

Deluded Musings *FanficAuthors.net*

Intervention

Boston Brand sat in midair, eyes closed, hands folded into his lap, and his legs crossed into the full lotus, trying, once again, to find his inner peace.

He had been looking for a very long time, but looking was all he could do. He doubted he would ever actually find it.

Being the Universe's chew toy was never an easy vocation.

Boston sighed and tried to drive the distraction from his mind. He was never going to find peace at this rate. Maybe a mantra would help.

"Ooh, eeh, ooh, ah, ah, ting, tang, walla, walla, bing, bang, ooh, eeh, ooh, ah, ah, ting, tang, walla, walla, bing, bang."

"I hardly think," a woman said, breaking what little focus Boston had achieved, "that the chorus of a Ross Bagdasarian song can really count as a mantra to focus your mind."

Boston rotated in space to end up facing the voice. He did not open his eyes, but he was at least facing her aspect.

"You chant your way, Rama Kushna, I'll chant mine."

"I have a new project for you Boston Brand," the divine aspect said.

"I bet," Boston replied, while slowly starting to spin in place. "Not interested. No matter what I do, I don't move on. I don't fall, I don't ascend, I just stay here. Finding my murderer didn't work. Helping people hasn't worked, preventing alien invasions hasn't worked. So screw it. Maybe doing nothing will do the trick. I quit."

He could almost hear the amusement bubbling from Rama Kushna's aspect. "You cannot quit, Boston Brand, this is your penance."

"Ooh, eeh, ooh, ah, ah, ting, tang, walla, walla, bing, bang Ooh, eeh, ooh, ah, ah, ting, tang, walla, walla, bing, bang," Boston intoned solemnly.

"THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE WILL NOT BE IGNORED!" A new voice thundered.

Boston cracked open one eye and took in the sight of an alabaster skinned giant clad in a dark green hooded cloak and trunks along with an inexplicable green domino mask. The mask, Brand decided, must allow for anonymity among the other all-powerful spirits of vengeance. "How's it hanging, Jordan?"

"I AM THE SPECTRE!" The giant bellowed. "I AM THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE!"

"Sure you are, Jordan, how's that working out for you?" Boston asked shaking his head. "Whatever it is you and Rama Kushna want, tell someone else. I'm out."

"A human monster is overdue for his death," Kushna insisted.

"Not my problem," Boston insisted.

"AN INNOCENT IS BEING MANIPULATED INTO SUICIDE TO DEFEAT THE CREATURE," the Spectre intoned.

That gave Brand pause. A suicide would likely be condemned to wander as he was. These two certainly knew which buttons to push. "An innocent?" It seemed like this supposed innocent was not the only one being manipulated.

"A boy of seventeen, who has rarely known love during his life. So many that he has tried to love have died, and more are going to leave him this day," Kushna explained, twisting the knife.

"So? You're both insanely powerful omnipotent beings, you help the kid."

"We are forbidden to deal with mortals in such a manner," Kushna said.

"YOU KNOW THIS," the Spectre bellowed.

"Fine," Boston sighed. "One last mission. Where is this kid?"

~ *Intervention* ~

Harry Potter closed his eyes and turned the stone over in his hand three times.

He sensed them before he heard them, before he heard the sound of people shifting their footing on the twig-strewn ground that marked the outer edge of the forest. He opened his eyes.

They were more than ghosts but less than living flesh, that much was clear. More than anything else, they resembled the memory of Riddle that had escaped from the diary five years before, and that had been memory made nearly solid. They moved toward him. On each face, there was the same expression of love and longing.

James was taller than Harry, apparently still wearing the same clothing he had died in, his hair was untidy and ruffled, and his glasses were a little lopsided.

Sirius was tall and handsome, and far younger than Harry ever remembered him being. His Godfather moved with an easy grace, his hands in his pockets and a playful grin on his face.

Remus was younger too, and much less shabby. The younger man's hair was thicker and darker. He gave the appearance of being happy to have returned to this place, the site of what was quite possibly the happiest times of his life.

Lily's smile was widest of all. She pushed her long auburn hair back as she drew closer to Harry, and her green eyes, so like his, searched his face hungrily, as though she would never be able to look at him enough.

"You've been so brave," She said in an echoing voice.

Harry found he could not speak. It was like the Mirror first year. He could see them, he could hear them, but his mother's touch still eluded him. He just stared at Lily, almost consumed by his loss. He thought that he would like to stand and look at her forever, and that would be enough.

"You are nearly there," James said, breaking the moment. "Very close. We are ... so proud of you."

"Does it hurt?" Harry asked, knowing it was a childish question even as he asked it.

"Dying? Not at all," Sirius laughed. "Quicker and easier than falling asleep."

"And he will want it to be quick. He wants it over," Remus suggested.

"I never wanted you to die," Harry said. These words rushing from him, almost beyond his control. "Any of you. I'm sorry..." he turned to Remus, "right after you'd had your son ... Remus, I'm so sorry..."

"I am sorry too," said Remus. "Sorry we will never know him... but he will know why his mother and I died and I hope he will understand. I was trying to make a world in which he could live a happier life."

"You'll stay with me?" He asked.

"Until the very end," said James.

"They won't be able to see you?" asked Harry.

"We are part of you," said Sirius. "Invisible to anyone else."

Harry looked at his mother.

"Stay close to me," he said quietly.

"Oh for Pete's sake, kid," a new voice broke in. "I can't believe you're falling for this crap. Can't

you see you're being led to your death like a puppet?

~ ***Intervention*** ~

Harry spun to face the new speaker, Draco's wand in his hand, a nonverbal stunner sweeping out.

Only to gape when the red spell passed through the man and continue on until impacting on a tree.

"Hey, cool, pretty lights," the newcomer deadpanned. "You got that out of your system, kid?"

Harry chanced a glance to his mum, who did not seem to realize that anything was happening. She kept trying to lead him into the forest, and had not noticed the newcomer or Harry's reaction to him.

"You're finally noticing?"

"What did you do to them?" Harry demanded. "Leave them alone."

"Kid," the red clad stranger said. "Look at them, they're not ghosts, they're sure as hell not among the heavenly choir. Think about it. That manipulative old man who told you the truth about anything exactly never leaves you with a hummingbird ball thing that has what is supposed to be the Resurrection Stone in it. He even marked it 'I open at the close'. I suppose we should be happy he didn't go with 'In case of suicide, kiss here.'"

"But..."

"And when the ball thing opens, it presents you with a stone that produces your parents, who encourage you to offer yourself up as an idiot sacrifice."

"Buts it's a Hallow!" Harry protested. "Death made a deal with the Peverell Brothers..."

"As if Death would make a deal," the man that appeared to be an animated corpse said, shaking his head. "For that matter, what made you think that Death was an aspect of divinity? Think about it, kid. Things die ALL the time. Do you really think that there is some designated entity standing around with a scythe and a clipboard every time something dies?"

"Well, no... Who are you anyway?" Harry demanded.

"Boston Brand," the stranger said with a bow and a flourish. "At your service. No, that's a lie. I'm here to talk you out of being an idiot. That's more of a public service than service to you."

"If your name is Boston Brand, why do you wear a letter D on your chest?"

"You go into the afterlife wearing what you were wearing when you die."

"And you were wearing *that* ?" Harry asked incredulously.

"This was my costume," the corpse explained. "I performed under the name Deadman."

"Deadman?" Harry asked again.

"You mean you haven't heard of me? I was one of the most famous aerialists in the world."

"Sorry," Harry admitted, "no. What's an aerialist?"

"What's an aerialist?" the corpse asked as if he doubted Harry's sanity. "A trapeze artist. A circus performer."

"Oh, sorry," Harry responded. "I've never been to a circus. So, you were good?"

"I trained under Johnny Grayson," Brand responded. Seeing the blank look on Harry's face, he continued. " *The Flying Graysons* ?"

"Look, I'm sure your life was interesting, but I've got to let a murderous ass kill me so that someone else can kill him," Harry said. "Could you stop doing whatever it is you're doing to my family, so that they can come with me?"

"I'm not doing a thing to them, kid," the Deadman said. "They don't know I'm here because the old man who created them never imagined that I might be here."

"Old man?" Harry echoed, an expression of focus spreading across his features as he looked to his parents and their friends, who were still silently waiting for him at the edge of the forest. "What is this all about?"

"Kid," the Deadman began.

"My name is Harry," Potter interrupted.

"Fine, Harry," Brand continued. "I've been briefed on your life."

"By who?"

A macabre smile played at the corpse's mouth. "You wouldn't believe me if I told you. Your parents died trying to protect you. Your godfather died trying to protect you. I have no idea who that other guy is, but if the pattern holds true, he died trying to protect you. Now they're all telling you that it's no big deal that you need to go commit suicide by immortal moron, and that you're so brave to do it. Does that make any sense to you?"

"They were all so brave," Harry pointed out. "How could I do any less?"

"Kid... Harry, listen to me. If those things were really the people they're supposed to be, who all died so that you could live, they'd be telling you to head for the hills, to get away. They would never be encouraging you to offer yourself up as a sacrifice."

Harry looked to the stone in his hand. "So this isn't really the Resurrection Stone?"

"As far as I know, there's no such thing as a Resurrection Stone," Brand said. "I mean, do they look resurrected to you? There's no such thing as a Hallow either. You already have evidence that your invisibility cloak doesn't grant universal invisibility, and the Elder Wand can be beaten.

"But..." Harry hesitated. "He has Horcruxes."

"So what?" Boston asked.

"So what?" Harry echoed. "So what? So, he can't die. So as long as I'm alive he'll keep coming back, and coming back and others will die."

"So, he can't die. Let me assure you that is NOT a day on the beach. His body can die. When your Mom did it to him the first time it took him, what? A decade to get it back together so that he could possess that teacher? And after you dealt with that one, even with a willing follower, it took him another three years to come back again. So kill the bastard and deal with his soul anchors at your leisure."

"But, I'm a horcrux," the boy said in a quiet voice. "As long as I'm alive, he can't die."

"No," Brand corrected him. "He can't completely die as long as you are a soul anchor. You don't need to die."

The Deadman was suddenly hovering over Harry, pinching at his scar with thumb and forefinger of his right hand. Harry suddenly found himself unable to move, his vision greyed out and was starting to tunnel. Just before he would have lost consciousness, his awareness of the world snapped back into focus and he found the specter that identified itself as Boston Brand standing before him with a squirming... something in its right hand.

"Nasty little bugger," Brand commented, as the squirming thing seemed to evaporate. "And you're de-horcuxed. Taa Daa!"

Harry's hand flew to his scar and he was more than slightly surprised to find touching it offered no sensation beyond touch.

Then the totality of what had just happened hit him. For the first time in his life, Harry actually felt... good. He felt... powerful. Like the night he had driven off the Dementors. He never noticed when the illusions of his parents and their friends faded away.

"Now then," Boston said, looking Harry in the eye. "Go back to the castle. This guy, Riddle has angered all the wrong entities, and now that I've stopped you from stupidly killing yourself, I'm supposed to deal with him. I'll take care of the jerk, and his little snake too."

"You'll need help," Harry protested.

"Kid, listen to me. I'm dead and sentenced to wander the earth until I make a certain sociopathic

goddess happy. What could that idiot Dark Lord of yours possibly do to me that could be worse than that? And no, I'm not tempting fate by asking that. Rama Kushna is just too much of a control freak to ever allow her favorite chew toy to get away." Once again, the corpse's waxy features twisted into a macabre approximation of a smile. "Go on, head back to the castle, find that girl you're hung up on and try to get a little, do it for all of us who can't get laid anymore."

"What?" Harry sputtered with a blush spreading across his features.

"Harry, Kid, you're seventeen. There's always a girl when you're seventeen," Brand laughed. "Go get her."

"She's with her boyfriend, my best friend," Harry muttered, not counting on the dead man having such acute hearing.

"Then go find one of the other girls you're hung up on. If you can't find Miss Right, find Miss Right Now."

Harry's mouth worked for several seconds without any sound until he stopped and calmed himself. "Boston," he said. "Thanks. For the horcrux, and everything."

"Beat it kid," Brand said. "I've dead guy stuff to do."

~ *Intervention* ~

Brand watched as the boy vanished into the distance, with a sense of satisfaction. The people he had helped in the years since his death were the bright spots of his afterlife. A movement among the trees caught his attention. There was, he admitted to himself, a certain satisfaction in screwing over the bad guys as well. That was the first part of his assignment completed. Prevent Harry Potter from committing suicide.

He launched himself into the air and made his way to the demon horde slowly orbiting the forest. He'd been briefed on these things as well as the rest of the challenges that might be marshaled against him this day. They were emotivores, dangerous to the living, but no more than a nuisance to the dead. Still, the proximity of his soul caught their attention.

It took only moments before he was surrounded by hundreds of the demons.

"Hi fellas," he said simply.

"What are you?" the leader asked in the demon tongue. "You are not ghost, you are not demon, you taste of... purity."

"Purity?" Brand laughed. "No, not me. I do have a little present for you though. A guy I know decided to give up on being the Spirit of Vengeance and become the Spirit of Redemption, but all that Vengeance had to go somewhere, you know?"

The horde crowded closer. It was as if they could sense that despite this spirit not being a source

of sustenance, it nonetheless had something intended for them.

Brand released Jordan's 'gift'. The last judgment of the Spirit of Vengeance.

The effect was immediate. Instantly the bodies of every Dementor on the material plane expelled the souls they had consumed during their existences, allowing those souls to pass on to the next level. The demon's bodies then turned to stone and plummeted to the ground below.

The Vampire followers of the Dark Lord burst into flame and were forced into their final, permanent deaths.

The Giants felt the burst of terror as the effect washed over them, and the forest shook as they rampaged away in their panic, wanting nothing more than to put leagues between themselves and the Dark Lord.

In moments, all of the Dark wizard's non-human allies had died or fled. And the second part of his assignment was done. Eliminate the opposition. Check.

~ *Intervention* ~

It was the fire burning in the middle of the clearing that led Boston to the Dark Wizards. They clustered together in the flickering light, completely silent. Some of them were masked and hooded; others showed their faces. Tied to a tree was the largest man Brand had ever seen, struggling against his bonds.

Every eye was fixed upon the Dark Wizard that had so angered Rama Kushna and Jordon. Tom Riddle, or 'Voldemort', who stood with his head bowed, and his white hands folded over the Elder Wand in front of him. He might have been praying, or else counting silently in his mind.

Boston recognized his type from his days with the circus. A driven and talented drama queen. Coiled on the ground next to the dark dink was a giant snake. That must be the final soul anchor. Well he had his primary and secondary targets, now all he needed was a vehicle.

There. A tall, blond wizard, conspicuous in his not having a wand in his hand. It appeared the man might not be having the best day, given the haunted look in his eyes and the general state of his clothing. The walking stick caught Boston's attention. There was only one reason a fop such as this tool would be carrying a cane.

Silently he dropped from the sky, sliding into the blond wizard's body with practiced ease. The wizard's body gave a slight start as Boston assumed control. The borrowed body's heart rate increased as the excitement of being alive, if only temporarily, took hold of Boston. Casually crossing to where the snake lay coiled, Brand inspected the walking stick. Turn the head to the left and pull, a wand. Interesting. Reinserting the wand into the shaft of the stick, he turned the head to the right and pulled. Eighteen inches of razor sharp steel.

A smile crossed the borrowed face. Brand really loved being right.

The snake looked up at him lazily, secure in its safety so close to its master. Brand drove the blade into the snake's brainpan in a single savage thrust.

"Nagini?" the death of his familiar brought the dark wizard to alertness. "What have you done Lucius?"

"Made you mortal," Boston responded with a shrug. "It had to be done. Your time is up Tom Riddle, the real immortals don't like it when little nothings like you make claims on their privileges."

"You will die screaming!" Voldemort threatened, his red eyes gleaming in the firelight.

"Been there, done that," Boston laughed. "Bought the t-shirt."

If Voldemort was confused by the response, he showed no sign, immediately launching into a barrage of spellfire. The Deadman simply exited the body of the wizard he had possessed and dove into the ground allowing the Dark Wizard to vent his anger on one of his servants.

"Dolohov!" Riddle barked. "Yaxley, check on the fool that dared to challenge me."

The two Death Eaters rushed to follow their instructions while Riddle himself knelt next to the snake, clearly hoping that his familiar was not truly dead. Meanwhile Boston rose from the earth before a clearly disconcerted Bellatrix Lestrange. "Hi doll," he drawled with a leer. "Man, you must have been something back in the day. If you don't mind, I'll drive for a while."

Taking possession of her body before she could react, Boston raised her wand. As promised, knowledge of how to use the weapon came to him in a flood. Rama Kushna liked to pretend she was all for a fair fight, but she was never shy about stacking the deck in her pawn's favor.

It truly was a rush to command this kind of magic, Boston reflected as his spells cut a swath through the milling Death Eaters.

"Bellatrix," Riddle shouted. "Stop, what are you doing?"

"Trixie isn't in right now," Boston laughed, his killing curse cutting down Yaxley and Dolohov as they bent over Lucius Malfoy's motionless body. "But if you leave a message at the beep, she'll get it when she gets back. Beep!"

The final straw for the surviving Death Eaters was seeing their Dark Lord kill his favorite in front of them. Those that could apparated away, those who could not, ran for their lives into the darkness of the forest.

~ *Intervention* ~

"WHERE ARE YOU?" Voldemort demanded, turning in place, the Elder Wand at the ready.

"Boo!" Brand said as he rose from the forest floor to hover behind the almost panicking Dark

Lord.

"Avada Kedavra!" the Dark Lord screamed as the deadly green light leaped from his wand,, and passed through the red clad spirit as if he were no there.

"Boy, you're really good with those pretty lights. Too bad they don't do anything."

"What do you want?" Voldemort asked.

"A bit of peace, a nice pepperoni and Italian sausage pizza, a pitcher of beer, and a few hours with Hildy McConnors back when we were both seventeen," Boston answered helpfully. "But as far as what do I want from you? Well, you've overstayed your welcome on this plane, and it's my job to get you to move along to your reward. The problem is, between us, we've killed all of your troopies capable of offing you, and the rest have scampered off."

"What?" Voldemort asked incredulously.

"Yeah, that only leaves..." Boston's gaze drifted over to the half giant tied to the tree. "That's Hagrid, right, the classmate you framed for your first outright murder?"

"Yes," the Dark Lord admitted.

"Yeah," the corpse nodded, "that could work."

For once in his life Tom Riddle did the sensible thing, he turned and started to run.

"Oh, none of that," Boston laughed as he entered the Dark Wizard's body and took control.

"Let's see now," the Deadman said as he started searching the robes the Dark wizard wore. "Extra wand, portkey watch, portkey pen, portkey handkerchief... You'd think the guy wanted a way to get out of Dodge or something. Knife, knife, another knife." He added to the pile. "Poisoned knife, potion, potion, potion. Hey! A gun?" Boston asked as he dropped the Smith and Wesson revolver onto the pile. "The guy's a hypocrite on top of all else?"

Banishing the pile of weapons and portkeys, he paused as a suggestion from Rama Kushna entered his mind. That was devious, Boston grinned in his borrowed body as he performed that suggested spell, and then he flicked the Elder wand to wake the half giant.

Rama Kusna could be an evil bitch when she set her mind to it.

~ *Intervention* ~

"Harry!"

Harry Potter barely had time to turn before he was hit by a bushy haired missile. "Hello Hermione."

"Where have you been?" she demanded. "When we couldn't find you, I thought you'd gone and done something nobly stupid like turning yourself over to... to... You-Know-Who."

"I thought about it," Harry admitted, "but a ghost reminded me just how much being dead sucked, and talked me out of it."

"Bloody hell, mate," Ron said as he jogged up. "Now is not the time to do your disappearing act. Mum is bad enough over Fred, when we couldn't find you..."

"I know, I'm sorry," Harry admitted. "We've got to get our defenses organized."

"All right," Voldemort's voice interrupted all the conversations in the Great Hall. "It is time Hagrid, time for me to finish my one true foe."

There were screams throughout the hall as people sought out the source of the voice. It was not until Hermione pointed upwards that Harry thought to look at the enchanted ceiling and discovered that rather than the sky, it was showing a scene in the forbidden forest.

"Yeh'll never get yer hands on Harry Potter, yeh bastard!" a bound Hagrid responded to the Dark Lord.

"Potter?" Voldemort asked. "Why would I want Potter? He isn't a challenge. You are my one true foe, my old school chum. Everything I've done all these years has led to this moment. At last, we are going to settle, once and for all, just who is the better man."

"What? Me?" Hagrid sputtered.

"You," Riddle confirmed, "I planned to reintroduce the Acromantulas into the Forbidden Forest to serve as my minions, but you did it first. I thought that I could get rid of you by framing you for murder, but you outsmarted me again, when you manipulated Dumbledore into keeping you at the school. I struck at the Potters, knowing they were favorites of yours, but you responded so quickly, I was distracted by your arrival, and that is what happened to me that night. The boy had nothing to do with it. It was you, the one true Light Lord. It has always been you Hagrid, stopping me at every turn, frustrating my every plan. Everyone always said Dumbledore was who I always feared, but it was you. It was always you. Well, that ends tonight!"

"

"Harry," Hermione hissed. "Vol... You-Know-Who is calling *Hagrid* a 'light lord'? What the hell is going on?"

"I'm not sure," Harry admitted, "but I think we're in for a show."

~ ***Intervention*** ~

"And now," Brand flicked Voldemort's wand, causing the bindings to fall away. "Now we finally prove who the better man is Hagrid. You or I."

"They snapped my wand, Tom," Hagrid said, rubbing his wrists. "I can' duel yeh."

"They did, didn't they?" Boston said, affecting deep reflection. "I could kill you where you stand, but what would that prove? You and I would both know that I only won because I had an advantage, and that just will not do." Boston took the Elder wand in both hands and snapped the Death Stick in two with a shower of sparks. Step three of his assignment was complete. The destruction of the Elder Wand.

"Now it's just you and me, Hagrid," Boston said as he threw the still sparking pieces of wand away, shed Voldemort's robes, and took up a traditional bare-knuckle-boxing pose, with both fists at chest level. "Mano a mano, put your dukes up, Hagrid, we'll finish this like men."

The half giant regarded the man he thought was the Dark Lord as if the smaller man had gone insane. "Yeh want to fight me, Tom?"

"Fight you?" Boston asked as he stood before the half giant in only his trousers and shirtsleeves. "I'm going to murderize you. Come on, it's go time!"

"Tom," Hagrid began.

Boston began the shuffle step dance he recalled from Ali, "Come At me, Hagrid. Come at me!"

"I'm not fightin' yeh Tom," Hagrid said, clearly wondering what the hell was going on. "Come with me, we'll get yeh to the Aurors, an' they'll get yeh some help."

"What's wrong, Hagrid? Chicken?" Boston asked, moving into a shadow boxing routine.

"Chicken?" Hagrid echoed.

"You heard me, Chicken. Afraid to go up against me man to man," Boston continued. "Buck, buck, buck, buck."

"Don't call me 'chicken', Tom," Hagrid protested. "I'm not afraid o' anything."

"How long was it, Hagrid?"

"How long was what?" the half giant asked, perplexed by the change of subject.

"The two-by-four your old man strapped to his arse so he didn't fall into your mother..."

All throughout his afterlife, Boston Brand was no stranger to taking a punch. While possessing bodies, he had been struck by villains, heroes, and even super powered aliens. None of that had prepared him for the huge fist that was suddenly filling his entire world.

"Don't..." Hagrid all but screamed. "Don' yeh talk about my mother!"

"Is..." Boston gasped as he struggled to his feet. "Is that all you've got Momma's boy?"

"Don't..." Hagrid repeated through clenched teeth.

"A normal man with a giantess, now that really makes you think," Boston said trying to determine if Hagrid's blow had simply sprained Voldemort's left knee or had it shattered it? Standing was quite difficult. "Talk about your sausages in hallways. No wonder she left, she probably just needed to get laid."

Boston was on his back again, only this time Hagrid was on top of him in a rage, raining blows down. The Deadman decided enough was enough and exited Voldemort's body into the forest floor, making sure that the half giant never saw his ghostly form.

And step four of his assignment was complete. The final death of Tom Riddle.

~ *Intervention* ~

"Harry!" Hermione insisted, "Why would You-Know-Who use such clichéd Americanisms like 'murderize'? Why would he destroy his wand like that? Why would he provoke Hagrid into killing him?"

"I have no idea, Hermione," Harry lied, having recognized the speech patterns Voldemort had been using as belonging to the Deadman, but not really wanting to go into that with Hermione at this point.

"If Hagrid is the Light Lord," Ron asked, "why did we have to do all the horcrux hunting? And why did everyone think you were the Boy-Who-Lived?"

"Ron, seriously," Harry said, doing his best to distract Hermione from the pointing out the illogic of Ron's question. Harry found himself wondering how Ron could shift his worldview so easily, "I have no idea."

"Maybe it was all part of Dumbledore's plan," Hermione theorized, "Like how he got you the Put-outer, Harry got the Snitch, and he gave me *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* ..." The young woman paused for a moment. "What was that Snitch for anyway?"

"Hagrid's plan you mean," Ron corrected her. "And I thought *I* knew how to play chess. Hagrid must have been running this whole thing dozens of moves ahead."

The Great Hall went silent when a somber Rubeus Hagrid entered. "I've... Yeh see... Yeh-Know-Who is dead," he rumbled. "Thought yeh would want t' know..."

Almost as one, the assembled survivors of the Assault on Hogwarts began to cheer for their newest hero.

~ *Intervention* ~

"Thanks, Hagrid," Harry said with a grin, "for everything."

"Ah, Harry, I didn' do anything," Hagrid said, a blush rising above his beard.

"You only saved us all," Harry disagreed. "Hagrid the Hero. I like that, it has a nice ring to it."

"Don' yeh go thinkin' all this will make people forget the Boy-Who-Lived," Hagrid protested.

"Oh, Heaven forbid!" Harry laughed as his place in the line to speak with Hagrid was taken by Filius Flitwick.

Harry wandered to a quiet corner of the Great Hall to try and figure out what he was going to do now, only to have the silence broken.

"Hello Harry."

Harry was surprised that his search for solitude had brought him to be standing next to Susan Bones. The girl and her clothing were covered in sweat and blood. Her hair, no longer bound in its customary plait, hung down her back almost like strands of insanely fine copper wire. She was sitting on a pile of rubble nursing from a bottle of butterbeer.

"The fighting was horrible. So many people were hurt."

"I know," Harry nodded.

"But, it's weird. I was scared, terrified really, but now, I'm just tired. Tired, dirty and ... and..." Susan said, not meeting his eye.

"And?" he asked.

"And I'm horny. Is that terrible?"

"I don't know," Harry admitted. "I read somewhere that arousal is a common reaction to fear and violence..."

"And I'm really, really drunk," Susan continued.

"How many of those have you had?" Harry asked as he took the half-empty bottle from the redhead's hands.

"Half this bottle," she said.

"You can't get drunk on half a bottle of butterbeer," Harry said as he took a pull on the bottle.

"Quit trying to take my rationalizations away Harry," Susan sniffed. "I need to go down to the dorm, see if the showers are still working, and if my bed is still there... and I need some help me. Would you help me, Harry?"

Harry was surprised and somewhat impressed with the offer. He looked across the Great Hall and

spotted Hermione among the Weasleys, in Ron's arms. What was it Boston had said? 'If you can't find Miss Right, find Miss Right Now'?

"Well, you *are* awfully drunk," he suggested.

"I might need your help in the shower."

What could he say to that? "Ok, whatever you need."

"I'll hold you to that, Harry," Susan said as she stood up and started pulling him from the Great Hall in the direction of the stairs.

~ ***Intervention*** ~

Albus Dumbledore sat patiently, waiting for Harry to appear. Time, of course, passed at a different rate here than it did in the world of the living, but the old man was sure that Harry, dependably heroic Harry, would appear at any moment with his portion of Voldemort's fractured soul.

Albus congratulated himself for choosing to configure this place to resemble King's Cross Station. This would be the place most likely to remind Harry of transitions. A place that would motivate the boy to do the right thing.

Sometimes, even heroes need a bit of guidance.

The peace of his wait was broken by the sound of shattering glass. Albus looked upwards in shock to see an enormous green gloved hand pushing through the train station's glass roof to reach for him.

The wizard found himself gripped in the huge hand and pulled upward until an equally large hooded face confronted him.

"ALBUS DUMBLEDORE!" the giant bellowed in a voice that seemed to come from everywhere, "I AM THE SPIRIT OF REDEMPTION!"

Not giving Albus a chance to respond, the giant continued. "YOU HAVE TOYED WITH THE LIVES OF INNOCENTS AS IF THEY WERE PLAYTHINGS! WORSE YET, YOU WERE CARELESS WITH YOUR TOYS!"

"IT IS TIME, ALBUS DUMBLEDORE," the giant said, "TIME FOR YOU TO EARN YOUR REDEMPTION!"

~ ***Intervention*** ~

Once again, Boston Brand sat in midair, eyes closed, hands folded into his lap, and his legs crossed into the full lotus trying to find his inner peace.

Being the Universe's chew toy still was never, but occasionally it had its high points.

Boston concentrated on his inner peace, and started his new mantra.

"Salagadoola mechicka boola bibbidi-bobbidi-boo put 'em together and what have you got? bibbidi-bobbidi-boo."

"The chorus to Witch Doctor might, under some very strange conditions, might be considered a mantra," Rama Kushna said her laughter barely restrained. "But a Disney song? Never."

"You chant your way, Rama Kushna, I'll chant mine."

"You always say that Boston Brand," the goddess said. "You didn't complete your mission."

"I hit the high points," Boston said patiently, rotating to face her aspect. "The kid is still alive, and closer to happy than he's been in a long time. The stone bearing the resurrection curse is in the middle of a forest, trampled into the ground by a centaur herd, the Death Stick is destroyed, Riddle is dead, with his reputation destroyed, and everyone's happy."

"You forgot the invisibility cloak."

"It's not like the kid is doing anything wrong with it," Boston suggested. "Using it to sneak looks at the girls in the shower most likely."

"That isn't the point," Rama Kushna said. "While they were not the Hallows of legend, they were all the most powerful of their kind, too dangerous to be left to the mortals."

"When you figure out a way that an invisibility cloak can actually be dangerous, call me." Boston said with a shake of his head. "Until then, leave the kid alone."

"You are a stubborn man, Boston Brand," Rama Kushna said. "So be it. I have a new project for you."

"Not interested. I quit again," Boston said as he resumed his monotone chant, "Salagadoola mechicka boola bibbidi-bobbidi-boo put 'em together and what have you got? bibbidi-bobbidi-boo."

"Again?" Rama Kushna asked, humor in her voice. "That trick never works."

~ *Intervention* ~