry said staring after the rodent. "Guys, beyond the sanitation issues, did that seem really odd to anyone else?"

---oooOOOooo---

Peter tried to ignore the amplified voice that thundered in the Great Hall outside his nice safe pocket. It had been weeks since he had been out of the Gryffindor first year boy's dorm, other than his frankly horrifying trip to see the reborn Dark Lord. His goal in life was to find a safe place to ride out whatever was coming.

That and to keep his master's new Mark from singing. Other than that first night when the Mark had inexplicably started singing 'Meow', it had kept its musical vocalizations to times when Peter was alone... other than when the Dark Lord called of course.

Peter really tried not to think about that.

He curled into a tighter ball and tried to go to sleep, when he suddenly realized something was wrong.

He had to get out of Ron Weasley's pocket, and he needed out NOW. He climbed from the pocket and onto the table. Avoiding Ron's grabbing attempt to recapture him, Peter scampered across the table and leaped across the void separating the Gryffindor table from that of Ravenclaw house. From that table he jumped to the Hufflepuff table, and from that one to the Slytherin. He then mindlessly raced down the table toward the Staff table, ignoring the reactions of the students he passed.

---oooOOOooo---

Entering the Great Hall with his signature billowing robes, Severus Snape raised an eyebrow as he caught the tail end of the Stevens boy's announcement that he was not doing something any longer.

Part of his mind wondered just what it was the boy was not going to do any longer; the rest however knew that whatever it was it was trivial in the grand scheme of things.

Snape froze in place. Something was wrong... Something was... horror filled his soul when the music started. He knew all too well what that meant.

A rat was racing toward him, running long to the top of the Slytherin table. The rodent launched itself off the table, transforming in mid-leap from a rat to a man. Snape found Peter Pettigrew standing before him. Pettigrew produced a rose from nowhere, and clenched the bethorned stem in his teeth.

To his undying shame, Severus took Pettigrew into his arms, and the pair proceeded to tango while singing.

"I ache for the touch of your lips, Dear,

But much more for the touch of your whips, Dear.

You can raise welts

Like nobody else,

As we dance to the Masochism Tango.

Let our love be a flame, not an ember,

Say it's me that you want to dismember.

Blacken my eye,

Set fire to my tie,

As we dance to the Masochism Tango."

Why? Severus asked himself as he moved through the dance. If it had to be Tom Leher, why could not the song have been Poisoning Pigeons in the Park? That was a song he could get behind.

---oooOOOooo---

Six hours later, Severus Snape sat in his darkened office, trying to understand what was happening to him. How could he ever face his students after his display in the Great Hall at lunch?

It had not been easy, but he has so far managed to keep the students in the dark as to his new Mark... but now, that was all gone. Pettigrew's arrest had cheered him a bit, but the thought that everyone would know of how he had... That because of him Lily was... Lily's son was...

Albus was intrigued by the control the new Mark held over the Death Eaters, and almost as amazed by Voldemort's rebirth as a child, who seemingly had no control over the Marks himself. However, Albus had no understanding of just what all this meant to Snape. The pain that the lack of control was causing. Not for the first time, Snape regretted all of the choices that lead him to this point.

A knock at his door brought his attention from his problems to the here and now. "Go away," he responded. "My Office Hours are clearly posted on the door; you've missed them for today."

He heard the knob being tried. He set his mouth into a firm line. No student was ever going to open that door. Albus himself would be pressed to open that door with all the magic layered onto it.

To say that Severus Snape was surprised when the door opened to reveal Harry Stevens would be something of an understatement.

"Professor Snape," the boy said in way of greetings.

"I believe I was quite clear that I did not want to be disturbed Mr. Stevens," Severus tried very hard not to look into Lily's eyes in the boy's face.

"Yes sir, you did, but this is more important than what either you or I want," the boy said defiantly. "I had no idea that you wore Voldemort's Mark."

"I'm sure I don't know what you are talking about Stevens," Snape spat. "Now get out of here before I..."

"The only way you would have been caught up in your tango at lunch today was if you wore the Mark. If you are a Death Eater, you have no place in a school surrounded by those weaker than yourself," Stevens explained. "I will not allow it."

"You will not allow it?" Snape sneered.

"No," Stevens said simply. "I will not. Report."

Severus' left arm was suddenly bare and extended from his side. The mark began to speak.

"Severus Snape. Age: 33. Potions Master and teacher when he can be bothered. Joined the Death Eaters in a funk at the age of 17 after he destroyed his relationship with your birth mother and she would not forgive him. He has killed no one, though he holds himself responsible for your birth mother's death due to relaying the information that ultimately caused Voldemort to seek out your birth family. He feels absolutely no guilt over the death of your birth father, and indeed feels that James Potter deserved to die for coming between him and your birth mother. The guilt he feels over your birth mother has caused him to attempt to redeem himself by working at great personal risk as a spy against Voldemort."

The boy seemed to relax a bit. "So, despite joining the Death Eaters, he isn't one?"

"No. The man is a massive dick, but he was that way before he took the Mark," the Mark responded. "And he refuses to sing with me. The only time he sings along is when more than one Mark is active and is in close proximity, and even then, he fights against it. In short, he is a jerk."

"Thank you," the boy said and Severus found he had control of his arm once again. "My apologies for intruding on your privacy, Professor, but I had to know. I can remove the mark if you like. Call it an early Christmas present."

"The Dark Mark cannot be removed," Severus said, his mind racing.

"Sure it can," the boy smiled. "I'm the one that changed them after all, compared to that removing one is a walk in the park."

"Oh, come on Boss, don't separate Sevvy and Me," the Mark said. "We've become such good buddies, and he has a lovely singing voice. At least when he's playing along."

"Shut up Mark," the boy said.

"It will be gone? Forever?" Severus asked.

"I have no plans on putting it back," Stevens said as he gestured with his left hand. "There, no more singing, no more dancing, no more responding to the idiot's calls. You're free."

Severus spent several seconds staring at the pale, unblemished flesh of his left forearm. "How did you do that to the Dark Mark?"

"When I found out Voldemort was hitching a ride on the back of Quirrell's head, I knew I had to do something. I mean he was hurting people, and he almost killed Hermione Granger with a troll. I had to stop him, but I couldn't just *kill* him."

"Why not?" Snape asked.

"We don't kill. Ever," The boy said. "Well, far too many of the older ones do, but my Mom, Tabitha, Adam and me, we don't kill. It would be too easy, and it should not be easy to kill. So much in life is easy for us; we need to have some limits, even if they are self-imposed. Mom has spent a lot of time making sure we all understand that. Voldemort told me that he wanted a body, so I gave him one. A kids' body, one he isn't fully in control of and I put limits on his magic. If he tries to curse someone, he'll be surprised."

"And through him, his followers?"

"Yeah, a lot of them got off after doing some really horrible things to people. So, they are as limited as their master. If they try to cast against something evil against someone, they'll be sorry."

Severus finally looked into the eyes of Lily's son. "I don't deserve this. Because of me, your mother is dead."

"Did you tell Voldemort to kill her? Or my birth father?"

"No, but I supplied the information that lead to their deaths."

"Do you want me to blame you Professor?" the boy asked. "I don't remember the Potters, at all. My earliest memory is when I was almost three and I was jumping on my parent's bed to wrestle with my dad. I don't blame you for anything. Other people may not share that view, but that's how I see it."

"I... see," Severus whispered.

"I was fairly stupid and let my year mates in Slytherin know my birth name, and word spread from them to the rest of the school. I may need to speak with you after the Christmas Break and about how you think I should deal with that."

---oooOOOooo---

Deluded Musings
FanficAuthors.net

Harry Potter and the Elder Sect

Chapter Six - Decisions

"Dad, Mom," Harry said, looking up from his plate. "Could we talk a bit?"

Tabitha and Adam had already left the table to spend a little time with their gifts. In what had become a Stephens family tradition, Sirius and Remus were in attendance along with Aunt Serena and Remus' girlfriend Candace. The adult conversations around the table paused.

"What is it Sweetheart?" Mom asked.

"It's about Hogwarts," Harry said. "I think I need to quit."

"Quit Hogwarts?" Darrin asked. "Is it the workload?"

"Oh, no," Harry shook his head. "The class work is interesting. It is really neat to see how they go about doing things. It's me. I mean my reputation. We were talking about family one day, and I mentioned Sirius was my godfather and one of the kids knew him and asked if we were related."

"Draco Malfoy?" Sirius asked. Seeing Harry's nod, he continued. "Lucius and Narcissa's son. They've been maneuvering to get me to name Draco as my heir. Never gonna happen."

"Yeah, he's a whiny little dick," Harry commented before he realized what he had said and clapped his right hand across his mouth.

"Pretending for the moment that I didn't hear that foul language young man," Samantha asked pointedly, "what is the problem with this Draco person knowing that Sirius is your Godfather?"

"I guess I didn't really understand about the fable they have built up about my birth family, despite Remus telling me about it. When they asked, I told them my birth name. Now there are people who are openly hostile over how I 'put down' their Dark Lord despite my pointing out that Granma did it, and there are others who seem to think I'm some kind of 'chosen one'."

"I'd heard rumors that you had told people who you were," Sirius said with a twinkle in his eye. "I'd heard other rumors about you as well."

"Oh, no," Harry said laying his head on the table.

A smile creped onto Darrin's face. "What might that rumor be?"

"Rumor has it," Sirius laughed. "That there is a new haute couture fashion house at Hogwarts. High fashion available on demand from the master designer Harry Stephens."

"Oh, kill me now," the pained eleven-year-old moaned from his place at the table.

"Very nice Sirius," Serena laughed. "Using terms like haute couture like that."

"I know things," Sirius said defensively.

"He knows things that he used to pull birds," Remus snarked. "He tried to seduce half the girls in our class seventh year by taking them to fashion shows. Tried. His interest in women's fashion started a rumor about his sexual orientation."

"A rumor you started," Sirius fumed.

"Ok, first of all, shame on both of you. Secondly, how did my eldest son become a fashion designer?" Darrin asked while Sam tried not to join in on the laughter.

"It started with that dumb troll back on Halloween," Harry said in a tone full of embarrassment. "After I stopped it from killing a student, the lavatory was all busted up. So, I used a little magic to clean it up. I got the girl to close her eyes so that she didn't see what I did, but I put a little too much oomph into the cleaning. It also cleaned up the troll."

"Cleaned up the troll?" Remus asked. "It was still alive after you stopped it?"

"Of course it was," Harry said indignantly. "I asked it to cut it out, and it agreed."

"You can talk to Trolls?" Sirius asked incredulously.

"Sure, it's not hard. Anyway after the gunk and stuff got cleaned off, it was pretty obvious that the troll was both naked and a girl. So I made her an outfit," Harry explained. "But she didn't like because it was yellow. The troll and the girl she almost killed explained to me all about colors and seasons and stuff like that. So, I changed it to green. A couple of weeks later I found out that the girl and the troll had made friends, but the troll was complaining that the sun dress I made her was too cold for December and I ended up making her a bunch of winter clothes."

"And how did making clothing for a troll make your reputation as a fashion designer?" Samantha asked.

"Well, like I said, the girl and the troll made friends, and the girl had learned to speak trollish. They had tea parties in the woods, and had started a sort of club. Hermione, that's the girl's name, asked me to make them matching outfits for their meetings. From there some of the older girls heard that I did that and asked for an outfit from a magazine fitted to them, but I misunderstood and made a copy of every outfit in the magazine, in a selection of colors."

"Why?" Darrin asked.

"Because I didn't want to have colors and seasons explained to me again," Harry said with a shudder. "Once was bad enough."

The men all laughed and the three women shook their heads at the foolishness of men.

"Anyway," Harry continued, hoping to get the whole thing over with, "some of the girls in my class saw me make the older girls clothes, and then I made them clothes, and then I was making

clothes for a couple of the teachers and then pretty much every girl was coming to me with requests."

"You should have charged," Darrin observed.

"It was too late by then," Harry sighed. "They were driving me crazy. When I had finally had enough, I made all the girls in the castle a copy of every outfit I had made for everyone, and told them I was done. They're still not leaving me alone. So basically, I'm putting a whole lot of effort into attending a school where I'm not happy and I'm not really learning anything."

"Well Harry," Samantha said with barely restrained mirth, "if you're not happy at Hogwarts, you can quit. But you'll have to tell them."

"Ok Mom, thanks," Harry said as he scampered from the room.

The adults waited three whole minutes before they started laughing.

---oooOOOooo---

"Good morning Harry," Pansy said as she took a seat next to Harry in the Great Hall and began to fill her plate.

"Morning, Pansy," Harry replied.

"Are you ready for class this morning?" Millicent asked as she took the seat across from Harry.

"I'm not going," Harry admitted.

"Not going?" Ted asked from beside Millie. "You'll lose points; you know how Snape hates that."

"Snape will be fine," Harry said as he reached for the butter for his scone. "I'm not going to be ditching class. I'm withdrawing from school."

The Slytherin first years went silent for several seconds until Vinnie Crabbe broke it. "You're withdrawing from school? You can do that?"

"Yeah, I got my folk's permission," Harry nodded. "I've been keeping up with the classes back home; I'm just going to quit Hogwarts."

"But..." Tracey said in a confused tone. "Why?"

"Well, ever since I slipped up and let everyone know my birth family, I've been getting it from the fans. Not you guys, other than Puss, you've all been cool. It is the rest of the school. If I get one more seventh year Ravenclaw asking for pointers on how I took out 'the dark lord' for his Defense NEWT, I'll probably scream."

"But, you can't quit Hogwarts," Daphne insisted.

"Sure I can," Harry disagreed.

"No, you don't understand," Blaise said with a shake of his head. "You physically can't quit. By accepting a place here, you entered into a magical contract. You might skip a few classes, but in a day or so your magic will force you to return."

"Who wants to know about Magical Contracts?" Draco asked as he took his place at the far end of the table. "I know all about magical contracts, my father enters into them all the time."

"My *magic* will force me?" Harry asked, ignoring the Malfoy scion. "How does that make any sense? No one said anything about a contract when I started."

"Hogwarts's attendance is enforced with a magical contract. They don't talk about it, but it's there, and it affects for all of us," Daphne explained.

"And since it's a magical contract," Blaise said with a shrug. "It doesn't have to make sense."

"Mr. Stephens," Minerva McGonagall said from behind Harry, startling him.

How did she do that? He wondered. "Yes Professor?" he asked.

"The Headmaster will see you in his office," the woman said, the disapproval evident in her voice.

"What did I do?" Harry asked.

"The Headmaster will see you in his office," Minerva repeated. "Now."

"I haven't finished my breakfast," Harry pointed out. "I'll head up to Professor Dumbledore's office once I'm done. Most important meal of the day you know."

"The Headmaster has wanted to speak to you for the entire holiday," Professor McGonagall insisted. "You will go to him now."

"Professor, the Headmaster knows where I live, and could have sent a letter if he wasn't willing to come himself," Harry pointed out. "Lack of planning on his part does not constitute an emergency on my part." Harry wondered if the poster he was quoting had ever put in an appearance in the Wand Users' society. "I'll be up as soon as I'm done."

---oooOOOooo---

The door opened before he could knock.

"Good morning Headmaster, you wanted to see me?" Harry asked entering the office to find the Headmaster glowering at him over his desk and his head of house sitting quietly in the corner behind Dumbledore.

"I wanted to see you half an hour ago," the old man spat. "Have you any idea what you have

done?"

The Headmaster's open-ended question gave Harry pause. 'Finished breakfast' was his first automatic response, but the anger coming from the man was almost physical. "What do you mean sir?"

"You have taken our single greatest advantage against Voldemort away from us," Dumbledore said.

"I did?" Harry asked, wondering what he might have taken away.

"Professor Snape's Dark Mark was his way into Voldemort's confidence," the Headmaster pronounced. "I must insist that you return the Mark to his arm."

"Oh, yeah, the Mark said that Professor Snape was your spy in Voldemort's organization. No, I'm not putting the Mark back."

"You will!" Dumbledore all but shouted.

"I will not," Harry corrected him. "If you want it back on Professor Snape's arm, you put it there. Personally, I don't think you can do it, but hey, it's possible."

"Why won't you do what I ask?" the old man asked.

"A few reasons," Harry answered. "First, Professor Snape might be a bit of a jerk, but he doesn't deserve what my modifications to the Mark would do to him. I'm sure he didn't enjoy the time he wore it, unless he really liked singing."

"I did not," Snape snapped from his chair.

"I didn't think so," Harry grinned. "Second, putting the Mark back would put the Professor at risk. His absence has no doubt been noticed, if he were to suddenly show up again, Voldemort would ask why he has missed meetings."

"Professor Snape is fully capable of explaining..."

"No sir, excuse me, but he is not. The Dark Mark is tied to the wearer's soul. He would be utterly incapable of lying to a direct question."

"What?"

"You didn't know?" Harry shook his head. "The Mark enforces discipline in those who wear it, but I didn't put that there, it was part of the original design, I just made it funny. So was the truth enforcer. I didn't change any of that because it was integrated into the original design."

"So," Snape interrupted, "the whole time I was spying on him..."

"You were one question away from telling him everything he wanted to know, followed quickly by a painful death," Harry admitted. "Though in all honesty, from what I dug out of the Marks, I'm not sure Voldemort has much of a clue as to all the controls that were built into the Marks. I think he cribbed the designs from other people; there were at least three style changes through the charm's topology. The guy is smart, but kind of lazy. Aunt Endora would slap him down hard for that for the sort of stuff he pulled with the charm that powered his old Marks."

The Headmaster clearly was not used to discussing charm construction and design with an eleven year old, and his expression showed it. "None the less, I believe the information we will get from Voldemort will be worth the risk. When you recreate the Mark, simply omit the truth telling and punishment factors."

"Like I said," Harry grinned, "I'm not going to do it. I will not brand my Head of House as if he were a barn yard animal."

"Mr. Stephens," the old man sighed. "Are you going to force me to compel you to do as I ask?"

"Funny you bring that up," Harry said, pulling the note signed by both his parents from a pocket and presenting it to the Headmaster. "I'm withdrawing from Hogwarts. Since my birth name slipped out, I'm getting constantly hassled about it, both by older students in Slytherin angry at what they believe I did to their Dark Lord, and by students from other houses who all seem to think I'm some kind of chosen one."

The Headmaster paled. "You can't quit Hogwarts, your attendance was sealed a magical contract."

The boy actually grinned. "You're the second one to tell me that today. My Uncle Maurice is always telling my sister and me that we control our magic, it doesn't control us." Harry shrugged. "If you're right, I'll be back next week, begging to come back. If I'm right, well I guess that says something about 'Magical Contracts'."

---oooOOOooo---

"Well," Harry said as he hefted his book bag, "I'm out of here."

"I wish you weren't leaving Harry," Ted said. "You've managed to make school a lot more interesting than it likely would have been."

"I agree Harry," Millicent said. "I hate to think how Tracey and I would have been treated before you came along and the Founder started talking to the House again."

"Uncle Sal said that he'd keep a closer eye on the House now," Harry laughed. "Ted, just don't let Puss start thinking he's all that again."

"Running away, Potter?" Malfoy sneered.

"Good bye Puss," Harry said with a gesture. "I'll really miss you. Sorta like a really annoying rash. Here's a little something to remember me by."

Draco responded, but no one noticed.

"I'll miss you Harry," Pansy said.

"And I'll miss all of you," Harry replied as he noticed Draco start to pound on the walls of the invisible soundproof box he was trapped in for the next two hours. "Just remember, you're more than a bargaining chip for you father's ambitions. Seriously, you can do a whole lot better than the Puss."

"I'll remember Harry," Pansy said with a blush before hugging him tightly. This led to the rest of the first year Slytherin girls hugging him as well.

"Ok everybody, Puss will be in that box for about two hours, so enjoy the quiet while you can," Harry grinned. "Later!"

The common room was silent as he disappeared, and for several seconds after before every first year not imprisoned in an invisible soundproof box left for their dorms to prepare for lunch.

---oooOOOooo---

Two weeks passed before Albus admitted to himself that the Hogwarts enrollment contract clearly had no hold over an elder.

Another week passed before Albus wrote what was to become only the first of weekly letters that attempted to coax the Potter heir back to Hogwarts in preparation of Voldemort's inevitable return to power.

None of the letters ever got a response, but he kept trying.

A month passed before he approached Sirius Black about convincing the boy to return.

Albus had never enjoyed being laughed at. Being laughed at by Sirius, a young man who had once held him in high regard... hurt.

Didn't anyone see what was coming?

Finally, three years after Harry Potter... Stephens... had attended and then left Hogwarts a distraction arose in the form of the revival of the Triwizard Tournament.

---oooOOOooo---

The golden plates returned to their original spotless state; there was a sharp upswing in the level of noise within the Hall, which died away almost instantly as Dumbledore got to his feet. On either side of him, Professor Karkaroff and Madame Maxime, the heads of Durmstrang and Beauxbaton's respectively, looked as tense and expectant as anyone did. Ludo Bagman, the famous retired Quidditch player and head of the tournament was beaming and winking at various students. While Mr. Crouch of the Ministry, on the other hand, appeared to be quite uninterested, almost

bored.

“Well, the goblet is almost ready to make its decision,” said Dumbledore. “I estimate that it requires one more minute. Now, when the champions’ names are called, I would ask them please to come up and join the tournament judges on the dais. Once all of the participants are assembled, there will be time for all of you to extend your congratulations your classmates before you all to return to your respective dormitories so that we may explain the rules to the Champions.”

He took out his wand and gave a great sweeping wave with it; at once, all the candles except those inside the carved pumpkins extinguished, plunging the Great Hall into a state of semidarkness. The Goblet of Fire now shone more brightly than anything in the whole Hall, the sparkling bright, blue-white flames were almost painful to look at. Everyone watched, waiting... A few people kept checking their watches...

“How much longer is this going to take?” Pansy asked in a whisper.

"Who knows?" Millicent answered in the same manner.

The flames inside the goblet turned suddenly red again. Sparks began to fly from it. Then, a gout of flame shot into the air, and a charred scrap of parchment fluttered out of it - the whole room gasped.

Dumbledore caught the piece of parchment and held it at arm’s length, so that he could read it by the light of the flames, which had turned back to blue-white.

“The champion for Durmstrang,” he read, in a strong, clear voice, “will be Viktor Krum.”

“No surprises there!” Ted called out as a storm of applause and cheering swept the Hall. The fourth years watched as Krum rose from his place down the Slytherin table and slouched up to the dais.

“Bravo, Viktor!” boomed Karkaroff, so loudly that everyone could hear him, even over all the applause. “Knew you had it in you!”

The clapping and cheering died down. Now everyone’s attention was again focused on the goblet, which, seconds later, turned red once more. A second piece of parchment shot out of it, propelled by the flames.

“The champion for Beauxbatons,” said Dumbledore, “is Fleur Delacour!”

“Her?” Daphne sniffed dismissively as the girl who so resembled a veela rose gracefully to her feet, shook back her sheet of silvery blonde hair, and swept up between the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff tables.

“Oh look, they’re all disappointed,” Tracey noted cattily over the noise, nodding toward the remainder of the Beauxbatons party. “Disappointed” was a bit of an understatement, as two of the girls who had not been selected had dissolved into tears and were sobbing with their heads on their

arms.

The Goblet of Fire turned red once more; sparks showered out of it; the tongue of flame shot high into the air, and from its tip Dumbledore pulled the third piece of parchment.

“The Hogwarts champion,” he called, “is Cedric Diggory!”

“No! Not that Duffer!” Draco called out loudly, leading the bulk of Slytherin House to hope that no one had heard his outburst. Every single Hufflepuff had jumped to their feet, screaming and stomping, as Cedric made his way past them, grinning broadly, and headed toward the dais to join the other Champions. The applause for Diggory went on so long that it was some time before Dumbledore could make himself heard again.

“Excellent!” Dumbledore called happily, as at last the tumult died down. “Well, we now have our three champions. I am sure I can count upon all of you, including the remaining students from Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, to give your champions every ounce of support you can muster. By cheering your champion on, you will contribute in a very real...”

The Headmaster suddenly stopped speaking, and it was apparent to everybody what had distracted him.

The fire in the goblet had just turned red again. Sparks were flying out of it. A long flame shot suddenly into the air, and borne upon it was another piece of parchment.

Without apparent thought, Dumbledore reached out and seized the fluttering scrap of parchment. He held it out and stared at the name written upon it. There was a long pause, during which Dumbledore stared at the slip in his hands, and everyone in the room stared at Dumbledore. After a long pause, Dumbledore cleared his throat and read out: “Harry Stephens.”

The Great Hall went silent as that name hung in the air.

---oooOOOooo---

Until the silence was broken.

"What?" asked the young man suddenly standing between the student tables and the Dais.

"Is that Harry?" Tracey asked.

"Nice," Daphne agreed quickly.

The young man was taller, and dressed in trainers, denim trousers and an oversized white sports jersey with red trim, a large red 17 on the back and the name 'BROWN' between his shoulders.

"What did you need Professor?" Harry asked. "I'm in a hurry, my dad has tickets for the Jet's game tonight and they're on the 50 yard line."

"On the what?" the old man responded.

"On the fifty yard line..." Harry responded. Seeing the confusion on the old man's face, he shrugged. "Let's just say they're really good seats. What do you need?"

"Why did you enter your name into the Triwizard Tournament Harry?"

"I did what, now?" the fourteen years old asked, clearly confused.

"Your name came out of the Goblet of Fire, Harry," Dumbledore explained. "The only way that could have happened is if you put your name into it, or had an older student do so."

"He cheated!" Draco Malfoy declared, rising from his place at the Slytherin table. "He cheated to get in."

"Puss!" Harry called out with a smile. "You haven't changed a bit, still as pathetic as ever, and that's kind of sad, really. I'll abuse you later." Turning back to the Headmaster, the young Warlock continued. "Sorry, Professor, but I have no idea what you're talking about. I didn't enter my name into any Tournaments, and I've never heard of the Goblet of Fire, which I assume to be that vase with the fire in it that's calling my name."

"Calling your name?" Dumbledore asked.

"Yeah, it's really annoying. Could you make it stop please?"

"Harry," the old man said quietly, "I don't hear anything."

"Ok, fine," Harry said gesturing with his left hand. The flame in the Goblet snuffed out. "Better. Ok, we good? I didn't enter into your tournament, I'm not interested in it, and I'll be going."

"Your name came out of the Goblet boy!" Barty Crouch thundered. "You will compete!"

Harry sighed and looked over to the man who had just started shouting at him. "And who are you?"

"Harry, this is Barty Crouch of the Ministry of Magic," Dumbledore explained.

"He is? Why is he wearing a false form?" Harry asked.

"A false form?" Dumbledore echoed.

Yeah," Harry said, cocking his head to the left, squinting his eyes and frowning. "I can see the echo of another form. It's not like an animagus, they have the spectral echo of their true bodies... but he's some kind of shape shifter, or under a shape shifting potion or charm or something. I can see another form under the one he's showing the world."

A horribly scarred man was suddenly at Crouch's side, his wand against the Ministry Man's neck.

"Using polyjuice are we?"

"What's polyjuice?" Harry asked.

"It is a potion, my boy," Dumbledore said idly, preoccupied by the prospect of a disguised spy in his school. "It allows a person to assume another's form for an hour."

"An hour?" Harry asked. "Well, that's easily dealt with." The boy gestured again, and Crouch seemed to blur for a moment.

"What did you do?" the scarred man asked suspiciously.

"I sped his metabolism up a bit, his body aged an hour in about three seconds," Harry explained as he watched the man's transformation back to his original form with great interest. "Cool, looks painful though."

"Barty Crouch?" the scarred man asked in surprise.

"So he is the ministry man then?" Harry asked. "Why did he make himself look older?"

"This young man appears to be Barty Crouch Jr.," Dumbledore explained.

"Who is supposed to be dead," the scarred man said as he pressed his wand deeper into Crouch's neck.

"Really?" Harry asked. "He's also one of Tom's playmates. Report!"

The left arms of both Crouch Jr. and Karkaroff were extended from their sides and bare, displaying their 'happy' Marks to the world.

"Not the Russian, you Jr." Harry instructed, and the mark began to speak.

"Bartemius Crouch Jr. Age: 35. Death Eater, Jailbird, and long-term imperius victim. Joined the Death Eaters at the age of 19 to get back at his father who never paid him enough attention. Smuggled out of prison disguised as his mother, who stayed in his place and died there. He feels no remorse over any of the deaths he has caused, not even that of his mother. He is devoted to his Dark Lord, and even more so given the Dark Dink's current age. Yes, the guy you attached me to is in love."

"Ok, ew," Harry said disgustedly. "I really didn't need to hear that. Why is he here?"

"He is the one who put your name into the Goblet. He's setting up a horribly involved and unnecessarily complex plot which is supposed to end with your kidnapping so the Voldie can learn how to steal your magic."

"Man," Harry sighed. "I gave him a chance to make something out of his life, and this is what he comes up with?"

"You can't really blame Voldemort," the Mark suggested. "I mean it's amazing that he came up with this much of a plan given his all-consuming interest in boobies."

"Really?" Harry asked with a grin.

"Oh, yeah," the Mark said chattily. "He started with Bellatrix, but a decade in prison has pretty much ruined her figure. Since he figured that out, he's been working his way through his Death Eater's wives. He's currently fixated on Narcissa Malfoy, and has taken up the fine art of motorboating. Between you, me, and everyone else in the room, I think she likes it."

"He's lying!" Draco Malfoy screamed from the Slytherin table, reminding everyone that the students were still watching and listening. "I'll kill you Stephens!"

"All students to their dormitories! Prefects!" McGonagall shouted. "I want a headcount in fifteen minutes."

"I'll be calling for the Aurors," Filius Flitwick said as he rose from his place at the Staff table.

While that was going on, Harry continued his interrogation of the Dark Mark. "So, if there are two of you in the room, why didn't you sing?"

"Oh, we did Boss," the Mark said. "We got together two hours early and worked through the entirety of Bye Bye Birdie. It was fun."

"Ok, thanks." Harry said as the Death Eater's arms returned to their control. He turned toward the Headmaster. "There you go Headmaster; I didn't enter into your contest."

"I'm afraid that it might not matter Harry," Dumbledore said as Barty Crouch Jr. was taken into custody. "The Goblet of Fire is a powerful artifact, as you witnessed when it pulled you here. The Goblet selecting you is an example of what is quite possibly the most powerful Magical Contract in the world."

---oooOOOooo---

The three school champions quietly edged away from the chaos that the appearance of the Stephens boy had spawned. The students had been sent back to their dorms, and the Aurors called to deal with the imposter.

"I do not understand," Viktor said quietly. "Who is this boy?"

"That's Harry Stephens," Cedric said, never taking his eyes off his Headmaster and the younger man. "Quite possible the most powerful wizard in the world."

"What?" The girl asked. "That little boy is powerful?"

"Yeah, his whole family is," Cedric nodded, "he was a student here for a while three years ago. He was doing things I've never seen anyone match, including the staff here. If he's forced to compete,

we've all lost any tasks that are purely based on magic."

Victor's eyes narrowed as he tried to decide if the Hogwarts student might be telling a joke. "I am Viktor," he said extending his hand.

"Cedric," Diggory said grasping the offered hand firmly.

"And I am Fleur," the silver blonde said quietly. "How can this boy be so powerful?"

"I have no idea," Cedric said with a shake of his head. "But I personally saw him apparate from this very room as casually as anything. None of the staff can do that. I saw him create things from nothing."

"Conjuring isn't that difficult," the girl suggested.

"Perhaps you are especially talented," Viktor rumbled. "I find conjuring to be particularly draining."

"Me too," Cedric grinned and nodded toward the boy who was now involved in an animated argument with the headmaster and the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. "But when I saw him do this he was all of 11 years old and a first year. I watched him conjure complete wardrobes for more than 200 witches as if it were nothing. Less than nothing, he did it as casually as you or I would pick up a teacup. He was 11. I couldn't do that now."

The young man under discussion approached an air of annoyance evident on his features. "Hey, Cedric right?"

"Cedric Diggory," the Hogwarts student confirmed.

"I thought I remembered you from '91. Sorry about all this."

"What is happening?" Viktor asked.

"Hey, Harry Stephens," the younger boy said, introducing himself.

"Viktor Krum."

"And I am Fleur Delacour," the French girl said.

"I know this is supposed to be your night, probably parties in your common rooms waiting for you and all that, but someone thought it would be a good idea to enter me into your tournament. The Headmaster is going on about magical contracts and I've told him that I'm not impressed with them, but the old woman from the Brit Ministry is saying that the way the contract is written, my refusing to take part may hurt you guys."

"How can any wizard ignore a magical contract?" Viktor asked.

"That's just it," Harry grinned. "I'm not a wizard."

"Not a wizard?" Viktor echoed.

"I'm a warlock," Harry explained. "English speaking wand users call us 'The Elder Sect', I don't know what your folks call us."

"Les Premiers?" Fleur whispered. "I never believed...Les Premiers are only legends."

"Nah, we're real enough. I'm surprised that you aren't more aware of us, given how much time my Aunt Endora spends in Paris, and she is anything but subtle. A lot of the older folks are kind of showy with their magic so it's sorta believable that their stuff would become legends."

"So, the contract has no hold on you?" Cedric asked.

"Well, the one for attending Hogwarts didn't," Harry allowed, "as far as this one, after I told that stupid urn thing to shut up I haven't heard a thing from it. I don't know, we don't really use magical contracts."

---oooOOOooo---

"Mr. Stephens?"

Harry looked up from his conversation with the three older students. "Madam Bones?"

"I have just finished a consultation with our Department of Mysteries," she said, cleaning her monocle as she spoke. "They concur that the contract governing the Triwizard Tournament as it stands now will likely inflict a penalty on all of the competitors if you refuse to participate."

"Of course it does," Harry sighed as he stood up. "Ok, let's get this moving then."

"You don't understand Harry," Dumbledore interjected. "There are preparations to make, your wand must be weighed, so many things must be done prior to the tasks."

"Nope," Harry said with a headshake. "Put me down for a weight of zero. No wand."

"No wand?" Bones echoed. Dumbledore had warned her, but she had not really believed that anyone could do any serious magic without a wand.

"Well, I've got one," the boy admitted. "It's in my room back home. Haven't touched it since I unpacked it when I quit Hogwarts. I think it's on my dresser back home... might be in a box in my closet."

"I... see," Amelia said hesitantly.

"The first task will not be ready for more than three weeks Harry," Dumbledore said quietly.

"That doesn't work for me," the Harry said. "I've got plans and I'm not schlepping back and forth on someone else's schedule. We'll do it tonight or not at all."

"The other students aren't even remotely ready, Harry."

"Then I'll do it tonight Headmaster, you can compare their scores to mine. What is the first task?"

"Harry..."

"Ok, fine, we'll do it the hard way. Hey Mark?"

Again, Karkaroff 's left arm extended out from his body, his fur lined robes fading from view.

"Yeah Boss?" the animated yellow disk asked.

"What is the first task? For that matter, how many tasks are there?"

"The first task of three is to retrieve a golden egg from a nesting dragon," the Mark replied.

"And?" Harry asked.

"Just retrieve the egg. It holds a clue as to the second task."

"Ok," Harry nodded. "Sounds simple enough. Everyone ready? Start the clock."

The assembled wizards watched as the boy raised both his hands toward the enchanted ceiling and began chanting as winds seemed to swirl about his body.

"Now I'm stuck in the Wandie's Game,"

"Because of a paper bearing my name."

"Eat the bread, drink from the flagon,"

"Come to me, a nesting dragon!"

---oooOOOooo---

"SWEET BLOODY FUCKING HELL!" Cedric shouted as his Hufflepuff inclinations overrode his panic and caused him to place himself between Fleur and the raging dragon that had suddenly come into being in the middle of the Great Hall.

"Yah," Viktor agreed as he pulled both of his fellow competitors into the back of the room. "We go!"

"VERMIN!" the dragon raged, its claws tearing deep gouges into the stone floor, "WHAT IS THIS PLACE? I WILL DESTROY YOU ALL!"

The three champions froze in place. "Is that dragon... speaking?" Fleur whispered.

"Yah," Viktor agreed again. "Romanian."

"No, French," Fleur disagreed.

"And I hear English," Cedric said. "This is Stephens' doing."

The Dragon continued to rage, pausing only to draw breath and let loose with a huge burst of Dragonfire.

Which stopped abruptly in front of the fourteen-year-old.

"Are you quite finished?" Harry asked.

"HUMAN!" the dragon bellowed lunging for the boy.

"Ok, Sit!"

The assembled wizards were amazed when the giant beast complied with the command... almost as surprised as the dragon herself.

"All right then, I'm sorry for the surprise, but nothing is going to happen to you or your clutch," Harry said reasonably. "If you help me out, you'll be back in your lair and you'll have a large addition to your hoard. Gold and Gems are your preferred bedding, right?"

"WHAT DO YOU NEED HUMAN?"

"The false egg in your clutch is what I need."

The dragon's eyes flicked to her nest and immediately spotted the golden egg. "VALUABLE IS IT?" she asked with a gleam of greed sparkling in her eyes. "WHAT IF I FIND IT MORE VALUABLE THAN WHAT YOU OFFER?"

"Thank you," Harry said as the large egg appeared in his hand. "Back you go. Later."

"WAIT!" the dragon roared as it and its clutch of eggs returned from where they had come.

"Well, that was easy," Harry commented as he looked at the egg as the Great Hall returned to its original state. "Time?"

Silence from the adults stretched on for several seconds.

"No one was keeping track?" Harry asked with a sigh. "Ok, fine, Mark?"

"Yeah Boss?" the disk on Karkaroff's arm asked.

"Time?"

"Thirty two seconds, Boss. You should get extra points for style. Though, the rhyming scheme was

a bit of a stretch though..."

"There is nothing worse than a nitpicking brown nose," Harry laughed.

"You didn't give me a nose, Boss," the Mark noted, "For which I am eternally grateful, since Igor here only bathes once a week, and it's much bothered if he misses a week."

"Too much information Mark," Harry laughed again as he opened the egg.

A horrible screeching filled the Great Hall. The occupants of the Hall covered their ears while the Stephens boy stared into the magical construct for several seconds before closing it.

"Ok, that's clear enough," Harry said, his voice echoing in the now silent Hall. "What is the thing you think I'd miss the most Headmaster?"

"You speak Mermish?" the gigantic French woman asked.

"That wasn't Mermish," Harry corrected her. "It was English, all garbled by the air/water barrier transition."

"Harry," the old man began again, "the second task isn't until February..."

"February? You want people to jump into a lake in Scotland in February? That doesn't work for me, I've got a haircut scheduled for that day."

"Harry," Dumbledore chided, "How could a haircut be more important than the Triwizard Tournament? And you don't even know what day in February the task will take place."

"Professor, whatever day the task is scheduled, that's the day I have an appointment for a haircut. And my haircut is more important than your tournament because I want nothing to do with it. You're insisting I participate, we're doing it now. What am I supposed to get from the lake?"

The old man hesitated, and Harry sighed.

"Mark," he called. "What am I supposed to get off the bottom of the lake?"

"It's supposed to be a person, a hostage that you will retrieve from the lake. The person you would miss the most," the Mark said helpfully.

"Okay... thanks Mark," the boy shook his head. "The person I would miss most. Well, I'd miss my girlfriend, but she's a mortal, and has no magic. If you so much as think about putting her in your lake, I'll destroy this castle... quite possibly, with you still in it Headmaster. My grandmother wouldn't like it if I were to destroy the place she helped to build, but she would understand."

Dumbledore nodded without even offering a suggestion, so Harry continued. "That leaves my family. If you were to touch my Dad... well, since he's a mortal, what I would do to you would not be pleasant. My Mom would laugh at you, if you were to try it with my Grandmother, you'd likely

have a ghost revolt in the castle. Aunt Endora would kill you for the presumption, Uncle Maurice would likely change you into something small and unpleasant, Uncle Arthur would get creative, Aunt Serena... well I don't know what she would do, but it would be very weird, and I doubt you would enjoy it. My brother Adam is only ten, so he might play with you a while."

The boy smiled. "That only leaves my sister. I suppose I could spare a few minutes while you convince Tabitha that she needs to go into a cold lake in October as part of your tournament."

Memories of the girl caused Dumbledore to swallow loudly. "What do you suggest then?"

Harry frowned, and then he looked about the Great Hall before smiling. "You know, I really like this pumpkin," he said as he approached the huge pepo and stroked its rind. "I would really miss it if something were to happen to it."

Dumbledore exchanged looks with his fellow Heads. Karkaroff shrugged and Maxime nodded. It was clear that both were as cowed by the boy's casual use of magic as he was. "That would be acceptable," he nodded.

"Cool," Harry said as the giant pumpkin disappeared. "Start the clock!"

"Wait!" Karkaroff shouted. "How do we know it's in the lake?"

"Fair enough," Harry grinned. "Why don't you have a look?"

The Headmaster of Durmstrang vanished. After a three count, Karkaroff reappeared, soaking wet.

"Satisfied?" Harry asked.

"Yes... yes... yes..." Karkaroff replied through chattering teeth.

"Good. Start the clock."

The pumpkin reappeared looking somewhat worse for wear, water and a large fish flooding from its carvings.

"Time?"

"One second," the Mark supplied helpfully.

"Two down, one to go," Harry said. "So what is the third task?"

"Retrieving the Triwizard Cup from a hedgerow maze," Dumbledore sighed, surrendering to the inevitable.

"I don't see that a maze is really necessary, how about just finding the Triwizard cup?" Harry asked. "I mean, with it possibly being anywhere in the world, that's sort of a maze, right?"

"I suppose..." the Headmaster answered.

"Cool. Back up a bit, ok?"

The assembled group of Wand users took a step backwards, almost in formation, as Harry began to chant.

"Searching for the cup among plants all mazey,"

"Not gonna do that 'cause I'm feeling kinda lazy."

"I need the cup as proof for these folks to see,"

"Bring the Triwizard cup to me!"

With a puff of smoke and a musical chime, the Triwizard cup appeared in the Great Hall.

"And the crowd goes wild!" Harry said into his cupped hands, before simulating the sound of an audience, "AAAAAAHHHHHHHH!" The boy gestured and the three School champions appeared beside him.

"Hey guys, good game," Harry joked, shaking hands with each of them and giving them each a small golden trophy marked 'Participant'. "Seriously, I hope they restart this thing so that all three of you can have your time in the spotlight. It just isn't fair for you to be put up against me."

"Why did you chant for the dragon and the cup, but not for the pumpkin?" Fleur asked.

"Oh, I knew where the pumpkin was, so calling it back was easy. I had to find the dragon and the cup, which takes higher-level focus, the chant is just a silly way of doing it. The words aren't strictly necessary, it's just a technique."

Harry turned to the assembled adults. "So, we done? Ministry folks? School people?"

"Harry," Dumbledore said stepping forward from the group. "Tonight demonstrates that even though you thought you had defeated Voldemort," he paused while the assembled crowd gasped and reacted to the forbidden name, "he remains a threat. You know as well as I that prophecy says that only you can vanquish him. I must insist that you do so, now."

"Ah, crap," Harry sighed. "Ok, ok. Mark, where is the idiot now?"

"Malfoy Manor," the yellow disk reported. "He's got his face between Narcissa's boobies and is having a good old time."

Fourteen-year-old Tom Riddle appeared in the Great Hall with his eyes closed, his hands positioned as if grasping a pair of somethings, though thankfully fully dressed.

"What?" he asked the room, shocked at his sudden transition from one place to another.

"Tom, dude," Harry said as he threw an arm around the former Dark Lord's shoulders. "I gave you another chance, and this is how you repay me? You try to come up with a scheme to steal my magic? Seriously? Do you think this is a comic book or something?"

"I am Lord Voldemort!" Riddle responded.

"Sure you are," Harry said, as he drove his fist into Riddle's solar plexis dropping the Dark Lord to his hands and knees.

Harry stepped away from the retching Dark Lord. "There you go, Professor, all vanquished. Now you can deal with him. Mark?"

"Yeah, Boss?" the disk on Karkaroff's arm responded.

"Pass the word to the boys, everyone tells the truth, got it?"

"Confession is good for the soul," the Mark agreed. "Gotcha' Boss."

"That one was for you Madam Bones. All bearers of the Dark Mark will tell the truth to any question anyone asks them. I'm sure Mark over there will provide a list of people you might want to talk to, and so will the one attached to the guy you arrested. Enjoy."

"Thank you Mr. Stephens," the monocled woman said.

"No problem, say hi to Susan for me. Headmaster, I hope that's all you need, because I'm done. Don't call me again."

"Mr. Stephens," the old man began, "you must understand..."

"No, actually, I don't." Harry disagreed before turning to the Champions. "Good luck on your tournament guys."

With that, Harry Stephens was gone.

---oooOOOooo---