

The Truth

Chapter 1

A/N: I don't own Harry Potter and wouldn't particularly care to. I would like a rental agreement with option to buy for Hermione Granger. A short term contract with Nymphadora Tonks wouldn't be turned down. A Long-term agreement with Luna Lovegood would probably be a whole lot of fun. Any time Padma Patil wants to open negotiations, call me and oh for a weekend with Fleur. Oddly Lavender and Padma's sister (despite being her twin) Parvati do nothing for me...

The Truth

I slowly woke from a night of fitful sleep.

My name is Harry Potter, and I'm doomed.

That's a horrible realization to have before you've had your first cup of tea in the morning.

I cracked an eye, squinting so that I didn't need to find my glasses. There it was. My calendar of Doom, with each day carefully crossed off, until the box for today. That box I circled twice in red and annotated the day with 'Doom'. I quickly checked my warding scheme. Still up. Still active.

The wards hadn't worked last time, but I had spent every waking second in preparation for this day since then. I had stolen ideas for my new warding scheme from the Dynastic Egyptians, the old Norse, the Chinese Power Mages, and the Aztec high priests. Surely that combination might offer at least temporary protection from the horrors outside my room. Right? God, please let me be right this one time.

I pulled the duvet tighter around my body trying not to remember the laughter of the North American Technomage I had told of the horrors I faced. He laughed and told me what every other learned wizard I had approached had already said. I'm doomed. His only useful suggestion was to start drinking heavily.

I lay in my bed remembering that laughing ass from Boston when it started. The banging on my door. They were coming for me.

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As with most of the bad things that have happened to me in my life, this was all Dumbledore's fault.

"I've come up with a plan that will allow you to leave your relative's home Harry." The bearded wonder said rubbing his hands together. "If we are successful, you will never again need to darken their door."

I looked up from the first meal I had received in a week, having just been rescued from #4 Privet drive only minutes before... hadn't I?

It seemed odd that there was a warming charm on the plate given that every meal I had ever had at Hogwarts had been delivered piping hot without the use of a charm. But maybe that was just because it was summer; perhaps the kitchens were unmanned (unelfed?) over the summer. It was also odd that I wasn't hungry. I remembered waking up that morning ravenous, a constant dull ache in my belly, what had happened since then?

Shaking off the odd feeling of déjà vu, I realized I had missed something important. A chance to leave the Dursleys forever? See what can happen when you're not paying attention? How could I possibly pass up an opportunity like that? So, like an idiot, I signed all the paperwork Dumbledore put in front of me without bothering to read it.

"Oh well done Harry!" the old man with the goat fetish that he had somehow blamed on his brother exclaimed as he took the signed parchments from my hand, and cause them to go where ever signed documents go when he tapped them with his wand. "Not only will you be protected from Voldemort and his people, but you are single handedly going to unite the four houses of Hogwarts!"

He was really into whatever his plan was. It was only then that I noticed that he hadn't actually told me what I had just agreed to, but that feeling of déjà vu continued. "Whaa?" I asked intelligently.

"Harry..." Dumbledore said in that 'I'm so disappointed in you for not recognizing what a brilliant plan I've formulated and to prevent further disappointment you should immediately accept what is happening without question' way of his, "now that you're sixteen, certain... opportunities present themselves. Unfortunately it is recognized that young wizards, such as yourself, tend to be dreadfully stupid, unable to pour urine from a boot with directions written on the heel as it were, until at least their early thirties. As such, they are rarely allowed to interact with others in any meaningful way.

"But young witches," He continued, "Young witches mature much younger than their male counterparts. A young wizard can overcome his shortcomings with an ambitious young witch behind him guiding his decisions. Your blood protections are easily transferred from your aunt's home to the place of your marriage bed. This is why you've married."

There was silence for a full three count as I processed what Dumbledore just said. The feeling of déjà vu vanished. "Married?" I croaked unable to believe what I had heard. "I've got to get married?"

Dumbledore blinked. "My dear boy, you've just GOTTEN married. Didn't you read what you were signing?"

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I was **MARRIED** ? What the hell? “Who am I married to?” I asked when I found my voice. “Hermione?”

“Oh, no my boy, Miss Granger is completely unsuited to the type of marriage you require. As soon as I determined that you held the possibility of uniting the Hogwarts houses, what we needed to do became so very clear.”

“Who am I married to?” I repeated, perhaps a bit more forcefully. I found myself wondering what he meant by the ‘type of marriage’ I required. There are types of marriage?

“A member of each house.” Dumbledore said with a wave of his hand as if the name of the actual girl involved was of no consequence.

His actual response confused me as much as his manner while making it. Who was a member of each house? There was no alternative; I once again had to respond with my normal level of insight and understanding. “Whaa?”

“I have arranged for the formation of a group marriage for you, with one member of each of the four houses,” the old bastard said as if that answered all my possible questions.

It took a few seconds for me to wrap my mind around that concept. I mean sure, I was a sixteen year old guy who was being told that he was going to have sex with four different women. But I was also told that I was married to these women and I STILL didn’t know who they were. “Who? Who are they?”

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I only have one thing to say about apparition. Don’t. As a mode of transportation, it’s a great purgative. The compression/expansion cycle of the experience is to be avoided.

So of course, this was the manner of transportation that Dumbledore used to take me to my new ‘brides’. While in the process of this idiot form of self torture I thought I was going to die.

It wasn’t until I arrived at our destination and I met my new wives that I found myself wishing that I actually had.

“Mr. Potter, may I present your wives.” The old bastard actually had the balls to smile and wink at me.

There they were, rising from chairs set in a semi circle around the point that we appeared in. Millicent Bulstrode, Marietta Edgecombe, Romilda Vane, and Susan Bones. What the hell? The only one of them I’ve ever exchanged a civil word with was Sue. How could this possibly be happening to me?

“Ladies, your husband.” Dumbledore continued.

“We know who he is Headmaster,” Millicent said almost managing to sound respectful. “What we don’t know is who the First Wife is.”

“Ah, the refreshing directness of Slytherin House.” The old man smiled at the assembled women. “The simplest answer is that it will be which ever of you who bears the first Potter heir.”

“Wait a minute.” I protested. “This can’t be legal. Romilda can’t be more than fourteen, and Bulstrode and Edgecombe hate me.”

“I’ll be fifteen September second Harry.” Romilda cooed in a manner I guess she thought was alluring. “My grandmother was married even younger than I.”

“We’re all Potters now Husband.” Millicent growled in a manner that I took to be life threatening.

“Every marriage has certain obstacles that must be overcome Harry.” Dumbledore said condescendingly. “Certainly Marietta Potter has certain reservations about your relationship.”

“My father used me to cancel a debt to the Potter estate.” The girl shook her head, setting her strawberry blond curls to move back and forth violently. “This was not my idea.” From her expression and body language relayed a further unspoken thought ‘and you’re going to pay.’

“Susan Potter found herself in dire straits following the death of her aunt. The Ministry directed Death Duties depleted her vaults and her Aunt’s home was sold to cover the family’s debts. Susan found her self destitute, unable to even afford her sixth year tuition.”

“I’m sorry Harry,” the red head whispered. “I had no choice, I had no where else to go.”

“And Millicent Potter has admitted to the possibility that she will secure her inheritance of your estate by bearing the Potter Heir, and then she will turn you over to Voldemort, but I believe that with love and understanding the two of you can work through that.”

I stared at the old fool with my mouth open in amazement. “You’ve gone senile, haven’t you? She intends to give me to Voldemort and you see that as something to ‘work through’?”

“Harry, I know that’s just your wedding night nerves speaking, so I’ll forgive you for that, this time.” The old man pulled a pocket watch from his robes. “Well, I’d best be off and allow you five the privacy you’ll need to enjoy your evening.”

Before I could protest, the old man vanished. Damn him. Now what? I returned my attention to the four witches in the room to discover that they were seemingly involved in a spontaneous Stone/Parchment/Wand competition. It took six rounds to determine that Millicent was the winner.

The large woman approached me and took hold of my bicep in her huge right hand. "Let's go to bed Husband. It's my wedding night and I want it to be special."

As I was dragged from the room I tried not to scream, really I did.

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I'm not going to describe my 'Wedding Night'. Let it suffice to say that Millicent told me that it was her first time, asked that I be gentle, and that two amazing hours later, I found myself lying in her sleeping embrace wondering what the hell just happened. That was unbelievable! Maybe this married thing wouldn't be so bad.

The next morning she tried to kill me in the very nicest way possible once again. I have to say that as assassination attempts go, this was a really nice one. Why didn't I like her again?

After a shower and a leisurely breakfast I attempted to contact the Headmaster, but he was seemingly ignoring me. Again. So I set about trying to contact my friends. This turned out to be the latest of my mistakes.

Ron managed to floo right over, as he knew where I was from Dumbledore. Odd that I still had no idea, but there you go. I had been worried that Ron would be jealous as per his normal reaction when odd things happen to me. He wasn't. It turned out that Ron thought my situation was funny.

"Only you Harry. Only you could end up in a situation like this," he laughed.

"It's not funny Ron," I protested in return.

"Of course it is." He laughed slumping on to the sofa in my suite in what I had been informed was the Potter Estate. "And the fact that you've done this without knowing that is hilarious. I mean, sure the power boost would be nice, but ..."

Hermione arrived prevented Ron from explaining what he meant by 'power boost'. Upon seeing the expression on Hermione's face, Ron sobered, mouthed the word 'LATER' toward me and stealthily made his way to the hearth to make his escape.

I was a bit surprised to find that Ron was avoiding Hermione, but the young lady in question seemed to have built up a full head of steam. Perhaps he was worried that she was going to be working herself up to a full screaming fury over my 'marriage'. From his point of view it was probably a wise move to leave her alone with the object of her ire.

From my point of view the rat bastard abandoned me. Again.

"Harry, what have you gotten yourself into this time?" she asked in that low tone she reserved for when I had been spectacularly stupid.

"The Headmaster told me he had come up with a way for me to never have to return to Privet Drive, and shoved some documents in front of me to sign. None of this was my idea Hermione."

For some reason my admission seemed to infuriate her. "After that insanity with the Triwizard magical contracts, you signed contracts without reading them?"

"Well... yeah," I admitted. "When you put it like that it sounds real stupid, but I wasn't really..."

"When it's put anyway at all it sounds real stupid because it IS real stupid." She fumed.

I was suddenly very happy there weren't any elves attached to the estate... were there?

"On top of keeping you safe and trying to figure out what the Headmaster is up to, we need to concentrate on security for the poor women victimized in this situation." She continued before fixing me with one of her patented death glares. "You haven't had your way with any of them have you?"

"Had my way?" I asked incredulously. "Well... you know it was our wedding night. I was still trying to deal with what was happening, but Millicent..."

"Oh, Harry, what am I going to do with you?" She rose from her chair and began pacing. "What bothers me about this whole thing, besides your using these poor women and the way Dumbledore is just taking control of your life, is that this is the first group marriage I've ever heard of in Magical Britain."

"I'm not using anyone!" I protested.

"Shut up Harry, I'm thinking." She said dismissively. Then she stopped dead in her tracks and wheeled to face me, a dark fury seemingly born out of no where. "And don't be getting any of your sick ideas about me joining in on this perversion."

"Oh god, no!" I gasped taken by surprise at the suggestion

"And what is that supposed to mean?" Hermione huffed, her expression changing from anger to that of being offended in a fraction of a second.

"But I... I never..."

"So I'm not good enough for your harem?"

"I didn't say that," I tried to backpedal from my protest. "But you're... You're Hermione. I've never thought of you like that."

"See that you don't." She restarted her pacing. "Given that this situation is a prime example of a normal male adolescent fantasy, if a group marriage is legal under the Ministry's laws there must be a reason that they aren't more common among people like Lucius Malfoy."

"Maybe Malfoy's dad is really deeply in love with Malfoy's mum." I suggested.

"Maybe," she agreed somewhat doubtfully. "Until I can get some research done, we need to make sure that you're treating your new wives respectfully."

"Respectfully? Hermione, Millicent wants to turn me over to Voldemort, Marietta hates me, Romilda is a little girl, and Sue is just here because she had nowhere else to go."

"Hmm," she said while regarding me with a gimlet eye. "I see I'm going to have to form a group to keep an eye on you."

That is how I ended up a founding member of S.A.P.P.S. (Society for the Advancement and Protection of Potter's Spouses). Hermione even made me shell out two sickles each for a badge for all five Potters.

I was really beginning to hate my life.

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"No." I said. "Get out."

"But Husband," Romilda simpered, "We need to consummate our marriage."

"No," I repeated. "You are fourteen years old. I was tricked into this 'marriage' but I'll be damned if I'm going to let a fourth year into my bed. If I haven't found a way out of this so called marriage by the time you are sixteen and legal, then we'll talk about it. Until then, get out."

That's when she pulled out the big guns and started to cry.

I was somewhat amazed that her crying ploy didn't work, not in the slightest. After the reaming I had received from Hermione I had put quite a bit of thought into my situation. I could just see all this being nothing more than a setup between Dumbledore and the Ministry. This whole marriage thing was probably nothing more than a trap to throw me into Azkaban for child molesting.

Fudge would do it because he's an ass. Dumbledore would do it 'to keep me safe'.

Well the joke is on them, because there is literally no way in hell I was going to take a fourteen year old to my bed.

Romilda carried on for an hour before she finally got the hint and ran from my room, slamming the door behind her, leaving me in blissful solitude and silence for almost three minutes. My alone time was terminated by a hesitant knock on my door.

"Go away Romilda." I said to the door. I wasn't surprised in the least to see the door start to open.

I was surprised to see that the one opening the door was Susan Bones... Well, Susan Potter by then.

"Harry? Could we talk?" The redhead asked in a voice so low I could barely make it out.

"I'm not sure what kind of company I'll be Susan." I like Susan, I really do. From what I'd pieced together from what little conversation we've managed since I arrived here, that bastard Voldemort killed her Aunt Amelia three weeks before. Between Death Duties and the Family debts, all she had left was her family name... and I'd taken that from her. Dumbledore had literally plucked her from the Diagon Alley where she had spent her last five galleons on a fairly squalid room in the back of the Leaky Caldron, and hadn't eaten in two days.

"I wanted to thank you Harry."

"Thank me?" I couldn't imagine what she could possibly be thanking me for.

"That you would take this risk for us, given what is likely to happen." She said shyly.

"Risk? What risk?"

Her left hand flew to cover her mouth. "You don't know? Really?"

"Know what?" I asked, feeling a chill running up my spine. "What's going to happen?"

"A magical bonding like this links the women." She said with a blush.

Links the women? What did that mean? "That's good right?"

"For the women," she said, her blush deepening. "Depending on how magically powerful the Wizard is, the Witches will be healthier, stronger and, well, potentially smarter as well. A bonding of a group of Witches to a powerful Wizard will allow them to reach their potentials in all aspects of their lives."

"So..." I asked my mind racing. Did this mean? "So you'll be basically feeding off my magic? What happens when you exhaust me?"

"No, I... I'm explaining this badly. We don't drain you. The bonding sets up... what did Auntie call it? A feedback loop. The bond pushes your

magic to us, and at the same time, the more Witches in the bond, the more powerful the Wizard becomes over time.”

“Oh. Well that’s all good isn’t it?” I asked tempting fate. I should really know better than to do that.

“Well, as far as it goes,” Susan hesitated. That wasn’t a good sign. “Like I said, the magical bonding links the women. When it comes to you, we’ll all feel the same way.”

“Excuse me?”

“The strongest emotion between the four of us will become the common emotion between us. I think it will become a contest between how much Marietta hates you and how much Romilda lusts for you.”

“Oh.” Suddenly the possibility of a power up didn’t seem all that attractive.

“On the plus side, three of us don’t want to give you to You-Know-Who... so Millicent should calm down on that idea. But that’s not really the bad news.”

There was that chill down my spine again. “What is it?”

“The bond will synchronize our cycles.”

“That’s not so bad. I remember hearing that happens to women who live in groups. I bet it happened between the girls in your dorm room.” I said stupidly.

“It did.” Susan admitted. “But that’s not what I mean. The bond will drive our cycles to insane levels... When we’re all optimally fertile...”

I felt my eyes widen when I understood what she was saying.

“We’ll find you and... All of us,” She added.

“Oh.”

“And you know how some girls get a little... moody sometimes?”

Oh hell I thought. Surely not.

“We will become almost psychotic. Harems have been known to kill the men involved.” She paused again blushing prettily, “or drive them crazy with the moodiness and tears.”

I think that was when I realized just why despite being legal, group marriages were uncommon.

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Susan spent the night with me.

I’m not really sure how it happened. It wasn’t a seduction or anything, as if I was capable of that. One moment we were sitting on the sofa in my room talking, and then we were kissing. I don’t think I started it, but I honestly don’t know if she did either. We just seemed to instantly transition from quiet conversation to having each other’s tongues in our mouths. At some point clothes started coming off, and then we were on my bed.

It turned out without Millie’s guidance I was something of a fumble fingered oaf, but Susan seemed to enjoy herself. For my part I had confirmed my earlier theory that sex was a great way to spend an evening... or pretty much any time of day.

“Wow,” The redhead said, nuzzling my neck. “That was nice. You really have no idea what you’re doing do you?”

“Hey,” I protested. “You said ‘wow’ and ‘that was nice’. I must have been doing something right.”

“It was very nice,” she giggled. “It’s just that your reputation lead me to believe you were a lot more... experienced than you turned out to be.”

“I have a reputation?”

“Oh, yes. Since fourth year. At least a dozen girls claim to have been in your bed.”

I propped myself up on an elbow, the better to see her face. Was this a joke? “Really? I wish I had been there. Who?”

Lavender, Megan, Pansy.” She said counting off the list on her fingers.

“Wait. Pansy? Pansy Parkinson? She hates me, even more than Marietta,” I protested. “Why would she ever claim such a thing?”

Susan’s brow furrowed. “I don’t know, she was very... convincing. Maybe she was just bragging, or maybe she was looking to get back at Draco after one of their fights.”

Malfoy and Parkinson fought? They always seemed to be joined at the hip. I found myself wondering what else I hadn’t noticed in five years at the school. “Girls brag about that sort of thing?”

"Some do," she admitted. "What did Weasley and Granger have to say about all this?"

"Ron finds the whole thing hilarious. He mentioned something about the power up you spoke about, but then Hermione showed up and he ducked out."

"Hmph." Susan snorted. "It figures a low life like Ron Weasley would find the situation funny."

"Low life? Hey, Ron's not a bad guy," I protested.

"He doesn't look at you like you're a side of beef." Susan replied. "His eyes haven't risen above my chest since third year."

"Well, I can understand that..." I don't know why I was working so hard to defend Ron after he laughed at me. "I've snuck a few peeks as well."

"I know," she said, a blush spreading down her torso. I'd never known that a blush went that far down. "What did Hermione have to say?"

"The usual, I'm an idiot, and I better be treating all of you with respect while she researches why group marriages are rare enough to be almost unknown while still being legal. Of course you told me why this evening. Anyway, you'll be pleased to know that I've paid the membership fees that that all of you can join a society."

"S.P.E.W.?"

"No," I laughed. "Spew is yesterday's cause. Now it's S.A.P.P.S. That's the Society for the Advancement and Protection of Potter's Spouses."

"Oh, goodie, I like being advanced and protected."

"You're in luck then. The badges should be ready next week."

She smiled. Harry was surprised by how that lit up her face. "You hid in your room all day Harry. Tomorrow you need to come out and talk to us."

"Yeah, I know. We need to get everything figured out before school starts."

"Are you willing to pay for us to attend Hogwarts?" There was a sort of wistful hopefulness in her voice.

"If I can afford it, of course. Among the things I need to do is go to Gringotts to figure out our finances. Hopefully I can hire an Elf or two."

"Buy. You buy Elves." She said gently.

"No, hire. I would never take a slave. I'm pretty sure that Dobby will come to work for us. Probably Winky as well."

Sue seemed to examine me for the first time. "You are a very strange wizard Harry Potter."

"You have no idea."

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I was feeling a little ashamed of myself, but I really didn't see that I had all that much of a choice. I woke as the sun came up as per usual, but found Susan wrapped around me in a very nice way. I certainly wasn't going to spoil that and she was snoring in the cutest way I have ever heard.

Ron, Seamus and Neville all snore, but none of them were cute when they did it. I spent several moments pondering that, and concluded that nice breasts made pretty much everything cute.

Putting that rather sexist (if highly accurate) thought aside, I pondered what I had learned the previous two days. My first realization was the blindingly obvious. I've been very, very stupid. The central basic truth of my life boiled down to the uncomfortable idea that Dumbledore was toying with me. He pulled the strings and I danced like an obedient little puppet was supposed to.

My parent's home in Godrick's Hollow was under the Fidelius charm. It's attacked on Halloween night and Dumbledore dispatches Hagrid to get me. That meant both Hagrid and Dumbledore knew the secret, which means they were told by the Secret Keeper... right? Of course it could have been via a note like how I learned of #12 Grimmauld Place. Still, Hagrid was sent to get me. Not to help Mum and Dad, to get me. That suggested that the events of that night were not quite as unexpected as one might hope.

Hagrid did something with me before I was dropped off on Aunt Petunia's doorstep for her to find on the 2nd of November. Petunia made very sure I grew up knowing the day I was inflicted on them. What happened in that missing day?

I resolved that as soon as I didn't have a very naked girl with spectacular breasts cuddling up to me, I was going to start making notes.

Dumbledore wanted me at the Dursleys, I went to the Dursleys. Dumbledore wanted me at school, and after Vernon said no, the letters kept coming. And coming. And coming. I found myself wondering if that happened with every Muggle born and Muggle raised who thought that the letter was a prank. Why hadn't this occurred to me before?

Professor McGonagall went to explain things to the Grangers. Hagrid appeared to threaten the Dursleys. Vernon plainly said no several times to my attending Hogwarts, yet I went. But when it came time for me to go to Hogsmeade because Vernon didn't sign a permission slip, I couldn't go. Why was his permission not needed to attend the school but was so that I could go to a small village?

Why was it possible for three first years to defeat the defenses offered by the staff of the school? Sure Hermione is a genius, but Ron's

cluelessness and my general idiocy should have balanced that out. Yet we somehow succeeded. How?

Second year I was hearing the Basilisk in the pipes all year, but when I finally found the damned snake, it was far too large to fit in any pipe I've ever seen. It would have clogged most viaducts I've seen, and why was Hermione the only one capable of figuring out what the creature was? What the hell was wrong with the staff anyway?

Third year Remus Lupin was hired as DADA professor, Coincidentally Sirius escaped Azkaban, and no one feels the need to mention that a supposed escaped mass murderer was a Dog animagus.

The insanity of fourth year and Voldemort's absurdly convoluted plot to capture me speaks for itself, as does the madness of fifth year with its torture and mental attacks.

Now, out of the blue Dumbledore pulled me out of #4 Privet drive and tricks me into marriage with four women who I don't know. Sure the sex so far has been fantastic, but am I still dancing to his tune? Is this all part of his plan? Are the women parts of that plan?

Susan stirred in my arms. I closed my eyes and deepened my breathing. Many years of living with the Dursleys had taught me to fake sleep convincingly. The beautiful redhead cuddled into me for a few moments, then kissed me lightly on the cheek before easing herself out of my arms and my bed. Through cracked lids I watched her shimmy into her night shirt and panties, admiring the action as much as the act, and she made her way from my room. As soon as the door closed I was up, dashing quickly to the bath to void my bladder, I dressed quickly and threw on my invisibility cloak. It was time for me to figure out what was going on. I exited my room and made my way down stairs.

I caught up with Susan as she was entering the kitchen, sliding in behind her on the second opening of the swinging door. Sitting around the table waiting for her were my other three 'wives'.

"Well?" Marietta asked. "We expected you last night."

Susan poured herself a cup of tea, "I found something far more interesting than reporting to you Mari." She made her way to sit at the table. "He didn't know." The red head said taking a sip from her cup.

"Didn't know what?" Millicent asked. Her attitude suggested that she didn't like having to depend on others for information like this.

"Anything. Dumbledore lied to me. To us. Harry never requested us for this marriage, the first he heard of it was when Dumbledore handed him some documents to sign yesterday during his first meal in a week. He didn't know anything about the Harem effect before I told him, and quite frankly the idea of our synchronizing terrifies him."

"How can he not know about the Harem effect? The Potters are an old family. That doesn't make sense." Marietta asked.

"No, it does make sense." Millicent disagreed. "The Potters are an old family, but James married Lily Evans, a Muggleborn. Potter was raised by his Muggle relatives. He came to Hogwarts completely ignorant. Malfoy said once that Potter didn't even know about magic until he got his acceptance letter to Hogwarts."

I swallowed a growl at her use of 'Muggleborn' concerning my mother. I needed to find out what was going on, I could hurt people later.

"I would advise against calling his mother a 'Muggleborn' Millie." Susan said. "Just because he doesn't know what he can do to us doesn't mean that he won't figure it out."

What I could do to them? What did that mean?

"Sorry." The large girl blushed, "Old habits. I thought it was odd that Potter would open negotiations with my Dad for me. So, Dumbledore is behind all this? Why?"

Susan shook her head. "I have no idea."

"Power." Marietta said simply. "The same reason Dumbledore does anything. If his goal was truly to be the headmaster of Hogwarts then that's what he would be. He wouldn't be expending his efforts toward the Wizengamot or the ICW or any of the other things he does. It's the power he's after."

"But why is Harry going along with it?" Romilda asked in a small voice. "If he doesn't love us, why are we here?"

"Romi, you need to grow up." Susan said quietly. "Harry doesn't love any of us; he doesn't even know any of us, not really. He knows Mari through his short flirtation with Cho, he knows Millie from the constant fighting between Gryffindor and Slytherin, he knows me from the DA, and he knows you from being two years behind him in Gryffindor. Has he ever even had a real conversation with you?"

"He helped me with my transfiguration homework last year once."

"And that is the basis of a life long relationship." Marietta said sarcastically before slipping into a more serious demeanor. "I think I know why we're here, and once again the answer is power. The Four of us are the most powerful witches currently at Hogwarts without a family willing or able to protect us from Dumbledore and whatever he has planned."

"What?" the other three witches chorused.

"Based on our index scores. I am the seventh most powerful of my year, the third most powerful witch. Sue and Millie are the Ninth and Twelfth most powerful in their year, and our little Romi is number one overall in her year."

"I thought that the index scores were supposed to be confidential." Millicent protested.

"Oh, please," Marietta scoffed. "I'm a Ravenclaw, if there's a test, we know how everyone scored. How else can you determine how well you did? We had the end of year test results before Dumbledore did."

"Alright," Susan nodded. "That explains knowing your score, how is it you know all of ours?"

"Eidetic memory," The Ravenclaw said tapping her left temple with her wand. "If I see it, I remember it. So, we're all powerful in relationship to our year mates. So, my father suddenly discovers a debt that must be paid to the Potter estate..."

Millicent nodded in understanding. "And my Granddad suddenly discovers that he can rid the family of the embarrassing half blood, and position himself to claim at least part of the Potter fortune when the Dark Lord kills our Husband..."

"And my parents out of the blue decide that I need to marry the Boy Who Lived..." Romilda added.

"And I no longer have any family at all." Susan concluded.

"The most obvious answer is usually the correct answer," Marietta continued. "Take a powerful wizard like Potter, whose index score is far and away the highest currently at Hogwarts, half again as high as Christopher Warrington in Slytherin who is second place over all, bond him to four witches with index scores very near the top of their years, and what do you get?"

"Over time the power boost will be insane." Millicent breathed.

"Assuming that we don't kill him. Without the link, I turn into a psycho once a month." Susan noted.

"And I breeze through my monthlies without the barest of a twinge," Marietta added. "Perhaps we'll average each other out."

"If that was possible, then surely somewhere in the histories of group marriages someone would have mentioned it," Romilda protested, and then she looked distraught. "Last night, I thought he was testing me when he sent me away claiming to have been tricked into this marriage. He really does see me as a little girl doesn't he? He doesn't love me at all."

"Harry doesn't really even know you Romi," Susan said kindly.

"Why is Dumbledore doing this to us?" Millicent asked.

"Because of a prophecy." I said shedding my cloak

It was almost amusing the looks on their faces. Sometimes I forget how few people have ever seen an invisibility cloak.

"Spying on us Husband?" Millicent asked, her tone almost approving.

"I needed to know if you were working for Dumbledore, or victims of this like me." I paused examining their faces for reaction. "From what I've heard, it's the five of us against the world."

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I was amazed to find that we were free to leave the estate and travel to Diagon Alley, without as much as an escort. I hadn't been allowed out unescorted since third year (which was odd when you consider that Sirius was supposedly a mass murderer out for my blood, but there you go.)

Gringotts assured me that while I was far from rich, my vault held sufficient galleons to pay for all five of us to continue our educations and then some. The goblin teller showed me the balance sheet for my vault and explained that there would be enough for a comfortable start when I finished at Hogwarts, and that was without taking into account the two hundred acre estate we were now living at., and that upon turning seventeen I was due to receive an unspecified bequest from the Black estate.

Putting that problem behind us we did our back to school shopping. I'm also not going to detail that, as it was insanely unpleasant. Marietta made the unfortunate observation that I needed a complete wardrobe, and I was introduced to the hell that is women dressing you in a shop. The less said about that, the better. I am going to be forever scarred by the loud conversation the four of them had concerning the choice of boxers or briefs.

Upon returning to the estate, I called for Dobby and offered to hire him away from Hogwarts. All four of the women stared in open mouthed amazement as we negotiated his salary and working conditions. I started high, he started low, and we met... somewhere so very slightly higher than his starting point.

Where did the little bugger learn to negotiate like that? After we reached an agreement, Dobby went to get Winky who after much pleading agreed to join my staff at slightly less than half of what Dobby was making. The maniac pair then set to cleaning the house from top to bottom.

That was when it occurred to me that I should probably speak with my wives. They all came from pure blood households, (Even if Millie was a half blood like me) and probably had certain... expectations of elves that I needed to deal with right away.

Winky had somehow, and don't ask me how, whipped up a four course dinner within twenty minutes of having been hired, and we were sitting at the table awaiting the first course. I was at the head of the table, (all four women were insistent that I take that place) with Marietta on my left with Millicent beside her, and Romilda on my right with Susan at her side. The chair at the far end of the table stayed empty. Susan explained that it was for the First wife, and she wouldn't be determined until the first heir was born.

Wonderful.

The soup arrived and I broached the subject of the elves. "I thought we ought to discuss Dobby and Winky."

"We all know how to handle elves Husband." Millicent said.

"Actually, I don't think you do." I interrupted her. "The elves you've known have all been slaves. Dobby and Winky are my employees and friends. They aren't slaves and won't be treated as slaves."

There was silence around the table as the soup service vanished replaced by salads. I wish I knew how they did that.

"I think we understand that Harry." Marietta said. "It might take a bit for us to learn your ways; you are a rather unusual wizard."

I smiled and returned to my meal. Millicent broke the silence.

"So, are you going to explain this prophecy?"

"I don't believe in prophecy," Marietta said. "The only ones you hear about are those people go out of their way to make come true."

"Well, that sounds fairly accurate. Both Voldemort and Dumbledore have been very active in making sure the prophecy comes true." All four of the girls flinched at the mention of the Riddle's nom de guerre. "It predicts the coming of someone capable of vanquishing the Dark Lord 'as the seventh month dies', which matched up to my birthday on the 31st of July. Then the Dark Lord will mark him his equal," I pointed to his scar, "and I, evidently will have a power the Dark Lord knows not. No idea what that is, Dumbledore tells me he believes its 'love'."

Susan furrowed her brow. "Love? Is that why he manufactured this marriage?"

I shrugged. "I don't know, why not? That makes as much sense as any other reason I've come up with to explain this. Although 'just because he can' is still my leading theory. Anyway, either I kill Voldemort or he kills me. I'm doing my damndest to make me the one who does the killing."

Silence reigned at the table for several moments. I sighed and asked the question I had been thinking about all day long. "So, is anyone else noticing anything different about themselves?"

The women shared looks. "What do you mean?" Romilda asked.

"All day long I've been noticing things. Like how stupid I've been on so many subjects. I've been seeing patterns that I never noticed before. Sue said that you all will be healthier, stronger and possibly smarter due to the marriage bond. I think that's working back my way as well. I think you've made me smarter."

"I've lost some weight," Millie said quietly. "I've been firming up all over. I thought I might be imagining things, but I noticed my clothes were looser than normal this morning."

"I've not noticed anything," Marietta said. "I mean it's only been two days... It might be that you're just seeing in yourselves what you expect to see."

"Mari's right," Susan agreed. "It is awfully soon. The Harem effect is supposed to change us all, but surely not overnight."

I nodded, what they were saying made sense, but that didn't change how my outlook at so many things had changed since yesterday. When we finished with dinner, I noticed all four of the witches checking their reflection in the dining room mirror, looking for changes.

We spent the evening reading and in quiet conversation in the sitting room. Romilda, it turns out still hadn't finished her summer assignments, so Sue, Millie and I assisted her as best we could, while Mari played at the piano.

Let me state for the record that I have no appreciation for or understanding of music. Oh, the primary school I attended tried to wedge some music into my tin ear, but they weren't too successful. It was quickly noted that I was incapable of even keeping the beat on a tambourine. That personal failing aside, what Mari produced at the piano made even a philistine like me sit back and take notice. I didn't recognize a single tune she played, but it was amazingly beautiful. I tried to tell her so, but she seemed uncomfortable speaking with me.

Romilda was the first of us to tire, putting away her books and heading for her room at nine thirty, giving me a wistful look as she passed by my chair. Seeing her unhappy had me silently cursing Dumbledore yet again. What the hell was he playing at using a young girl in a situation like this? It couldn't possibly be healthy for her.

At ten I stood and excused myself to Mari, Sue and Millie. Despite my new found (or perhaps simply newly imagined) clarity of thought, I found myself wondering where we were going. All my life I had dreamed of having a family, and now it appeared that I had been granted my wish. Sort of anyway. Somehow I had always pictured that family being a wife, myself and what ever children we were graced with. I never really imagined the possibility of four wives, all of us young, one far too young.

Being associated with me made them all targets... Of course Susan was already a target and Millie's life as a half blood in a family of rabid blood purists couldn't have been all that comfortable. I was a little ashamed that I knew nothing of Romilda's family and little of Marietta's beyond her mother worked at the Ministry and had been pressured into pressuring Marietta into betraying the DA to Umbitch last year.

Entering my suite I prepared for bed, grabbing a pair of my new boxers and a tee shirt for sleepwear. As painful as the shopping expedition had been, having clothing that fit was a feeling that I dearly wanted to become used to.

While performing my evening ablutions I pondered my wives. How did I truly feel about them? For Romilda, I sadly felt almost nothing, which was

made sadder by the crush the girl felt for me. For Mariette... also nothing. She's brilliant, resourceful, an amazing pianist, and an entertaining person in a conversation, but I still had the feeling that she didn't like me in the slightest.

Then there was Millicent and Susan. I definitely felt something for them, but was it true affection or just lust? At the time I wished I knew how to tell the difference. It had only been two days at that point, and one of those I spent hiding from them all. It was probably lust. I had to be honest with myself. Most definitely lust. Probably.

I exited the bath pulling on my tee shirt to find Marietta sitting on my bed.

"Hello Husband," she said formally.

"Hello... What should I call you? Marietta? I heard Sue call you Mari all day, but..."

"Mari is fine," she said quietly, not meeting my eyes. "It's a family name, and we're, well, family."

"Why are you here Mari?" I asked.

"I am here to fulfill my obligations to my husband," she said pulling her blouse from the waistband of her skirt.

Wait," I said, taking her hands in mine. "Do you want to be here with me?"

She still wouldn't meet my eyes. "What I want has little to do with our situation Husband."

"I know the feeling Wife," I answered. "Neither of us chose this marriage, but if you don't want to share my bed, there is no requirement that you do so, not in this house."

"Why? What's wrong with me?" Mari asked, clearly distressed.

"Nothing is wrong with you." I smiled. "I'll admit that there was a time this last year when I wouldn't have poured water on you if you were on fire, but I realize that situation wasn't one of your making, and you really little choice in what happened. You were pressured into it by people who should have been looking to protect you. We will move on with our relationship at what ever speed you want. If you change your mind next week, next month, next year, never, it's all ok with me." I reached out to brush a bit of her curly red hair from her eyes. "Go to bed Mari. Come back when you want to be with me, if you're ever truly comfortable doing so."

Her eyes got very large, I found myself wondering why I had never noticed how pretty she was before this. Then she smiled. "Good night Harry."

I walked her to the door. "Good night Mari."

The door closed behind her and I turned back to my bed. The large empty bed. I was a bit depressed at the thought of not having someone in it with me. That was when I realized what I had been thinking.

I started laughing at myself. From famine to feast and back to famine. I had an excuse for this, I was sixteen. I was supposed to be a self centered egomaniac.

Still chuckling, I extinguished the lights and crawled between the sheets. It didn't take long for me to fall asleep.

I woke to the darkness feeling the mattress move as someone joined me in bed.

"I went to the kitchen for a glass of milk to help me sleep," Millie's voice whispered in my ear as she cuddled into my back. "I found Mari there doing the same. If she's skipping her turn, I'm takin' it."

"She ok?" I asked sleepily.

"Right as rain, though she's wondering if she made the right choice. I think you're right Husband. The bond is already having its way with us. I've lost more weight today, and I'm not thinking of turning you over to the Dark Lord anymore. I'm thinking I'll be keeping you for myself and the others."

"Of course, you're an evil Slytherin, so you *would* say that," I teased enjoying the feel of her against me. Feast again.

"Pleasant dreams," she said pulling me closer. "In the morning I find out if you learned anything from Sue."

My last conscious thought as sleep reclaimed me was that I could get used to this.

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The month passed much in the manner of the first few days. Romilda was a bit miffed at my unwillingness to take her to bed, and Marietta seemed to actually like me on occasions, and we made an unescorted trip to Diagon or Hogsmeade once a week. Hermione and Ron both came over once, but not together. That struck me as odd, but given the crusade Hermione chose to pursue, it was probably a good thing.

Hermione's visit on the first Friday after the formation of my new family was memorable. She had researched the Harem Effect and decided that she needed to hold a meeting of my wives to discuss the protection of their virtues from me.

"Harry hasn't touched me," Romilda said impatiently after Hermione had finished. "No matter what I ask or offer, he says I'm too young."

"Well, thank goodness for that." Hermione sniffed, while I wondered how long it would take for her to forgive me if I kicked her out of the house.

"He has yet to be intimate with me as well," Mari said. "Though I'm not all that sure just why you feel the inner workings of our marriage is any of your business."

"I'm concerned about the fact that you seem to have been forced into this... perversion of a marriage by the headmaster," The tic above Hermione's left eye was starting to show itself. Never a good sign.

"Frankly, Granger," Millie drawled... What's with all the drawling from the Slytherins? Is there a class on the subject that was part of the house indoctrination? "I think I'd prefer it if our husband WAS the pervert you paint him to be. A girl needs variety, you know, but I still haven't gotten him to use the silk scarves on me."

I have to say that the colors that flashed across Hermione's face weren't flattering. It reminded me a little of Uncle Vernon in his 'incipient stroke' mode.

Hermione finally decided to settle on 'Lecture Mode!' "You're all blinded by outmoded cultural norms! It's almost the twenty first century, you aren't property, you should be able to say no to all this." Her voice becoming louder and louder. "You're all being changed by this marriage bond; the Harem Effect is controlling you. Well, I won't stand by and watch four intelligent women subjugated to the whims of any man, not even Harry. I'll do what I have to do to have this sham of a marriage over turned, and I'll do this alone if I have to!" She got about five paces into her dramatic storming exit from the room when she came up against Susan's glowing wand-tip. Hermione squeaked and fell backwards onto her backside, suddenly pale.

"Actually," Sue said thoughtfully, "I think we'd all like to know whose side you are on. It seems odd that a girl who is allegedly our husband's 'best friend' should be so quick to think the worst of him."

"Who are you to have our marriage 'over turned'?" Mari asked adding her wand to the question.

"And so what if our marriage is non-conventional?" Millie joined in, producing her wand as well.

"If you do anything to hurt our family, we'll make you wish you were never born." Romilda agreed, also drawing her wand.

That was when I escorted Hermione to the hearth so that she could make her getaway. "Hermione, you can't do around doing that."

"Why did they react like that?"

"They don't have the years of exposure to you that I do. They don't understand how excitable you are." I said knowing as I said it that it was the wrong thing to say.

"Excitable? Excitable?" Hermione was shouting again.

"Hermione, calm down. Yes, you're excitable, listen to yourself, shouting at everyone when things don't conform to your world view. You insulted them when you challenged their culture like that, how would you like it? In fact how did you like it when Malfoy did it to you and your parents?"

"I'm not like that." She protested.

"Not when you think things through, no you're not, but when things happen that upset you you've got a tendency to over react a bit. Like how you know that I'm molesting these girls. You haven't thought this through. You know me; you know I would never do any of the things you accuse me of."

"But you're sleeping with them."

"We're *married* Hermione. Yes, Millie and Susan have shared my bed, willingly. I've told Romilda she's too young, or she would be there too. Mari started this relationship hating me, but that is changing through the bond, as has my feelings for her, for all of them. I don't think any of us love the others yet, but we will. We're getting there."

"It's wrong Harry, all of this is just wrong."

I looked into her big brown eyes sadly, wondering if I was losing her as a friend. "What's wrong is your assumption that I am some kind of monster preying on them just because I'm male. You can't attack someone's culture like you've been doing. And you can't accuse me of horrible things because of what you assume is happening between the members of my family."

"So if I want to be your friend I have to shut up, is that it?" She asked, her anger building again.

"You will always be my friend Hermione," I said, hoping it was true. "What you can't do is come to our home and inform my wives that they and the culture they grew up in are wrong and you are going to save them, no matter what they think. I can't allow you to do that, because if I did, then I would be the monster you seem to believe me to be, allowing you to hurt them like that."

As I watched her anger faded, and tears formed in her eyes. Hermione whirled from me to face the fireplace, tossed in a handful of floo powder and murmured a destination before vanishing into the green flames.

Hermione didn't return to the house for the rest summer, and she didn't respond to the owls I sent.

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On August 31st Ron came over and the two of us took our brooms out for a morning of flying and general purpose goofing off. We had a blast and wasted an entire morning. It was great. When we landed in front of the front entryway of the manor house, Ron and I trooped into the house

laughing and shoving each other, looking to have a little lunch.

We found the women in the sitting room and were greeted by an icy silence. I looked to Ron and he looked to me. More silence. I think we both realized that there was no way that could possibly be good. Susan, Millie, and Romilda sat glaring at us. Mari was reclined on one of the sofas with what appeared to be a damp flannel over her eyes.

"Where have you been?" Millicent snapped.

Like an idiot I answered truthfully. "We were just out flying."

"Flying," Susan sniffed. "Just out flying. We leave for Hogwarts tomorrow; this house is no where near being ready to close up for three and a half months and you were out *flying*."

"But we talked about this last night; no one said anything about wanting to do anything special to the house." I looked about the room at four very obviously angry witches.

Ron on the other hand had evidently seen something like this before and wanted no part of it. "Uh, Harry... I've got to be going. Walk me to the floo?"

"Harry isn't going anywhere with you." Marietta said, lifting the flannel from her eyes and giving me a pained look.

"You're as bad as Granger." Romilda growled. "You're both trying to take Harry away from us."

"No, really I'm not," Ron stammered out, backing out of the room, leaving me to my fate. Again. Though in all honesty, I didn't blame him in the least.

"Mari, are you alright?" I asked, not understanding what was happening.

"Oh, now you care." Marietta answered from under the flannel. "I've got a migraine Harry, if that's alright with you."

Ok, that was something I could deal with. Aunt Petunia got migraines and became even more of a bitch than normal. "I've always heard that light can make migraines worse, wouldn't you be more comfortable in your room?"

"Oh, so anytime I'm not one hundred percent, your first impulse is to get rid of me?" She asked, suddenly infuriated.

It was obvious that anything I said was going to turn out to be wrong, so I decided to give silence a try. Three of them stared at me and Mari pressed her flannel back over her eyes. This wasn't working, all I was doing was managing to feel guilty.

Sue began rocking in her chair, her hands moving to her stomach. "Hurts," she whimpered.

I looked to the others; Millie came to my rescue, jerking her head toward Sue. I knelt in front of her "Can I help?"

"Cramps," she whispered. "Hurts bad."

I was so far out of my depth it wasn't funny. The only thing I knew about cramps was that I sometimes got them when I didn't stretch before exercise, and I'd never got one in my stomach. "Would a hot bath help?"

"It never has before."

I ended up with Susan cuddled against me on my right side while I rubbed her stomach with my right hand and Romilda on my lap crying her eyes out. When Susan had said that their cycles would synchronize, I never imagined it would come to this.

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It rapidly became a very long day. Each of the women reacted differently to the synchronization (and amplification?) of their menstrual cycles. Susan was in pain from cramps and her breasts became very sensitive. Romilda seemed to cry all the time. Mari had her migraine and Millie... she had mood swings more extreme than I ever imagined possible. At one point she became so angry at me she was screaming her lungs out, then suddenly clapped her hand over her mouth and rushed from the room.

Concerned I followed to finding her vomiting in the toilet. What could I do? I held her hair until she was finished throwing up what appeared to be everything she had eaten in the last two weeks, and then I tried to help her clean up and get the taste out of her mouth.

I said 'tried'. Evidently my simply being there infuriated her to no end. She chased me from the bathroom with threats of violence.

Despite the tears, pain, threats of violence and other discoveries of what I was doing to them, we somehow got through the day. I got Sue, Mari and Romilda to take a bit of soup before tucking each of the girls into their own beds. (Millie had her normal meal, enjoyed it, and then got sick again. I helped her clean up again, and she started crying, telling me over and over that she hated being 'weak'. I tried to tell her that her weakness was stronger than I ever thought about being, but that seemed to make her mad again. Still, I got her into bed and she didn't seem all that angry anymore.

Then I got into trouble with Winky because I cleaned the bathroom after Millie was sick. I'd never been yelled at by an elf before; it was a whole lot like being yelled at by Aunt Petunia, only with less hitting and a generalized higher level of respect. I am absolutely never going to understand women or elves, and that goes double for female elves.

When I got to my own room that night I was never more thankful for being male. From what Sue and Mari had told me I knew that some how my magic was amplifying the symptoms of their menstrual cycles, but everything I'd seen had to be there in the first place in order to be amplified. I couldn't imagine having my own body do that to me. Yep, good to be male.

I settled into bed to try and sleep, all the while wondering what the next day would bring. I was suddenly very aware I had no idea how long a woman's period lasted.

My door opened. "Harry?"

"Mari? What is it?" I asked.

"I'm hurting so bad." She said softly.

"Should I send for a healer? Do you need to go to St. Mungos?"

"No," the Ravenclaw said softly, "Could I spend the night with you?"

"Come on then," I said, pulling the sheets open for her.

We didn't speak again that night. Marietta lay next to me on her left side, I spooned behind her, softly rubbing her stomach until we both fell asleep. I spent that time wondering if they would be alright for the train ride back to school.

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The Truth

Chapter 2

A/N: I don't own Harry Potter and wouldn't particularly care to. I would like a rental agreement with option to buy for Hermione Granger. A short term contract with Nymphadora Tonks wouldn't be turned down. A Long-term agreement with Luna Lovegood would probably be a whole lot of fun. Any time Padma Patil wants to open negotiations, call me and oh for a weekend with Fleur. Oddly Lavender and Padma's sister (despite being her twin) Parvati do nothing for me...

The Truth

The pounding on the door increased, I watched in horror as the ward stones I had so carefully implanted around the door frame started to glow with a deep violet hue.

This is not good. Less than five minutes into the assault on my protections and the stones are already shedding energy into the visible spectrum. That should have taken hours, not five bloody minutes.

They've gotten stronger, so much stronger.

I considered dropping my defenses and trying to make my escape... but no. They would be expecting that. I'd actually done that the year before, and gotten away with it, but they would be expecting it if I were to try it again. Even if I did manage to get away, they would only track me down.

They had last time after all.

I picked my wand up from the side table and tried to push some more magic into the ward stones. As soon as the connection was made, I felt a horrible, almost unstoppable draw on my magic.

I cursed fate, karma and serendipity as I broke the connection while I still could. They were ahead of me at every turn. They were undermining my every countermeasure while slowly breaking down my protections.

I was doomed.

I watched as the ward stone began to glow green.

====oooOOOooo====

The morning of September first started badly and progressively got worse. Over night the women all seemed to have shifted symptoms. Now it was Susan who was violently sick at random intervals and moody as hell, Romilda with the swollen breasts and cramping, Millicent had a killer migraine, and Marietta was a weepy mess.

And me, well I woke up with the feeling that I had been stupid. Just like every other morning since our bonding. There was something about sleeping that seemed to be reorganizing the way I thought. So many patterns in my life were becoming obvious. I wondered why I had never noticed them before.

I managed to get my wives up and dressed, with almost no incidents. I say almost because when I woke her up for breakfast, Susan nearly took my head off at the shoulder with an insanely over powered cutting curse. I'd never seen such a thing before, not even from the Death Eaters. Her Aunt Amelia must have been hell on wheels. It was only luck and my Dursley trained reflexes that kept her from killing me seeing how it carved a three inch wide nine foot long two inch deep gouge in the wall of her bedroom, and then she was in my arms blubbering her apologies.

Then she was sick all over me. Like I said, it got worse.

After we got cleaned up and into fresh clothing, I managed to get them all downstairs for Winky's breakfast service while Dobby finished our packing. I watched the four women who were now bound to my life for better or worse pick at their breakfasts when it occurred to me that I had absolutely no idea how we would be living once we got back to Hogwarts. Presumably Dumbledore had made the proper arrangements for whatever tradition called for in the case of married students... but I didn't know if he actually had. The Headmaster had a miserable track record when it came to achieving his stated goals where I was concerned.

There was nothing to do for it, but carry on. Though I must admit that for the first time I wasn't looking forward to the ride on the Hogwarts Express. I knew, simply knew, that there would be all too much attention paid to the change in our statuses, and by all the wrong people. Malfoy was going to open his inbred mouth and I was going to hurt him.

Breakfast done, Winky produced four goblets of a steaming brew, one in front of each of my wives.

"Is potion First Mistress used when feeling poorly." The little elf explained. "She teach it to Winky when she started to being too sick to brew herselfes."

The four women all looked to me.

"I have no idea," I admitted. "I've never even heard of potions for what you're going through."

"Some families are supposed to have 'family brew' for their monthlies." Marietta said quietly. "Mine doesn't, but maybe the family Winky worked for did."

"They're only supposed to take the edge off," Susan agreed. "I really don't see how it could be worse." Then she lifted the goblet to her lips.

Millicent and Marietta shared a look, shrugged, and drank their own doses. Romilda followed suit as soon as the cramps she was suffering through abated. One by one the goblets were emptied and the four women sat back in their chairs.

"I... I don't think that did anything at all." Millicent said.

"No, I'm not feeling quite so sick." Susan whispered. "I think..."

"First Mistress say that Brew good for pains and sick, but not for moods." Winky said helpfully.

The four women all looked to me. It appeared that all this was obviously my fault.

====oooOOOooo====

For the first time since first year, I managed to make it to platform 9 ¾ before 10:30. This was mostly due to Susan and her general theory of 'If you're not early, you're late.' I found myself wondering if Amelia Bones and the way she indoctrinated Susan was going to end up ruling my entire life. This was also the first time I arrived at the station as a wizard. It seemed that there is a bank of public floo access not unlike those in the Ministry of Magic right on the platform.

I spent a few moments wondering why the Weasley's never used it, though its presence did explain why I had never seen an obvious Witch or Wizard on the far side of the barrier.

We arrived already dressed in our school uniforms, not bothering with our trunks because Dobby was delivering them directly to the school for us. This simple idea seemed rather alien to me, but I was far too busy dealing with the public's non-reaction to our marriage to dwell on that question just then.

It seemed despite our weekly visits to Diagon Alley, word of our marriage had yet to leak out. I have no idea what the people we interacted with thought I was doing with four women I had never been in public with before, but evidently the idea of our entering into a group marriage never occurred to anyone. This was driven home when we boarded the train and Marietta was approached by Cho.

"Mari?" The Ravenclaw beauty asked. "Where have you been? Why are you with Potter?"

"Hello Cho." Mari said sadly as she opened the door to the compartment we were to be using. "I think we need to talk." She gestured for the rest of us to enter the compartment. "Is it ok if I go speak with Cho Harry? I'll be back in a bit."

I had been half expecting this. After all, I'd already told all of my friends. Both of them. "I understand Mari. Come back when you're ready." It wasn't until much later I realized she had just asked my permission.

Mari offered a weak smile and closed the door, then along with Cho, headed toward the front of the train. After a few seconds a shriek of "MARRIED?" rang out.

"Well, she took it rather better than I expected." Millicent laughed.

"You're feeling better then?" I asked.

"Some," she admitted as she looked up and spotted Tracey Davis in the window with a look of incredulity on her face. "It looks like I've got some explaining to do as well. May I?"

"You might as well all go. I know you've all got friends you need to speak to about this."

Romilda and Millicent both rose from the benches they were sitting on and left the compartment, but Susan remained where she was. This struck me as very odd, given that Sue was a Hufflepuff and from what I understood about the 'Puffs...

"Sue?"

"I've got no one I want to talk to Harry. When I was turned out into the streets I found out what the friendships I thought I had were worth. The only one who would help me was you. The Headmaster tricked you into helping me, but I believe you would have done what ever you could for me regardless. I'm staying with my husband, and I'll be trying to make it up to him for how I've been acting the last couple of days."

"It hasn't been that bad," I lied. "Out of curiosity, how much longer do your periods last?"

"Only another two or three days."

Oh hell. That was when I started imagining all the ways I could end up with detentions that would give me a reasonable explanation for not being around.

====oooOOOooo====

The Express jerked as the driver applied power and the train began to slowly move out of the station. The door to the compartment slid open and I

looked up to find Draco Malfoy smirking at me.

"Pathetic Scarhead. It isn't enough that you're going to die when the Dark Lord comes for you; you have to take four women with you? I guess losing that Gryffindor stalker slut, the brainy frump from Ravenclaw, or even the Slytherin Troll won't be all that much of a loss to the Wizarding world, but the loss of those magnificent tits will strike a blow from which we may never recover." The blond git leered at Sue whose face darkened into a mask of fury.

I stood from the bench. "You're talking about my wives, you inbred, mouth breathing moron."

"And what are you going to do about it Potty?" Malfoy scoffed. "It looks to me like you're out numbered three to one."

I glanced to Goyle and Crabbe standing outside the compartment, looking threatening. The compartment's door slammed shut. Malfoy flinched at the sound and on the outside of the door, Crabbe and Goyle struggled to get it to reopen. I mentally thanked Susan for the help and smiled at Malfoy's discomfort.

"It looks to me like the odds just got even Draco." The prat's face paled. This had the possibility of being fun. Oh, there would be a cost later, but definitely fun now. He stepped back against the door that his bookends were busily beating on, a look of panic starting to spread across his face. "You've been asking for this Malfoy," I said, wanting nothing more than to smack him across his mouth."

Malfoy was flung bodily across the compartment as if I had summoned him. I was so shocked at this it was all I could do to throw myself to the floor to avoid his hurtling body. With a shrill scream Draco flew through the window before sliding to stop on the platform in a bloody heap as the train slowly moved out of the station.

Shocked I looked to Sue, who was looking at me like I had gone insane.

"Harry, why did you do that?"

"Well, I don't think I did anything... at least I don't think I did," I said wondering if I was losing my grip on reality. "I thought you did it. Did you use your wand?"

"No. No I didn't, I thought that you...no. I never drew my wand... Oh Merlin's purple cock!" Sue had quite the dirty mouth when she got excited. I think it came from hanging out with so many Aurors while growing up. Truth be told, her colorful vocabulary was one of the things I had come to love about her. "The power increase from the Harem Effect! Mari and I thought it would take years to show up, but... Merlin. I think I had a bout of accidental magic."

I drew my wand from my sleeve and cast Reparo on the window. It didn't work, which wasn't surprising since the pieces were needed to reassemble the window using that charm, and they were most of a quarter mile behind us. Susan seemed to concentrate for a moment, and then she drew her own wand and cast another Reparo. We both stared in amazement as the window reassembled itself.

"I think you may be right," I said feeling more than a little bit inadequate, like a first year comparing his skills against a seventh year.

Susan slumped back onto the bench, staring at the floor of the compartment. "I wanted to keep the big Slytherins out of the compartment and the door slammed shut. I wanted Draco out of here for what he was saying about us and he was flying through the window. I don't have any control"

"Sue..." I knelt in front of her and pulled her into a hug. "You've got lots of control... I'm still breathing aren't I?"

She nuzzled my neck. "Thank you."

====oooOOOooo====

Susan sat on the bench across from me with her feet in my lap so that I could massage them. We had been alone for most of twenty minutes before there was a knock at the door. Looking up, we found Susan's friend Hannah Abbott looking at us through the glass.

The door was evidently still locked. I tried to open it, and of course, I couldn't. I'm sure fate was giggling her vindictive arse off at me. Susan rose from her seat and as soon as her fingers touched the door frame I heard the lock click open.

Wonderful.

"Hello Harry." Hannah said hesitantly

"Hannah," I answered noncommittally as I returned to my seat leaving the two girls standing. She had hurt Susan, but was it really my place to interfere?

The blonde girl glanced between Susan and me. "Sue? Could we talk?"

I took that as a cue. "I think I'll go for a walk, stretch my legs a bit."

"Harry, please stay." Susan said quietly taking her own seat. "What did you want Hannah?"

Hannah looked more than a little embarrassed. "I just wanted to say that I'm sorry about what happened."

"What is it in particular that you are sorry happened Hannah? That my Aunt was murdered, or that everyone I thought was my friend had no time for me after I lost everyone and everything that mattered to me?"

“Sue?” Hannah whispered.

“We have known each other since before we could talk.” Susan said quietly. “We’ve shared every secret, told each other of our every heartbreak and every success. Then my Auntie was killed. Suddenly your family didn’t have time for me. Suddenly no one would take my calls... Not even you Hannah. I was stripped of everything. Even my friends... or at least the people I thought were my friends.”

“Sue!” Hannah had started to cry. “There were threats made. Everyone was told that if anyone took you in, the Death Eaters would come and kill everyone in the family.”

“Then it’s good that I married a Gryffindor isn’t it? I had never known that bravery had become a concept foreign to my fellow Hufflepuffs.”

“Married?”

Hannah seemed honestly surprised. I quite frankly thought that the gossip network worked better than that.

Hannah again rapidly looked between Susan and me. “You married Harry Potter? Are you mad?”

“Am I mad? Do you know what I was doing when I received the proposal that joined Harry and me Hannah? I hadn’t eaten in two days, and I was wondering how hungry I would get before I ended up bartering the only thing of value I had left. Have you ever been that hungry Hannah? Harry saved me from that and asked nothing in return.”

“But Sue...”

“My name is Mrs. Potter now Hannah. My given name is reserved for my friends.”

Hannah fled the compartment in tears. I turned back to find Susan staring up at me. “Well,” she said toeing her shoes off. “What are you waiting for Harry? My feet won’t rub themselves.”

I took her left foot and restarted my massage to the sole. “Are you sure you want to cut your self off from Hannah and all the rest of your friends Sue?”

“They cut themselves off from me Harry... Oooh, that’s nice.” She purred. “You know, we’re both likely to catch hell for what I did to Malfoy.”

“What did you do Sue? I never saw you draw your wand, I certainly didn’t draw mine. What I don’t understand is why Draco dived through the window like that. He’s always been a bit high strung; perhaps he just couldn’t deal with the pressure of being an idiot any longer.” I smiled and pushed my thumb into a particularly sensitive spot on the sole of her left foot. “Remind me to never make you angry at me.”

“As long as you keep my feet happy, you’ve got nothing to worry about. Oooh...” she gasped, shuddering and hugging herself. “I’ve got... I’ve got to tell the other girls what else you can do with those hands.”

====oooOOOooo====

For most of the ride to Hogsmeade Station Susan and I kept each other company. There were short visits by several people, most to see Sue. She was as cold to these newcomers as she had been to Hannah. I was only starting to digest just how bad it had gotten for my lovely Hufflepuff, and I resolved to do what I could to convince her that she never had to worry about anything like that again.

I did have one visitor; Ron stuck his head in grinning like an idiot.

“Harry!”

“Hey Ron,” I said, glancing toward Susan. She didn’t seem to be angry at Ron like she had been toward her own friends. “How are you doing?”

“Me? I’m doing great Harry. But you, you stirred up some shite there, let me tell you.” He grinned even wider. “What did you do to Malfoy?”

“Harry didn’t do anything to Malfoy.” Susan said primly. “We have no idea why Draco decided to jump out the window.”

“Yeah,” I agreed. “No idea.”

“Yeah, right,” Ron laughed. “Pull the other one Harry, I been out doing too many stupid things with you to believe that. You should look out for Ginny though, she’s seriously angry with you.”

I felt my blood run cold. Was Ginny still nursing that crush from her first two years?

“And why would Ginny be angry with Harry?” Sue asked.

“She feels that our Harry here has been mistreating Romilda Vane,” Ron laughed. “Being stingy with your attentions and all.”

“Romilda’s name is Potter, and she’s fourteen.” I sniffed. “While it might be technically legal for us to be married, I would feel like a child molester if I tried anything with her. We’re going to wait.”

Ron nodded. “I thought it was something like that, but Gin, well, you know how she can be.”

“So she’s not upset that Harry married?” Sue asked.

"Nah," Ron said smiling. "Oh sure she had a crush on the Boy-Who-Lived thanks to the stories Mum told her, but then she got to know Harry and he just didn't measure up to the myth."

"Hey!" I exclaimed, feeling somewhat put upon for reasons I couldn't quite identify.

"Harry, it's not as bad as I made it sound. She loves you like a brother. Hell, she loves you more than most of her brothers, but even though you saved her life, she still got to know the real you, you know? She knows that Pumpkin Pasties give you horribly foul wind, and that you find that hilarious. She knows that you do a thousand things that annoy her and that you're unlikely to ever change." Ron laughed before continuing. "And probably most importantly, she knows that despite the fact that you're a hero, but you aren't now and never will be a knight in shining armor, like the fictional Boy Who Lived was in the stories."

"I'm no hero," I muttered.

"Sure you are Harry, and everyone knows it. But Gin got to know 'Just Harry' and has decided that she still wants to look for the knight."

Ron saw the look on my face and laughed even harder. I suppose it was good that someone was amused. I'd always wanted to be 'Just Harry'... And now, it seemed I was.

"So, how's this prat treating you girls?" Ron asked Susan.

"Like princesses," Sue smiled. "We all wanted to apologize for how we were acting the other day Ron."

Ron waved off her apologies. "I've got a sister Sue, and she's been worse than all four of you combined. Besides, I knew enough about the Harem Effect to know where it was coming from."

That was when I noticed Hermione walking past the compartment without looking in. Rather pointedly not looking in. Had I truly lost my other best friend over this? Ron noticed her as well.

"There's Hermione, I'm supposed to be patrolling with her, Prefect stuff, you know?" He turned to me. "We'll talk later, Okay Harry?"

====oooOOOooo====

My wives returned to the compartment one at a time, each with varied degrees of happiness, and each with stories of the shocked disbelief of our classmates. Romilda giggled as she told us of the plans for my seduction that her friends had all come up with.

I smiled tolerantly at that idea. Like that would have worked on me.

It wouldn't have, would it? I don't think it would...

Mari explained that Cho had actually asked if it were possible that all of this might be nothing more than an attempt on my part to make her jealous. I wondered to myself just how self absorbed someone would have to be to come up with that explanation.

Millie told us all of the utter shock our marriage had caused among the Slytherins, even those she counted as friends. There was evidently much interest in Salazar's house as to how the Harem Effect might have changed her, and how much longer she believed I might survive. Millie was quite amused that her news had overshadowed whatever it was that may or may not have happened to Malfoy among the Snakes.

That was when Marietta got quite angry at Sue.

"You threw Draco Malfoy from the train? He could have been killed."

"He was moving on the platform," I countered. "And it's not like it was done on purpose."

"Harry, you could be arrested for this. We are your responsibility now. If you get yourself locked up over this, what's going to happen to us?" She gestured to herself and the other women. "We're dependent on you."

"Oh that's great, I'm responsible for four insanely powerful witches with control issues," I said shaking my head. The next time Ron laughed at me I was going to rearrange his teeth.

"It was hardly Harry's fault." Sue said rising to my defense.

"I'm sure that Malfoy provoked you, but that isn't an excuse..."

"He called Millie a troll, Romilda a stalker, made comments about my breasts and called you a brainy frump." Susan interrupted.

"A brainy frump?"

"Yes."

Marietta turned her attention back to me just as the announcement that we were arriving at Hogsmeade station came over the announcing system.

"Draco Malfoy called me a brainy frump, and *all* you did was let Susan throw him out the window?"

I believe that was precisely the moment I came to understand that no matter what I did from here on; I was going to be wrong. Oh god. I was likely

going to be four times as wrong as a normal man? Or was I looking into the maw of a hypercube of wrongness?

Truthfully, the thought that my utter wrongness might actually extend into other dimensions caused me to smile a bit.

====oooOOOooo====

We disembarked the train as a family, off in the darkness I heard Hagrid calling for the first years, but I couldn't see my oldest magical friend. Together the five of us made our way off the platform, heading for where the thestral drawn carriages would be waiting. This is where we found Professor McGonagall and Snape waiting for us.

"You've done it this time Potter," the Potions Master spat. "There won't be any point to your unpacking; you'll be leaving here tonight."

"The Headmaster will be dealing with this Professor Snape," McGonagall said in a most disapproving tone. "Your attitude isn't helpful."

"No! Albus has been coddling this arrogant child far too long. He is out of here tonight!"

"Professors?" I asked the feuding pair in my most innocent voice. "Could I ask just what it is I'm to be expelled for?"

"Your unprovoked attack on Draco Malfoy, Potter," Snape put his rather large nose directly into my face.

"And when was I supposed to have done this Professor?"

"You know very well Potter!" He bellowed, "As the train was leaving the station. You hexed him in the back and threw him out the window of his carriage."

"I most certainly did not." It figured that Malfoy would embellish what happened. Hex him in the back indeed.

"Liar!"

Fifth year had been horrible, but my time with Umbitch had taught me at least one thing. Remaining calm in the face of raving maniacs was a most useful skill. The nightly reorganization of my thought processes helped in this as well. "You should calm down Professor," I made a show of wiping a bit of spittle from my face. "I did not hex Draco Malfoy, nor did I throw him off the train. This is his word against mine, and given the number of times he has been clearly demonstrated to be a liar, well I believe we all know what Draco Malfoy's word is worth. Professor McGonagall, I would like to file a complaint about this unprofessional treatment. Can I count on you as a witness?"

Snape grabbed hold of my robes and jerked me toward him. "There are witnesses to your assault Potter. Crabbe and Goyle saw everything."

"I was there as well Professor," Susan said quietly. "Harry never drew his wand when Draco entered our compartment and insulted all five of us. Harry never hexed Draco, nor did Harry lay hands on him. In fact the only time Harry used his wand was to repair the window that Draco broke. That should be easy enough to verify."

"Now you're having your whores lie for you Potter?" The greasy git said with a smirk.

"Severus!" McGonagall gasped, and angry noises came from all four of the women behind me.

Looking to head off whatever the girls' enhanced magic might do, I made a move for my wand; but I found that I couldn't move. I couldn't even blink as Snape's grip on my robes was broken and he was thrust away from me throwing the Potions Master against the wall of the train station and held him there. I struggled against what ever it was that was holding me immobile. I needed to at very least make it seem like I was the one whose magic was flaring out of control. I could move again after a few seconds and I approached Snape in a manner that suggested that this had been my idea. I emulated his earlier action by approaching the man where he was held to the wall and grabbed him by the lapels of his robes. "Listen to me very closely old man. If you ever insult my wives again I will kill you."

"Mr. Potter!" McGonagall shrieked.

"What Professor? Am I expected to allow this insignificant little man insult my wives like that? If that is the standard of behavior that I can expect from the staff of your school then you don't need to expel me, my family and I will be leaving now." I allowed Snape to fall to the ground.

"You're gone Potter..." Snape gasped from the ground. "Attacking a teacher?"

"Shut up Snape. I simply showed an unimportant ass what happens when he stupidly lays hands on me and insults my wives. The fact that you did it in front of the Assistant Headmistress just points up your idiocy doesn't it?" I laughed. "Go ahead, go cry to the Headmaster and insist that I be expelled. Then we can find out who he values more, you or me."

I turned away from the man and returned to my worried wives, only to see Millie suddenly furrow her brow and I heard Snape scream as I was turning to see what she was looking at.

The man lay on the ground holding his right hand to his chest, in obvious pain, while what appeared to be the remains of his wand lay on the ground in front of him smoldering. I turned to face Professor McGonagall.

"Professor McGonagall, what is going on here? Why are you just standing here while Snape manhandles me, he insults my wives, and cowardly attempts to hex me in the back? Are you the Assistant Headmistress or not?" I gestured toward Snape, "Does this... thing work for you or not? Why was I forced to defend myself and my family when you were standing right here? Wasn't the level of protection you provided the students of the

school last year bad enough?"

I think my comparing this situation to those inspired and condoned by Umbridge shocked McGonagall into action. "Severus, get yourself to the Hospital wing. We will be having a long discussion about your professionalism."

She waited while Snape picked himself up off the floor and made his way out of the station, still cradling his right hand. Once he was out of sight she turned back to the five of us. "Mr. Potter, ladies, I would like to apologize for the conduct of my colleague. It will not happen again."

"If you say so Professor," I said. It was petty of me, I know, but I couldn't resist twisting the knife, just a little bit. "My complaints about him to both you and the Headmaster have never been taken seriously before, and the only real difference between his conduct toward me in the past and tonight is that tonight he laid hands on me and insulted those with me while you were in a position to witness it."

That seemed to startle my Transfiguration teacher a bit more. I managed not to smile.

"I was sent to inform you of the living arrangements that have been made for you. If you please?" she gestured toward the exit.

"In a moment Professor," I said, desperately attempting to keep up the illusion that I was the active player in all this. "I believe I need a few moments to speak with my wives."

McGonagall obviously didn't want the delay, but nodded. "Time is of the essence Mr. Potter, the sorting cannot be delayed."

I turned my back on her and turned to my wives. Romilda nodded when McGonagall was far enough away. "Is everyone alright?"

"Yes." Marietta whispered. "I'm sorry about the body bind. I didn't want you getting in the way."

"Wonderful," I said. "I feel all manly and stuff. We've got to maintain the illusion that it was me. If word gets out how powerful you've all become it would paint large targets on your backs."

"That makes sense," Susan agreed. "Everyone knows you're already powerful with being able to cast a Patronus and everything else you've done. No one will expect any of us becoming more powerful for quite a while."

"Snape didn't hurt you did he Harry?"

"I'm fine Romi." I pulled her into a hug. "Thanks you all for protecting me. And you Millie, you're going to have to work on your tell."

Millie looked at me with a small smirk. "I guess I could slap you up against the wall for a while as practice..."

"No, we're good," I said backpedaling. "We can't keep Professor McGonagall waiting..." I made a note to my self to never ever tease my Slytherin wife.

Outside we found one of the larger carriages waiting. I assisted the girls in climbing into the carriage, and offered my hand to Professor McGonagall, who hesitated, then accepted my help. I then climbed aboard to hear the details of the Headmaster's plans.

====oooOOOooo====

We were seated at a new table on the opposite side of the Great Hall from the Staff table. Just the five of us, I was at the center setting, with Susan and Romilda to my left, and Marietta and Millie to my right. Our seating arrangement of course drew the attention of the entire student body, but no official mention was forthcoming from the Staff table. Perhaps it was paranoia but I found where the staff had chosen to place us somewhat... comforting. Our backs were up against the wall of the Great Hall, and from our places my family had unrestricted view of the entirety of the hall. At least here we couldn't be blindsided.

The sorting went off as usual, though I have to admit to not paying the slightest bit of attention to the proceedings. I was too busy dwelling on what McGonagall had told us in the carriage.

I wasn't a Gryffindor any longer.

Married students, the Assistant Headmistress had explained, are removed from their houses and formed a family grouping. This was, of course, usually a pair, but in our case all five of us were removed from our houses. We would no longer be eligible for Quidditch or the House Points system, but would still be responsible for any detentions assigned. Following the Welcoming Feast, we were to meet with Professor McGonagall and from there we would be conducted to our new quarters.

I still hadn't decided how I felt about this when the sorting was finished and Dumbledore made his usual pre-feast inanities, and the serving platters on the table filled. It was time to start paying attention again. My wives were dealing with the loss of their houses in very different manners.

Mari was upset; it was obvious that losing the self identification as a Ravenclaw was hitting her hard. Millie took on a stoic expression. I suspect that she wasn't happy either, but she wasn't going to show weakness if she could help it. Romilda was picking at her meal; I believe Romi was more upset at losing her ready access to her dorm mates than anything else. Susan on the other hand seemed to have finally regained her appetite. She explained over her meal that her house had left her long before she knew that she would be leaving her house.

I think the fact that the one of us who should have been hit the hardest by the loss of house was in fact the one least affected was a bit disturbing.

I spent most of the meal trying to coax Marietta to eat more and consoling Millie and Romilda. Susan cast a few Auror level privacy charms that allowed us to make plans that took into account what we had learned so far today.

"I'm not sure it's a good idea to call so much attention to yourself Harry," Millie said reaching for her goblet.

"I agree Harry," Susan interjected. "While the immediacy of our power increase is unusual, I don't think that having it become known is really all that dangerous."

"You're probably right." I nodded. I looked toward the Staff table and noticed that both Dumbledore and Snape were focusing an inordinate amount of attention in our direction. "But even if you are right, it won't hurt anything for the attention to be concentrated on a known glory hog like me."

Then I mouthed the words 'Yeah, I heard that rumor too. I can believe that Snape spent his childhood on his knees blowing his father, but I can't believe his mother violated him with her strap on at the same time.'

I then looked back to the Staff table to see that neither of my fans at that table seemed to have gotten anything from my silent speech.

"Harry..." Susan giggled.

I returned my attention to my wives to find three of them looking at me in concern. "Harry have you been silenced?" Romilda asked.

"No, he was testing to see if Dumbledore or Snape could read lips." Susan laughed. When she saw the blank looks she was getting she continued. "That's a method Muggles who can't hear use to understand what people are saying. Relax Harry, I came across the concept in a book, and I asked my Auntie Amelia about it. She told me that since there were charms for enchanting quills and parchment to record conversations it never took off in the magical world."

"But you can do it?"

"The idea intrigued me, so I got some books on the topic...At a distance I can pick up about every fourth word. It's great for gathering gossip." She giggled again. "You're nasty."

I felt my face heat up. I wasn't sure that I would be comfortable always being off balance with these girls. And I was right. I managed to feed myself before the platters and dinner service all disappeared, and Professor McGonagall signaled for silence.

Dumbledore cleared his throat and waited a few seconds to ensure that the silence was absolute before continuing.

"Now, as everybody knows, Lord Voldemort and his followers are once more at large and gaining in strength."

The silence seemed to grow as Dumbledore spoke. I glanced over to the Slytherin table, focusing on Malfoy. The ferret was covered head to toe in bandages. I fought the urge to smile. The clown was such a drama queen. As if Madam Pomfrey would allow him out of the Hospital Wing if he was seriously injured. I wondered, not for the first time, precisely why the other Slytherins put up with his act.

"I cannot emphasize strongly enough how dangerous the present situation is, and how much care each of us at Hogwarts must take to ensure that we all remain safe. The castle's wards have been strengthened over the summer, we are protected in new and more powerful ways, but we must still guard scrupulously against carelessness on the part of any student or member of staff. I urge you, therefore, to abide by any security restrictions that you teachers might impose upon you, however irksome you might find them... in particular, the rule that you are not to be out of after hours. I implore you, should you notice anything strange or suspicious within or outside the castle, to report it to a member of staff immediately. I trust you to conduct yourselves, always, with the utmost regard for your own and others' safety."

Dumbledore's gaze swept over the students before he smiled once more.

"I am sure that you have all noticed the new table now situated on the far side of the Great Hall. Five of our own have decided to join their lives together in what is quite likely the first group marriage in almost half a century. This new family has taken its members from all of our traditional houses. Unfortunately, the bylaws of our school require that they be withdrawn from the houses that they have all been credits to for the entirety of their time here at Hogwarts. None of the Potters will be part of the House Points system, nor will they be eligible for the interhouse competitions such as Quidditch."

I rose from my seat. "Excuse me Headmaster?"

I seemed to have startled him with my interruption. "Yes Mr. Potter?"

"On behalf of my wives and myself I would like to thank you for this welcome."

"Of course Mr. Potter..."

"However," I interrupted him again. "Since boarding the train this morning, my wives have been insulted, once by a fellow student and once by a member of the staff," I maintained eye contact with the Headmaster. "In both cases I demonstrated precisely why it is a bad idea to insult the wife of a Potter. I would like to state here and now that I have given all the warnings I intend to. The next person who insults any of my wives in any way will find out what happens when I'm not issuing warnings any longer."

Dumbledore seemed stunned. Malfoy paled a bit, but Snape... His face clouded and he shot me a look that promised pain.

"Well... Yes. Thank you Mr. Potter," he hesitated, then again addressed the students. "Now that we have dealt with all the announcements... your beds await, as warm and comfortable as you could possibly wish, and I know that your top priority is to be well-rested for your lessons tomorrow. Let us therefore say good night!"

"Have a seat Mr. Potter."

"Thank you Headmaster." I said politely and far more calmly than I felt. I was... disturbed by being away from the girls. It was hard to explain, a feeling of... dread. I knew I needed to get back to them.

The old man sighed, blocking out my inner monolog. "We are here to discuss that happened today, both on the train and at the station." A snort from the chair in the rear of the Headmaster's office unnecessarily reminded me of Snape's presence.

"That is an excellent idea Headmaster," I said as I drew my wand from the sleeve of my robes. "While you are testing my wand to show that I did not use it on Draco Malfoy, I can start the grievance procedure to notify the Board of Governor of my complaint against Professor Snape and still made it back to my rooms to wish my wives a good night." The plan Millie and Sue came up with to marginalize Snape was simple, ignore him and push his buttons until he self destructed.

"Grievance Mr. Potter?" Dumbledore asked

"Why yes Headmaster. It is proper to file a grievance with the Board of Governors when a teacher attempts to assault a student and brings shame upon himself and his minor house isn't it?" Snape was sitting bolt upright in his chair now.

Dumbledore gestured for Snape to restrain himself. "I'm afraid you need to clarify what you are talking about Mr. Potter."

"Professor McGonagall was there to witness Professor Snape of a cadet line of the minor house of Prince lay hands on me, the head of the major house of Potter. She also witnessed Professor Snape refer to my wives as 'Whores'. I of course punished him for his presumption, but I understand your position that the proprieties must be observed."

"You arrogant little..." Snape was on his feet, a wand clutched in his left hand pointed at me, his rage evident in his face."

"Professor, please," I said leaning back in my chair, my hands folded in my lap. There was no way I could defend myself in the position I was in, so it seemed best to carry through with the bluff. "I shattered your hand when you attempted to attack me with my back to you. Do you want me to show you what I can do when I'm looking at you? Further I wonder if the DMLE would be interested in just how you came to have a replacement wand within hours of the destruction of your old one."

"Severus," Dumbledore barked. "Lower your wand and sit down." He glared at the Potions Master until he obeyed, then the old man redirected his attention to me. "Why must you provoke him so Mr. Potter?"

"Headmaster, I am sixteen years old, while Professor Snape is a grown man. If he has so little self control that mere words will drive him to a rage, how precisely is that my fault?" Snape looked like he was going to leap across the room to strangle me with his bare hands. I should have tried this calm, reasonable stuff years before, I was actually starting to have fun. "About that Grievance Headmaster? I really need to be getting back to my wives."

"Do you really think that you will be allowed to file a complaint against me boy?" Snape hissed.

I shrugged. "If we don't resolve this, tonight, my family and I are leaving. There are other schools, schools that hold their staff to professional standards."

That seemed to really get Dumbledore's attention. "I'm sure we can work something out to prevent involving the board in this Mr. Potter. What could we do, short of an official complaint to the Board of Governors to satisfy you?"

"Professor Snape could retire. That would do it."

Snape made the oddest sound, almost as if he were completely inarticulate with rage.

"As you well know Harry, Professor Snape has an important role to play here at Hogwarts, his continued presence is necessary to keep the Slytherin's from joining Lord Voldemort."

"And a bang up job he's doing too. I mean Draco Malfoy's soul couldn't be any more pure if it were strained through a vat of pickled beets," I smiled when I saw that my simile hadn't made the slightest bit of sense to either of the men.

"Professor Snape will not be retiring." The old man said with finality.

"Alright. How about the Professor makes an Unbreakable Vow to treat each and every student in the school honorably and fairly?" The Unbreakable Vow was Millie's idea. I didn't believe for a second that Snape would ever go for it.

Dumbledore's face lit up. "Is that all? Well, certainly, I'll take his vow now and all this unpleasantness will be behind us."

"An unbreakable vow made to me," I continued. "I'm sorry Professor, but you 'Trust Professor Snape implicitly' as you've told me many times, I suspect that you would be fairly lenient in your application of the vow. I on the other hand do not trust Professor Snape in the slightest and I will hold him to the letter of his word. Intentionally misgrading a single assignment, taking points without cause, giving points without cause, any instance of unfairness to any student positive or negative of any or no house will result in the loss of his magic, or his life. I'll leave the choice up to him."

"Mr. Potter..."

"Oh come on Headmaster, what could be fairer than a vow to be fair? Is Professor Snape incapable of the level of professionalism displayed by every other teacher at this school?"

"I will never swear any oath or vow to you boy," Snape growled.

"Well, there you have it Headmaster. Even in your office Professor Snape cannot act like a professional and he isn't willing to even entertain the possibility of being fair in his dealings with the students of this school." I shook my head sadly, and then continued, "It's sad really. I mean think about the real lesson he's teaching his Slytherins... That they aren't good enough to succeed without his coddling, that they are inferior to every other house in every way." I stood up, "I think it's pretty clear that we are wasting our time here Headmaster. I can file my grievance to the Board through Professor McGonagall tomorrow. Are you going to test my wand to confirm what happened on the train with Draco?"

The old man actually seemed to be getting angry. "Sit down Mr. Potter. You well know that Professor Snape acts the way he does for a reason."

I sat. "Indeed I do Headmaster. Professor acts the way he does toward me because my father was mean to him when he was in school. Boo Hoo. The fact remains that I and every other student at this school pay good money for the privilege of attending this school, and we aren't getting our money's worth from Professor Snape. If as the Professor suggested, I will not be allowed to file my complaints with the Board, then I will need to take my business elsewhere."

"I'm afraid that will not be allowed to happen Mr. Potter. Despite your recent marriage, you are still a minor, and as such cannot make those decisions until you reach your majority."

"Quite true Headmaster. I am still underage. However my wife Marietta is of age and this summer I petitioned the Ministry to allow her control of the Potter estate. She holds full power of attorney for my entire family." God that woman is brilliant. As smart as Hermione and willing to take the suggestions from Millie to fine tune her plans in ways my bushy haired friend would never dream of. When she suggested that we place her in control of the estate until I was of age, I never imagined how useful it would turn out to be. "If Professor Snape isn't willing to make a vow to act like an adult, then one of us is going to have to leave the school."

The old man was shocked, seemingly unable to speak.

"I guess it comes down to you Headmaster. Who do you want at the school more, Professor Snape, or me?"

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The girls were waiting for me when I arrived in at the rooms assigned to us. Compared to what we had become used to at the Potter Estate, the rooms were minimalist, but from what we were used to in the school setting fairly normal. The girls had a room setup like a standard dorm. My room was smaller containing a standard four poster, a writing desk and storage for my clothing. The two rooms each had a private bath, and opened to a central common area that had the standard sofa/easy chair combinations well as a small table where we could study or take our meals if we chose.

I think we shocked Professor McGonagall when she was offering the available married quarters. She actually seemed to think that we would want the first set of rooms she showed us which had a single bedroom containing a huge bed that would easily sleep five.

After our reactions to that offering, she led us to the rooms we did take, explaining that the last group marriage at Hogwarts had used the single bed suite, and she had assumed that we would as well.

I'd never imagined that Professor McGonagall could blush.

"Is everything alright?" Mari asked as I entered the room.

"It is now," I said as I removed my outer robes and sat next to Romilda who cuddled against me. I noticed that none of the girls looked... healthy. "Are you all alright?"

"I think the potion is wearing off," Susan explained. "Either that or we've all got nerves and are getting the same symptoms we had this morning."

"Have you called Winky for another dose?"

"We did," Mari answered while wiping at her eyes with a handkerchief. "Evidently the potion can only be taken in the morning. How did you meeting go?"

"Well, everyone believes it's me that threw Draco from the train, though I thought Snape's eyes were going to pop out of his head when Dumbledore ran the Prior Incantato on my wand and the only spell shown to be cast in since June was a Reparo."

"And no one suspects sweet little Sue from Hufflepuff," Sue smiled. "Because she could never be so violent, being both a Hufflepuff and a girl."

"Yeah, they don't know you all that well I guess." I laughed. "Anyway Dumbledore spent most of the meeting trying to get me not to file the Grievance against Snape. I got the feeling that he was really worried about that. I offered to let the grievance drop if he swore Millie's Unbreakable Vow of fairness."

"I do hope you kept my name out of it," Millie said quietly. "I'm going to get enough of a reputation just hanging out with you."

"Yeah, I have that affect on people. None of your names came up. Snape refused to make the vow, so I offered the Ultimatum. Dumbledore is supposed to let me know tomorrow one way or the other. It was kind of odd though."

"What was?" Romilda asked.

"It seemed to shock the Headmaster that I would dare to stand up for myself, and he was honestly surprised that I would suggest leaving the school if Snape didn't either actually reform or leave. Then as the conversation carried on and Snape got even angrier, Dumbledore seemed to be... I don't know, sort of pleased with the way things were going."

"Pleased?" Susan echoed.

"That doesn't seem right..." Marietta agreed.

"Did we miss something?" Millie asked.

"I don't think so," I said. "The way the old man was talking it seemed like he was still trying to come up with a way to keep Snape and me both here, but he still seemed... pleased." I stood up. "Anyway, it's late and we've got class tomorrow. Dumbledore is supposed to let me know tomorrow if we need to be looking for another school."

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Susan came to my room that night, just to be held.

Unlike the nights she had stayed with me at the Estate, that night she came in bundled in a heavy dressing gown.

"Budge over," Susan said quietly. "It's cold and I need your body heat."

How was a man supposed to resist a command like that? I moved to the center of the bed and held the blankets open for her. Removing her dressing gown the pretty redhead revealed the heavy flannel pajamas underneath. She kicked off her slippers and climbed into the bed, rubbing her feet, which appeared to be clad in a pair of heavy socks, against my bare legs.

"I hate this bloody castle." She grumped. "It's always so cold."

I didn't think it was all that cold. I was in my usual sleeping attire, a pair of boxers and a tee-shirt. I had been quite comfortable when I was preparing for bed. Even in the dead of winter, sleeping like that was comfortable... though once frost started forming on the walls, it made actually getting out of bed something of an adventure.

Still, if a cold castle got me a cuddly sleeping companion, who was I to complain?

"Harry? I wanted to thank you for the attention you paid Romilda tonight."

"I just sat with her." I pointed out.

"Yes, you did. And you let her cuddle with you. That means a lot to her. We all understand your reasoning for not sleeping with her. That's understand, not agree. She has been feeling quite left out."

"Tomorrow is her birthday," I noted. "I got her a few things. I was hoping to make a bit of a fuss over her."

"She'd like that," Susan murmured.

The silence built between us in the darkness. I thought long and hard about just going to sleep, but I needed to talk to Susan about what she had said to Hannah on the train.

"Sue?"

"Yeah?" she asked sleepily.

"I've been thinking about what you told Hannah on the train."

"Hmm?"

"I've been thinking about what you told Hannah today on the train," I repeated. "I want you to know that you will never have to worry about that again."

Sue rolled over to face me. I could just barely see her eyes sparkling in the light of the dimmed wall sconce in the shower room. "What do you mean Harry?"

"I'm going to arrange for vaults in all of your names to be held in the Bolivian Gringotts branch. The Ministry won't make paupers of you if anything happens to me."

"You don't need to do that Harry," she wrapped her arms around my neck and pulled me to her, nibbling on my neck. "We don't want your money, we want you."

"Well, except for Marietta." I laughed.

"Harry," she giggled. "Mari wants you bad. Why else do you think she stayed with you last night?"

"She was hurting." I said, stating what I thought to be obvious.

"Oh Harry. You are so clueless."

Not for the first time in my life I found myself wondering just why it was I never seemed to know what was going on.

-----oooOOOooo-----

The girls were miserable the next morning, until Winky appeared with their potions. Then we had a few quiet moments together celebrating Romilda's birthday before we headed to the Great Hall for breakfast and to find out if we were staying or not.

We arrived in the Great Hall to find that 'our' table was still in place, set with the table service for our meal, and so I conducted my ladies to the table and we sat down to break our fasts.

The Great Hall filled over the next twenty minutes with many of our fellow students shooting glances toward us. Malfoy was still clad in his bandages and making much show of being injured. Pansy was waiting on him hand and foot, going as far as actually hand feeding the prat.

That was when the Staff entered the Great Hall as a group, which was fairly unusual. Normally they came into the hall in small groups. It appeared that there might have been a meeting. Susan nudged me.

"Where's Snape?"

"Dunno," I answered. Indeed the greasy git was not among the assembled staff.

Professor McGonagall signaled for silence in the Great Hall, and the Headmaster stood at his chair to address the students.

"Good morning all," The old man looked about the Hall in that Grandfatherly way of his. "I'm sorry to interrupt your morning repast, but there is a staff change that I need to make you all aware of. Professor Snape has had to leave the staff in order to deal with a family issue. We will be starting a search for a replacement Professor of Potions as soon as possible, for now; I will be taking Professor Snape's classes until a suitable replacement can be found."

A flurry of conversations erupted in the Great Hall until Dumbledore spoke again.

"Yes Mr. Nott?" The Headmaster asked, having spotted the Slytherin Sixth Year signaling that he had a question.

"Yes sir, when will Professor Snape be returning?"

"Unfortunately it isn't clear when or if Professor Snape's personal business will allow him to return to Hogwarts and his Slytherins, which is why Professor Vector has agreed to assume the responsibilities of the Head of Slytherin House."

The Headmaster took his seat and the heads of houses began distributing class schedules. We waited while Professor McGonagall worked her way through the Gryffindors before she could get to the five of us.

"Are you proud of yourself Mr. Potter?" the Assistant Headmistress asked when she reached our table.

I accepted my schedule from my former head of house. "Sometimes Professor. What in specific are you referring to?"

"Specifically your blackmailing of the Headmaster." She sniffed.

"What would you have had me do Professor? I have taken five years of abuse from the man, including the physical assault that you witnessed last night. Then he insulted my wives, again in front of you. Neither you nor the Headmaster have ever done your job concerning the man and reined in his excesses. All that left me short of killing the bastard was the Grievance process allowed to students. The fact that the Headmaster would rather send Mr. Snape away than face the Board is hardly my fault."

"Professor Snape." She corrected me automatically.

"Mr. Snape is no longer a professor at this school, and I am unaware than he has been taken on anywhere else. Professor, I am not looking for a fight, all I want is the basic level of respect that the rest of the student body expect as a matter of course."

The Professor huffed and left the table. My wives and I shared a look, and then rose from the table to begin our day.

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Classes were... well, classes. The work was harder than it had ever been, but despite that I was beginning to see the method to the madness behind it all. My home work was checked by Marietta each night and she was rarely impressed.

On the first of October, Mari came to my bed and had her way with me. By this point Millie and Sue had been showing me what I was doing wrong for two months, and by all indications I was progressing fairly well in this particular field of study, so I was feeling pretty good about myself and the technique I'd learned.. Mari destroyed that illusion by telling me what she wanted, showing me what she expected me to do and drilling me repeatedly until I learned my lessons.

I can state without reservation that those particular lessons with Mari were my favorite lessons of my entire life.. When she was satisfied with the lesson she had conducted that evening and I was laid out on my back struggling to catch my breath, my sexy genius, using small words and speaking slowly, dissected my career at Hogwarts. Sitting naked in the middle of my bed she explained to me just how much I had neglected the

basics of magical theory in every single class. Mari went on to explain how I was ham fistedly frittering away my potential.

Nag nag nag.

Of course, with the nightly reorganization of my mind, I could clearly see each and every one of her points. Why had I been so damned lazy anyway? How much of the previous five years had I wasted? Sure, I could cast with the best of them. Practical application of magic had always come easier for me than the theory.

So I buckled down. From that point on I concentrated on what I needed to do, Mari slowly but surely turned me into an actual student. Of course she also did the same thing to the other ladies of our family, but none of them seemed to have been quite as purposefully stupid as I had.

. ---ooOoo---

Halloween arrived and I found myself feeling somewhat... empty. A second round of my ladies monthlies had come and gone, and after a horrible first day (evidently, the potion wouldn't work on the first day of their cycles) even that passed quietly, despite my having to be very careful with what I said.

But it was Halloween. Never a good day for me. Looking back over my life I couldn't think of a single good thing that happened to me on Halloween.

I had been wandering the castle, looking for something, anything to distract me. Even a preview of what ever horror this particular Halloween held would be better than the emptiness in my gut. Unfortunately, nothing happened. I should have taken that as a sign all by itself.

The Halloween feast was as festive as usual, though as I said before celebrating tonight of all nights seemed to be in poor taste. At least my ladies seemed to be enjoying themselves. It was during the dessert course I decided to join in and quit feeling so sorry for myself.

Following dinner we returned to our apartments. I knew that if the girls followed their normal schedule, then Millie would be joining me that night. Maybe something special was in order.

"Harry?" she asked as she entered my room.

"Hello Millie," I said from where I stood behind the door as I slipped a blind fold over her eyes.

"Harry, what the hell are you doing?"

"I seem to recall you mentioning that you had certain interests when you were telling off Hermione..." I said as I guided her to the bed while unbuttoning her night dress and allowing it to fall to the floor.

"Harry?" Millie gasped as I laid her on the bed.

I waved my wand and the silk scarves I had prepared for the evening looped over her wrists and ankles causing her to be spread eagle. In preparation for this I'd done a bit of reading in the library on this subject. Who knew the books that Madam Pince kept in the reserved section could possibly be so... interesting?

I picked up the peacock feather. "The safe word is 'Nargle'."

. ---ooOoo---

I woke to pain. A lot of pain. Pain like someone had worked me over with a beater bat until he got tired, then he turned the bat over to his larger very angry brother to finish the job.

"Ow!" I said, suddenly aware of how weird my voice sounded, and now much it hurt to say 'ow'.

I considered trying to open my eyes to find out where I was, but just laying there hurt badly enough, I couldn't see any reason to chance that opening my eyes wouldn't hurt more.

"Harry? Harry are you awake?"

A girl's voice. Sounded familiar. Familiar and concerned. Ow!. Thinking hurt.

"Alright Mrs. Potters..." a woman's voice this time. Very familiar. "All of you Mrs. Potters are going to have to leave my patient alone or you will have to leave the ward."

What had happened? Still not moving, I tried to recall what had happened... I had been in bed with Millie for about an hour, and she seemed to be having a real good time, though I personally couldn't see the attraction of being tickled and teased. She had thrashed around a bit, straining against her restraints; she had never been so wet before. She had arched her back and then... nothing.

What had I done? Had I hurt her? The pounding in my head increased, and now there was a ringing in my ears. Oh god, if I had hurt her... I forced my eyes open.

Bloody hell that hurt. Several very blurry faces swam in the tears that flooded my eyes from the pain"

"Mr. Potter, I see you've returned to us." The woman's voice said. Madam Pomfrey? Oh hell, I was in the Hospital wing again. "Tell me, how are

you feeling?"

"Hurts." I croaked out. My mouth was painfully dry.

My glasses were placed on my face and the faces came into focus. Madam Pomfrey and my wives. The ladies all seemed to be ok... Good, I hadn't hurt anyone.

"I'm afraid I need you to be a bit more specific than that Mr. Potter," Madam Pomfrey continued as she held a cup of delicious water to my lips. Water had never tasted so good. "What hurts?"

"Everything. Everything hurts."

My Healer nodded. "I suspected as much. Mr. Potter, pain is nature's way of telling you to stop doing things." She poured a pain relief potion into my mouth. After I got past the taste, the pain started fading almost immediately. "Perhaps you should remember that the next time you are tempted to try some power ritual you've read about, especially one that didn't seem to do much. I took the liberty of checking your index scores, you only received a tenth of a percent increase from whatever it is you did to yourself."

She bustled away before I could ask what the hell she was talking about. Power ritual? What the hell is a power ritual?

Millie was holding my hand and trying not to cry. "What did I do?" I asked. "Did I hurt you Millie?"

Millie just started sobbing and pulled me into a hug that threatened my ability to breath. All the girls started speaking at once and I couldn't understand what any of them were saying.

Susan frowned and immediately began casting some of her Auror privacy charms. "Let him go Millie. He's turning purple." She slid an arm around Millicent's shoulder. "As best we can tell, you had Millie so excited that when she came, she let loose with a burst of accidental magic."

"Evidently that burst of magic threw you across the room and slapped you against the wall hard enough to break a goodly number of your bones and do a horrific amount of damage to your internal organs" Marietta continued. "On top of that, the silencing charms on your room kept us from hearing Millie calling for help until Romilda came to see why the two of you weren't ready for breakfast."

"It figures that the first time I get to see my husband naked he's too injured for me to do anything about it." Romilda giggled.

"Romi called us and we all rushed into your room," Sue concluded.

"I'm sorry Harry. I'm so sorry." Millie sobbed.

"Millie, you didn't do anything... I was just stupid not to take precautions." I said while taking her hand again.

"You almost died!"

"But I didn't. It's ok, really." I don't know why, but I couldn't resist being a smartarse. "Besides, if I had died, imagine the reaction of everyone if it got out that you killed a man through sex."

The four women were shocked into silence for a moment, and then Sue started to giggle. "That would certainly command a certain level of respect."

"I know I'd want details on that technique." Romi agreed.

Millie's expression shifted between horrified and amused. "I guess that might do something for my popularity..." a small grin crossed her lips. "But we all know that Marietta would only let me use my powers for good."

"Well... yes. Very funny," Mari sniffed as the other girls giggled; I suspect more from the relief of the situation than finding my stupid joke very funny. "More importantly, we found you badly injured. We needed something to tell the Headmaster and Madam Pomfrey, so in keeping with our plan of hiding our power increases, we suggested that you might have been experimenting with rituals to increase your own powers."

"That makes sense. So Madam Pomfrey fixed me up as usual?"

"Yes," Romi nodded. "She fussed over you like a mother hen, but she said that she wouldn't be able to do anything about your pain until you woke up."

"So why aren't you lot in class? Using me as an excuse to skive off?"

"Harry," Sue said gently. "It's Sunday, you've been out for almost three days"

I blinked. Bloody hell.

The door opened and a visibly distraught Hermione Granger entered the ward. Susan quietly dropped her privacy charms and my wives regarded my friend coolly.

"Harry? I'm so glad you're awake."

"Hey Hermione. You know me; I'm not really at school if I don't make it to the Hospital wing once or twice."

Harry this isn't funny." I could see that she had been crying. "Have you been using Power Rituals?"

I was obviously missing something; I could hear the capitalization in her words. I decided to try and tell something less than the truth, but not the lie that was evidently circulating. "No, I was just training and a spell went wrong."

The relief was visible on her face. "I knew it, I knew that the Prophet was lying again. I knew that there was no way you would be doing something so dark..." She pulled me into one of her hugs and I was reminded most pointedly reminded that several of my ribs had only recently been healed. My vision grayed a bit from the pain, and then I noticed the looks my wives were giving both my bushy haired friend and me.

"Hermione," I gasped. She released me and I took a few cleansing breaths before continuing, "What are you on about?"

"Oh Harry, haven't they told you?" from a pocket of her robes she pulled a newspaper. She held it open for me and I saw that it was the Sunday edition of the Daily Prophet. The banner headline read: **DARK LORD POTTER?**

"Oh bloody hell," I said as I continued to read. '**Potter abandons the light with Dark Rituals to increase his power**' .

I really have no idea why I was surprised by this. After all, it was an even number year. It was time for the Wizarding world to believe me to be dark again.

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The Truth

Chapter 3

A/N: I don't own Harry Potter and wouldn't particularly care to. I would like a rental agreement with option to buy for Hermione Granger. A short term contract with Nymphadora Tonks wouldn't be turned down. A Long-term agreement with Luna Lovegood would probably be a whole lot of fun. Any time Padma Patil wants to open negotiations, call me and oh for a weekend with Fleur. Oddly Lavender and Padma's sister (despite being her twin) Parvati do nothing for me...

The Truth

The pounding stopped. The ward stones' continued to shed energy at a horrific rate, have left the visible spectrum entirely and now just radiating heat. At the risk of stating the bloody obvious, this isn't good.

I start grasping for straws. Maybe if I hid under the bed... Would that fool them even for a second? I pull my wand and conjure a metallic brace for the door. Conjuring has never been one of my higher skill sets; I guess that at most this will buy me another five minutes or so.

I'm doomed. Why didn't I just... I can't think of anything that I could have tried that I didn't do.

Panic brings an idea after all. Using my wand I shape the stone over the door into a shelf. I disillusion the shelf and wrap myself in my father's cloak, cast silencing and scent neutralizing charms on myself. Then I climb on to the nearly invisible shelf and cast one last Notice-Me-Not of the structure and myself.

It might work. Maybe. Please?

The door is noisily shoved open. It seems that my five minute estimate for my conjured brace turned out to be somewhat optimistic.

After all that... silence. I don't know what I expected, but silence wasn't it. The only thing I can hear is the pounding of my heart.

This can't be good.

I'm doomed.

====oooOOOooo====

Other than my wives, Ron was my most frequent visitor while I was stuck in the Hospital Wing, keeping me well informed of the happenings around the school, including the antics of those he called 'Fucking Idiots' who were now convinced that I was either the next Dark Lord or planning on joining the current one. It seemed that this group even included a disturbingly high number of the previous year's members of the DA.

That hurt, it really did. I don't know if I had ever really considered the kids in the DA to be my friends, but I had thought that they at very least trusted me.

I also got (finally) Ron's side of what was going on between him and Hermione. It turned out that at some point the previous year while I was busy paying attention to how unfair life was, the pair of them hooked up. The whole hand holding, stolen kisses, moonlight strolls, making plans for a possible future together kind of hooking up. My keen observational skills being what they are, I of course had missed it entirely.

While I was safely ensconced at Duraskaban, Ron took it upon himself to actually visit Hermione at her home. That bears repeating, so I'll say it again. Ron Weasley traveled Muggle style to Hermione's home in Crawley and visited her. He was justifiably proud of himself for managing this feat without ending up violating several instances of the Statute of Secrecy. Of course being his friend I had to rain on his parade a bit, so I asked him why he hadn't just used the Knight's Bus. The look on his face told me that he hadn't even thought of that.

I didn't laugh at him. Well, not much.

Anyway, after two weeks of his visiting her at home, with some fairly passionate sessions of progressively heavier petting getting their hormones bubbling along in an entertaining manner, Hermione decided that she wanted more.

And that's when Ron shut up. He refused to tell me what happened.

On some levels I found some new respect for Ron based on his refusal. Truthfully, what had happened between then was none of my business. That being said, something had happened to break them up after Hermione took this step, and I was starting to strongly suspect that what ever had happened was also the catalyst for Hermione's problems with me.

Besides, I wanted to know.

I spoke with Dobby and arranged for a few beverages to be available for the next time Ron came by to visit. Elves have ways of preventing Witches and Wizards from seeing what they are doing; I'd never known that Dobby was capable of masking our little party from Madam Pomfrey until he volunteered to do so.

Someday some wizard is going to figure out how to get all the elves in the world to work for him, and that wizard will rule the world.

There isn't much alcohol in Butterbeer, but I know from experience that a bottle or three will loosen Ron's tongue. It actually took six to get him

talking about what happened when Hermione took him to her bed.

I don't think Hermione making the first move between them really surprised me. Ron is a 'boy this is really good, I'd better not spoil it' kind of guy. Hermione has always known what she wanted and had never been afraid to take the steps needed to get it. Ron didn't say anything about it, but I'm willing to bet that she provided him with diagrams and step by step instructions for what she wanted him to try.

So Hermione pulled Ron into her bedroom, which Ron described as 'surprisingly feminine' without a bookshelf in sight, and undressed them both. She then took Ron to her bed and restarted their kissing session that had been in progress down stairs.

Which was when the problem reared its head. Or rather didn't. It seemed that once on her bed, 'little Ron' decided to do his turtle impression, despite having been at full mast for pretty much every snogging session they had ever had. Taking a cue provided by what she called her father's collection of 'special' videos, Hermione attempted to 'encourage' the little guy with no results beyond a wet crotch for Ron and a sore jaw for Hermione.

Unsurprisingly, this was not a good thing. After apologies all around Ron all but ran from the Granger home. He needed someone to talk to, and his parents were right out so that left his older brothers. There was no way he would trust the twins, Percy was as utterly out of the question as Molly and Arthur, Charlie was in Albania, so Ron sought out his eldest and most supportive brother, Bill.

Who laughed at him, patted him on the back, and then laughed some more in that helpful older brother type way of his.

After a while, Bill had gotten enough of that out of his system to actually speak to his youngest brother, and together they had examined Ron's feelings for Hermione. After a lot of discussion, a few fire whiskeys, and more laughter at Ron's expense Bill opined that on at least some level, Ron saw Hermione as a sister, and that Ron just wasn't enough of a Pure Blood to carry on with it in the face of that.

That comment had even Ron smiling. Bill illustrated his point by telling of the scandal caused by Lucius Malfoy marrying Narcissa Black back in Bill's first year, seeing how the Blacks and Malfoys had never been related before and neither family tended to stray much further than cousins for wives, especially since Lucius' father had married a 'cousin' who looked just like his sister, even sharing the same name. It was odd that Abraxas Malfoy's sister was never seen or heard from again.

After spending a day or so thinking about things, Ron returned to Hermione's home to apologize. After Ron explained himself, they decided together that it was going to much to awkward to try and deal with this in the short term and that it might be best if they avoided each other outside of class or prefect duties, which explained many things about how they had been acting around each other.

====oooOOOooo====

In all, I spent four days in the Hospital wing after I woke up, one of my longer stays. After receiving Poppy's traditional 'try and be more careful Mr. Potter' speech followed by her usual threats of 'next time, I'll just leave you where you're laying', Millie and Susan escorted me from the Hospital Wing as if I was made of glass.

This 'being married to four insanely powerful witches' stuff was doing wonders for my manly self image. Still, the sex was freaking great, so that made up for a lot of things.

Millie wouldn't quit apologizing for hurting me. It was embarrassing really. As soon as we got back to our rooms all four of my ladies clung to me as if they were afraid that I might disappear.

"Hey, I'm not going anywhere you know." I said.

"I almost killed you!" Millie sobbed into my shoulder.

"No, I was stupid. I knew you were all having bouts of accidental magic and I still teased you until you lost control." I rubbed her back as best I could given that four women were all seemingly doing their best to merge with me. "Since I was stupid, that makes it Mari's fault."

"My fault?" My eldest wife asked indignantly. "How could it possibly be my fault?"

"You were the one who took it upon herself to teach me to think," I grinned. "If I'm still an idiot, it must be your fault."

"Ah, I see," Mari said stepping back and drawing her wand. "How silly of you to attempt another dark ritual so soon after getting out of the hospital."

"Wait, wait," I pleaded, only half joking. "I'm sorry. Don't hurt me."

That caused all four of my wives to start laughing. It was quite a while before they calmed down.

====oooOOOooo====

I think it was the whispering that got to me the most. The furtive looks didn't help, but the whispering that suddenly stopped whenever the whisperer noticed I was looking at him or her only to begin again when I looked away grated on my nerves.

It was almost as if my school mates all expected me to start casting unforgivables in the halls.

Ron was right. Fucking idiots.

The saddest thing about it was I was getting those looks from some of the staff as well. Not McGonagall or Flitwick, but so many of the others. I even recall waking up in the History of Magic to find Binns staring at me in a manner that suggested bowel voiding terror.

I spent several hours thinking about what it meant that I had a ghost frightened of me. And wondering if ghosts had bowels to void.

The Prophet kept a relentless drumbeat about my apparent 'darkness' and it was getting more than a little annoying.

Which isn't to say that there weren't bright points. There were. For example the day that Susan and I had a free period and were in the Great Hall working on our Herbology assignments and Justin Finch-Fletchley slid into the chair to Susan's left.

"Something we can help you with Justin?" Sue asked coldly.

"Yeah, Sue, there is." The sandy haired Hufflepuff said. "I just wanted to know why the hell you never got in contact with me when you were in trouble."

"What?"

"I never heard word one from you all summer, and on the train I hear that you hate all the Hufflepuffs and that you've married Harry. It took forever to get the story out of Hannah, and I told her what I thought of what she and her family had done. I know we had decided that we didn't work together last May Sue, but I always thought that you knew you could come to me if you needed something."

Sue started to cry and pulled the Hufflepuff into a hug, and the pair began comparing notes on their lives since the previous spring. I was glad that Sue had managed to reconnect to at least one of her old friends, because I intended to at least try to reconnect to one of mine.

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Romilda helped.

Well, helped might be a bit strong. Almost got me killed is probably more accurate, but she tried.

I don't know why I hadn't thought to ask her for her help, but she recognized my moping around for what it was and suggested that she find Hermione and invite her to meet with me in the Room of Requirements.

Romi was so excited to be asked to help she started jumping up and down clapping her hands.

God I loved that girl. It was getting harder and harder to resist taking her to bed. If I'd only known...

Anyway I was in the Room waiting, trying to imagine all the ways my conversation with my first female friend could possibly go. I had asked the Room for a place where we could talk and it presented me with a duplicate of the Gryffindor common room.

Waiting has never been one of my strong points. I'm sure the pacing of the room I did while waiting had to measure out to at least a couple of miles before the door opened and Hermione was unceremoniously shoved into the Room before Romilda entered holding her wand.

"Romi!" I yelled. "You were supposed to ask Hermione to meet with me, not kidnap her!"

"I did ask," my youngest wife explained patiently. "She said no. I simply showed her that refusal wasn't an option." Romi grinned at me before leaving the room.

The door disappeared as soon as my youngest wife closed it behind her. Evidently the Room had decided that Hermione and I 'Required' having to remain together until we thrashed this out between ourselves.

Hermione hadn't said a word since entering the Room, she just stood there glowering at me with her arms crossed.

"I was hoping we could talk," I said as apologetically as possible.

"So you sent your enforcer after me?"

The room had provided a pair of wing backed chairs. I sat in one and gestured toward the other. "Hermione, please?" I waited while she huffed a bit before sitting down.

"Hermione, what's going on with us? Why are you so angry with me?"

"What you're doing is wrong Harry!"

"And why is it wrong Hermione? By the culture we live in it's not common, but it is legal."

"You know that it's wrong Harry! I've looked into the history of these so called harems. The women are practically slaves."

"Hermione, what ever else my wives are, slaves doesn't describe them in the slightest. Mari drills me more than you ever did and makes me like it. Sue has taught me more offensive magic than I ever dreamed existed. I have no idea why she bothered with the DA, the Aurors who were on her Aunt's protective detail taught her very well. Millie is convinced that I'm too thin and has taken it upon herself to make sure I eat properly. And Romilda... that little minx has been trying to seduce me since the second day we were married. No, slave doesn't really describe our relationship."

She just remained seated, staring at me.

"When you came to see me in the Hospital wing, I thought maybe we could be like we were, you know? But you never came back and still wouldn't

“speak to me outside of class.” I decided to cheat a bit, a little blackmail. “I miss my friend Hermione. I miss her telling me to do my homework, I miss her look of amazement whenever I accidentally make a good point in an essay. I miss laughing with you and Ron.”

That got no response at all. Changing my tactics I tried again.

“I know that this marriage upset you, but Hermione, you’ve got to understand, the bond had tied us together in amazing ways. It wasn’t my idea, and I was tricked into it, but I wouldn’t change it now if I could.”

That got through to her. I could see her resolve to resent me in silence cracking. “Harry, I know you well enough to know that you mean well, but... you’re using them.”

“We’re using each other Hermione. Have you thought through where they came from? How my wives got to the point where they would even think about joining into a group marriage with me? Millie is a half blood from a family of blood purists. Think about that for a moment. While she was tolerated, she was never really accepted. When she was offered a chance to prove herself to her family by linking the Potter fortune to the Bulstrode family, she leapt at the chance. Marietta hated me. She hated me for my relationship with Cho last year and for the pressure her mother was put under that led to her exposing the DA to Umbridge. Then her father uses her to settle a debt to my family’s trust.”

I could see Hermione’s social consciousness start to flare at the injustice of that, but before she could explode I continued.

“Romilda’s mum fed her the same Boy-Who-Lived crap that Molly fed Ginny, but almost to the exclusion of everything else. She’s the only one who came into this marriage with her eyes open full of nothing but enthusiasm, and she’s deeply hurt that I won’t take her to bed, but I think she knows that I think she’s too young and I would feel like a pervert if I did. When Sue lost her Aunt, taxes, death duties, and debt emptied her family’s vaults. She was evicted from the only home she had ever known and put out into the street with little more than the clothing she was wearing and a few galleons in her pocket. No one would take her in, help her or hire her due to rumors being spread that any family who helped her would be attacked and destroyed by the Death Eaters. When Dumbledore approached her about joining a group marriage, she had a choice to going along with it or end up selling herself to keep from starving.”

I could tell from her expression that the news about Sue was not something she had already known. Well, Hermione wasn’t ever one to keep up with the gossip in the castle.

“From the very first, your concern was that I was using my wives in some horrendous manner,” I hesitated. Did I really want to discuss this with Hermione? No, I didn’t, because it was almost assured to make her angry... Still, I was too far into this to stop by this point. “Yes, we make love. When one of them comes to me, we make each other happy. I don’t force myself on them, they come to me.”

“They don’t have a choice Harry. Saying ‘yes’ doesn’t mean a thing if you can’t say no.”

We sat in silence for several moments. “Is that what you really think of me Hermione?”

“Harry...”

“Are you done with me?” I asked. “It hurt when Ron didn’t believe me fourth year, I’m not sure I could take it if you abandoned me Hermione.”

“Abandoned you?” She asked incredulously. “You abandoned me.”

“What? I didn’t...” Suddenly what I had suspected about her break up with Ron gelled. “This is about you and Ron.”

“No it’s not!” she protested.

“Yes it is. Something happened between you and Ron. You are so mad at him you can barely tolerate being with him to fulfill your prefect duties, and you’re pushing some of that mad at me.”

Her head dropped until her chin touched her chest, presenting me with a view of her bushy locks. I knew that I had hurt her by bringing up her situation with Ron, and I hadn’t really intended to mention Ron at all, but...

“Ron and I started sort of dating last year,” Hermione said her voice barely a whisper. “We never really meant for anything to happen, but you were in detention so much, and your lessons with Professor Snape... it just sort of happened.”

“You don’t need to explain to me Hermione. I couldn’t have been much fun to be around even when I wasn’t in trouble.”

She seemingly didn’t hear me and continued. “It seemed to be going well, you know, exciting and... and... and dangerous with the way Umbridge and her Inquistorial Squad were everywhere. Then the fight at the ministry and everything, we just never found a way to let you know.”

I leaned forward and took her hand. “I never noticed a thing. But even if I had, I wouldn’t have had a problem with the two of you getting together.”

“Ron was so sweet; he even came over to my house. He travelled completely Muggle from Ottery St. Catchpole to my house. I was so proud of him for making the effort like that. We spent whole days together, and then we...”

“I know,” I said. I had to let her know that I already knew what had happened. The effort of trying to tell me almost had her in tears. “I managed to get the story out of Ron.”

“You talk about me?” She asked working herself back into a fury.

“Yes. Just like you and I are talking about Ron. He didn’t brag to me, I had to pull it out of him.”

"So you know how hideous he found me." Her tears started to flow.

I hate it when girls cry; I never know what to do. As I saw it I had two possible ways to respond. I could just try and hold her hand until she calmed down, or I could tell her the truth. Between Hermione and me, the truth had always been the best option.

"Hermione, it isn't always about you."

"What?"

"Try thinking about from Ron's perspective," I said quietly. "A very pretty girl takes him to bed and he can't perform. At all. He was terrified that he was gay."

She blinked at me. "There's nothing wrong with being gay. Ron has never had a problem with anyone who has come out."

"Just because someone doesn't have a problem with other people being gay doesn't mean that they would want to be gay themselves. As soon as he left you that day, Ron ran to find someone to talk to about it."

"Oh god," she covered her mouth with her left hand. "Tell me that Molly doesn't know, please."

"Ron is more likely to sit down and discuss his sex life with Malfoy than he is to discuss it with Arthur or Molly. He went to Bill. They had a long talk about how Ron felt about you, and Bill has an interesting theory."

Hermione has always respected Bill Weasley. Headboy, Scholar, Curse Breaker, and it didn't hurt that he had those ultra-cool good looks and attitude. If Bill suggested something, it was very likely that Hermione would believe it. "What? What did Bill say?"

"Bill compared how Ron reacted to you when you dated Viktor and how he reacts when Ginny dates anyone. He believes that deep down, Ron sees you as another sister."

"Sister?" she asked in a shocked tone of voice.

"Yeah. Sister. He fights with you the way he fights with Gin, he's protective of you the way he's protective of Gin, and it makes sense really. Bill joked with Ron that the reason that he couldn't respond to you was that Ron isn't 'Pure Blood' enough."

She wrinkled her nose. "Ew."

"Yeah, if you'd buddied up with Malfoy the same way, there wouldn't have been a problem."

She hit me for that one. Hard. Then she sobered as I rubbed my arm. "When Ron didn't want me, I told myself that I could see you after your birthday and it would be ok, because we'd all be together again, you know?"

"And then out of the blue, I was married." I nodded my understanding.

"Ron didn't want me, and you were... well unavailable, and the way Dumbledore did this to you and the girls... I'm going to end up alone aren't I?"

I couldn't help it. I started laughing, which caused her anger to spike again. She hit me again. My left bicep ended up with a fairly spectacular bruise.

"Sorry, sorry. Pax!" I laughed. "Hermione, you are absolutely the dumbest genius I've ever known. How is it you haven't seen how half the Ravenclaws stare at you like you were a steak dinner in front of a starving man? Hell, Finch-Fletchley would give his left arm to go out with you, and if you don't mind guys a little younger, I think Colin would probably die by orgasm if you as much as held his hand."

"You're exaggerating."

"Hardly, Hermione look in the mirror. You are more than pretty. If you showed the slightest bit of interest, you wouldn't have time to do your homework for all the guys competing for your time." For the first time in our conversation a hint of a smile crossed her lips. "I know you don't like my marriage, and I have to admit in the beginning none of the five of us were all that wild about it. But the fact remains, we are married and there is nothing I can do about it. I just need my friend Hermione back."

And she was crying again. I hate that.

====oooOOOooo====

Hermione and I spoke for another two hours, we even got to laughing. I was certain that I had done a lot to heal the rift that had formed between us.

If only I had known.

Anyway the room finally decided that we had worked through our problems and the door reappeared. I held the door open for my best friend and followed her out into the hallway.

I ran into the Susan's left hand pushing against my chest.

"Hello Hermione," Susan said sweetly while pushing me back into the room. She turned back to Hermione and continued. "If you are ever alone with my husband behind locked doors again, I'll pull ever single hair out of your head. Good bye Hermione," she closed and sealed the door behind

us cutting off Hermione's denials.

Sue suspected something was going on between Hermione and me? I was shocked at that thought. "Sue, I promise, nothing happened, we were just talking."

The redhead smiled. "I know that Harry, I'm just messing with her. It's obvious to everyone that after whatever happened between her and Ron Weasley, she is jealous of our relationship."

"It is?" I asked, flabbergasted that it had taken me so long to figure out what everyone else evidently just saw.

"Well, obvious to everyone who isn't clueless." She grinned at my reaction to that. "Wands out Potter. It's time for your lesson."

Around me the Room reformed from a sitting room to a dueling pit. That really bugged me. That wasn't how the Room was supposed to work; you had to ask the Room for what you needed before you entered. But Susan could cause changes on the fly. My other wives probably could as well, but I hadn't been in the Room with any of them since we returned to Hogwarts.

"That's tomorrow," I said drawing my wand. I had learned on our first lesson that Sue didn't give second chances. I was starting to wonder about the wisdom of my asking her to teach me the Auror spells she knew.

"No," her grin widened and became substantially more evil. "It's today... Perhaps I am a little angry that my husband would be in a locked room with another woman and I want to work a little of that mad off... Expulso!"

I dived to the floor to avoid the explosive hex, despite my reflexes the hex came within a whisker of taking my head off. From the floor I twirled my wand and returned with a "Furnunculus!"

"Or maybe I just want to keep you off balance." She continued, still grinning as she batted my boil producing curse away with a casual ease. "All warmed up? Good. Now we can get serious."

====oooOOOooo====

An hour later the Room of Requirement was littered with the debris of our 'practice session.' I sat against the far wall trying to catch my breath as Susan knelt next to me working to repair what she had done to my wand arm. I'm not sure what it was or what she was doing to fix it, but the arm was starting to feel decidedly less... crunchy. I had already decided that 'crunchy' was not a condition that you would ever want a body part to be in.

I took minor solace in watching her chest move in a hypnotic fashion as she was also breathing deeply following the work out. Not that I had hit her with much.

I seriously doubt that I could have laid a glove on her even before her Harem Effect Power up. I don't think I ever really appreciated just how skilled the Auror force must be. The sheer number of spells she knew, and her skill in using them.

"UUHH!" I grunted as she manipulated my arm.

"Oh hush," She said with a smile. "If you're good, when I'm done here, I'll kiss it all better."

"Sue, why did you ever come to the DA meetings? You must have been bored silly."

"Oh, I don't know Harry... My protective detail never taught me to cast a patronus... Hell, I taught some of them after you taught me. Besides there's that whole Hufflepuff teamwork thing to consider, we used to do that you know. Anyway," she reached up to brush some hair from my eyes, "the teacher was fairly cute."

I pondered that while Susan continued working on my arm. I still wonder if she was just messing with me because I never thought I was all that good looking.

"There," She said as she released my arm which didn't hurt any longer. "All better."

"And here I thought you were going to kiss it." I snarked.

Susan swung her leg across my lap so that she was straddling me, and pulled my face between her breasts. "I never said I was going to kiss your arm." She whispered in my ear. "I mean think about it, if I wanted to kiss arms, I've got arms," and she ground her crotch into mine. "So I know that kissing an arm doesn't make anything all better."

Sometimes, just sometimes, it's very good to be me.

====oooOOOooo====

By the end of January the castles was suffused with an odd feeling of... peace. Riddle and his crew of insane bastards hadn't done anything since the Battle at the Ministry, which seemed odd, but I wasn't going to complain about it. I wasn't having nightmares, my scar wasn't bothering me, my classes were going well and even the food seemed to be better than average. Three of my four wives were sexy/kinky/randy all the bloody time and the fourth one was working herself up to such a point that I strongly suspect that once she was of age, she was going to rape me.

In short, life was good.

Oh, sure, there were still the suspicious looks and the occasional whisper, but since pretty much nothing was going on at the school outside of class

work, and since no one was turning up petrified, poisoned, or otherwise near death without a reasonable explanation, most of my school mates seemed content to think ill of me quietly and pretty much leave me alone about it.

The only dark cloud on the horizon was the impending start of my ladies' synchronized menstrual cycle, which was due to start any time now but we were getting pretty used to those by this point, so how bad could it possibly be?

I actually asked that question out loud. I'm an idiot. I actually stood there in our common room and challenged fate like that.

Mari was exceptionally affectionate that night, telling me that she wanted to feel good before she had several days of feeling horrible, and I was happy to oblige. Our love making was gentle and sweet, with her telling me over and over how what I was doing was just right.

Good times.

Sated, we finally drifted off to sleep in each other's arms at around 3 am... Ah, to still have that kind of stamina.

Some time in those early hours the dreams started. Sex, and lots of it. Sex with Susan, Millie, Mari, and even Romilda. Sometimes just one of the girls and me, sometimes combinations of my wives, pairs, trios, even all four at once. It was pure passion, a seemingly endless series of encounters, one after another, pure driving sex. Indescribably pleasure, that somehow over the course of the dream became excruciating pain.

====oooOOOooo====

Something wet was being poured into my throat. I had inhaled at precisely the wrong time and began coughing.

What the hell? I hurt all over my body; my back was on fire, my left arm seemed to be restrained, and I had no feeling from the waist down. Another coughing fit racked my body. My glasses were gone and my eyes were filled with tears from the pain and the coughing, but the smell that made its way through the coughing fits told me I was in the Hospital Wing again.

What the hell happened? I wondered as I struggled to get air into my lungs.

"Headmaster?" I heard Poppy Pomfrey call. "Mr. Potter is waking up."

"So I can hear Poppy." The old man's voice filled my ears. Pomfrey muttered some incantation and my coughing fit eased.

"What happened?" I gasped as soon as I had enough air in my lungs to speak.

"We shall speak soon Mr. Potter," Dumbledore said, "But first, let's allow Madam Pomfrey to do her job, shall we?"

"Mr. Potter," the Healer said in a tone that did nothing to disguise her distaste for my condition. "I have never seen anyone in the condition you find yourself in. The damage is almost sufficient to make me believe those rumors about you engaging in Dark Rituals to enhance your level of power.

"What's happened to me?" I asked through gritted teeth.

"I know that you're in pain, but there is little I can do about it at this time. You have a badly broken, almost shattered pelvis, the pain from that had you thrashing about so much that you were doing even more damage which is why you are currently under a nerve block charm to keep your lower body immobilized. The skin on your back is shredded to the point where I'm going to have to force a regrowth but I cannot do that until your pelvis is taken care of, you arrived horribly dehydrated with a blood sugar level that suggested that you hadn't eaten for the better part of a week, in short your entire body chemistry is badly skewed."

She was leaving something out, but for the life of me I couldn't figure out what. "What's wrong with my left arm?"

"Both of your arms and upper torso are covered in bite marks Mr. Potter," Poppy sniffed. She was angry with me? I wracked my mind trying to figure out what had I done that might have angered Madam Pomfrey. The whole concept of bite marks frightened me more than a little bit... "Your left arm," she continued, "is restrained. Your level of dehydration required that I get fluids into your system as quickly as possible, so you now have a Muggle style Intravenous drip in your arm."

"Thank you Poppy," Dumbledore said in that patient way of his. "Is Mr. Potter well enough that we might speak privately?"

Poppy huffed in that annoyed way of hers, and her blur disappeared from my limited view. "Now that we're alone Harry," Dumbledore continued, "I suppose you would like to know what happened to you."

"God, yes Headmaster. What happened to me? What bit me? Are my girls ok?"

"The Mrs. Potters are as well as can be expected Harry, given their level of worry about you. What you are experiencing is the aftermath of one of the unfortunate downsides of a group marriage among magical people. Once a year, when all of your wives bio-magical cycles synchronize they will become, shall we say, aggressively fertile."

"Aggressively fertile? You mean that they did this to me?" I asked my mind boggling that any of my gentle ladies could possibly...

"Well, it might be more accurate to say that all five of you did this to you. A symptom of their condition has the bodies of the women in a marriage bond issue an alchemical aphrodisiac, something like what the Muggles call a pheromone dump. You were a willing, if addled participant."

I groped for my glasses, and after I got them on, I could see that the old man was seemingly sincere. "How often is this going to happen?"

As I said, once a year. You will find quite interesting late Januarys and early Februarys for the rest of your life.”

I digested that for a few moments. Then it dawned on me that I didn't know how long I'd been out this time. Poppy said that I hadn't eaten for most of a week?

“What day is it?” I asked.

“It is currently the morning of February the 4th Harry.”

That shocked me speechless. My last memory was making love to Mari in the early hours of January 30th.

“You and your wives missed all of your classes Thursday and Friday of last week, and any attempt to ascertain your statuses were rebuffed by your elves, who would only say that you were all busy with family obligations,” the old man hesitated, as if embarrassed. “I must admit to being somewhat surprised that elves could so effectively block my access to any part of the castle. What had happened was only discovered Sunday afternoon when Susan Potter emerged from your apartments looking for help.”

“But the girls, they're alright?”

“Yes Mr. Potter, your wives are all fine. Unfortunately, your reputation again is suffering from poorly thought out rumors. The Daily Prophet was full of speculation as to the nature of the Dark Rituals you were using to subjugate your wives.”

“Oh bloody hell.” I shook my head. “Can't you do anything about these stupid rumors?”

The old man simply shrugged. “I can try...”

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Evidently a pelvis is more complicated to regrow than the bones in your arm. I wouldn't have thought so; I mean the hand alone... Still I was stuck in that bed for two days while that vile potion did its work.

Meanwhile I had four extremely distraught witches visiting me whenever Poppy would let them on the ward, sometimes alone, other times in groups of two or three or all four.

Their stories poured out. While I had no memories of our four day rut beyond the faint and fading dream like memories I woke with, the ladies were fully conscious for the entire time, conscious, but out of control. They just wouldn't stop apologizing.

So I responded with bad jokes as soon as the skelgrow let me.

“I should have known the rest of you were jealous of Millie almost killing me with sex, so you all had to try yourselves.”

“Harry!” Susan said, shocked that I would joke about that.

“Probably getting ready to hire yourselves out... I even know your new slogan **Carnal Assassins, Look Sexy, Will Travel.**”

A small grin crossed Mari's lips. “That would look good on a business card.”

“Mari!” Susan and Romilda chorused.

“Harry, you don't have to make us laugh.” Millie said. “You're hurt and we are the ones that hurt you.”

“You didn't do it on purpose Millie. Besides, think of all the guilt points I've racked up here. I can be stupid all I want and none of you can yell at me for months.” I grinned.

“I'm afraid I'm going to have to insist you refrain from the intentional stupidity Mr. Potter,” Poppy Pomfrey said as she bustled up to my bed side and began waving her wand in a very complex pattern over my groin. “While your wives may not be able to shout at you for it, I have noticed that whenever you are intentionally stupid you tend to end up on my ward distracting me from caring for students who are truly ill.” Some glowing symbols appeared over my body. “Very good Mr. Potter, the Skelgrow had done its job. Your pelvis is as good as new.”

“So I can go?” I asked hopefully.

“As much as we might both enjoy that, sadly no.” The healer waved her wand and I was flipped onto my stomach. “Now I can begin working on your back. First I have to cancel the numbing charm...” My back seemingly lit on fire. “Luckily, this potion is applied topically.” And the sadistic witch sprayed my back with something that smelled of petrol and which seemed to cause the flames to burn hotter. “You need to remain face down for the next twenty hours or so Mr. Potter. Please don't make me restrain you, as that would spoil my fun.”

My wives watched the healer return to her office, and then Susan started crying again. “Harry, I'm sorry, I didn't mean...”

“So, you're the tiger then?” I asked as lightly as I could while trying to ignore the few billion ants on my back. “Who's the biter?”

“Me,” Mari said hanging her head. “I'm sorry Harry.”

“Don't be. What little I recall of it was a lot of fun. According to the Headmaster it won't happen again for a year, so we can make sure to take a few precautions.” I winced at a spasm in my back. When I opened my eyes again I could see that the girls were all near tears. Trying for another joke I

spoke again. "So... How do I taste Mari?"

That did it, any hint of tears vanished from my elder wife's eyes, and danger glinted in them. She reached out and pushed her index finger into my back causing me to gasp in pain. "Quite like an old shoe... You know the type, broken and torn and not really any good for anything anymore, but you keep it around for sentimental reasons."

Once I could breathe again I reminded myself to never, ever make Marietta angry.

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Upon leaving the Hospital wing I discovered that the whispers and pointed silences that seemed to occur when ever I entered a room had begun again in full force. Ron and Neville had stopped by to let me know that they believed me and that they thought near death by sex was a hilarious concept.

"I never really believed that it was possible for anyone to die from too much sex," Neville said in his most serious tone. "But I had always hoped it was. You know Harry, it's hardly fair that most of us barely get enough affection to merit an increased heart rate while you are getting enough to nearly die. Not fair at all.

"Yeah," Ron agreed. "When I tell my kids the story, I'm not going to tell them it was with your wives though."

"Excuse me? Tell your kids?" I asked.

"Well, sure," he said jerking his thumb toward his chest. "Weasley here. The smallest Weasley family I've ever heard of is one with four kids. When my sons are old enough I'll tell them the story of how my best mate Harry Potter broke his pelvis subduing an entire Veela enclave and that the local village put up a statue to commemorate the event. Wives are boring, Veela are hot."

Funny, funny guys I hung out with... You know I wonder if Ron carried through with his threat to tell the story of Harry Potter and the Veelas. I wish I could ask him.

Romilda joined in the rotation for spending the night with me.

That sounded bad. There wasn't really a 'rotation'. In fact I never did learn how they decided amongst themselves who would sleep with me. Pretty much every time I thought I had cracked their pattern, they switched up on me.

Anyway Romi started sleeping with me. Waiting for her sixteenth birthday seemed a bit silly following the events of the end of January.

In mid February my wives were tested by Madam Pomfrey. Despite their 'aggressive fertility' as the Headmaster put it, and what can only be described as my 'best efforts' none of my wives conceived.

Which was ok. None of them wanted to be carrying a child while still at Hogwarts. It was good that they hadn't caught.

My bed was fairly crowded that night with four sobbing women.

. =====oooOOOooo=====

Winter gave way to spring. The weather improved but the whispers and the rumors did not.

The high point of May was the news that Amelia Bones' will was finally finished in probate. The family money was long gone, but Susan received a trunk holding a few family mementos. The five of us gathered in the sitting room of our apartment when Susan opened the trunk with trembling hands.

The contents of the trunk were at first glance the paltry remnants of a bankrupt house; a few items of china, a partial silver setting, Susan's mother's wedding gown. Then she found Amelia's badge and my pretty 'Puff broke down in tears. I held her while she cried herself numb.

Once she had composed herself, Susan returned to her examination of her family's treasure. A few more artifacts of her Aunt's time as an Auror remained. A metallic baton and surprisingly several sets of blood red leather body armor.

"Is that what Aurors wear under their robes?" I asked.

"Well, not every day," Susan said lifting one of the sets up to drape across her body. "If they knew they were going to find trouble or things like that." Her eyes lost focus. "Auntie Amelia came up through the ranks, the Hard Way, she always said. She said she had to be twice as good as a man to get half the recognition."

"Try it on." Millie suggested. "That way we can see what a young Auror Bones might have looked like.

Susan blushed and looked at me. "If you want to Sue," I said.

She smiled a bit and scooped up one entire set of the body armor and went to the girl's common bedroom, only to return a few moments later.

I don't know what I expected, but this wasn't it. I've seen leather clothing before, mostly in the Muggle world but some Wizarding versions. Amelia Bones' body armor wasn't for looking sexy, though Susan did. No, that body armor was for looking like someone about to commit major property damage and make you like it. It wasn't armor like the various suits of armor around the castle which seemed to say 'look at me, I'm an antique.' The blood red leather gear said 'I'm going to hurt you and everyone you know if you upset me.'

"You've worn that before." Mari said, her mouth open in amazement as she watched Sue move.

"Auntie Amelia had a set made for me when my protective detail started training me." Sue said pulling her left glove tight. "And last year I was the same size she was so I started wearing hers."

"Everyone in Slytherin house was sure that the Bones line had gone soft when you were sorted into Hufflepuff." Millie said. "You were never Soft Susie, were you?"

Susan smiled again. "The best way to hide is to have everyone underestimate you. Besides," her smile got larger, "Auntie Amelia *was* a bit disappointed that I didn't follow her into Slytherin or my Dad into Ravenclaw, but she always said that being a Hard Case didn't mean you couldn't be a team player."

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We woke on one day in late May to find the castle was under lockdown. Meals were delivered to the Dorms, including our apartment. The Staff were patrolling the halls and the guardian portraits refused to allow anyone out of their dorms.

Lacking anything else to do, Mari organized a study session. This was how we spent our time until finally at 2 pm Professor McGonagall was at our door.

"The Headmaster wishes to speak with you Mr. Potter."

"What's happened Professor? Is it Voldemort?"

The woman flinched at the forbidden name. "Never you mind about that Mr. Potter. Take this pass and present yourself to the Headmaster." She said handing me a large blue sheet of parchment. "The password is 'Bloodpop'."

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Making my way to the Headmaster's office was... odd. I don't think that I'd ever seen the halls of Hogwarts quite so empty. The only living person I saw on my trek across the castle was Professor Flitwick, who insisted on inspecting my pass. My first and only hall pass during my Hogwarts career.

I specified 'living person' because the ghosts were everywhere. I'd heard that there were far more ghosts than we normally see, but this was the first evidence I'd ever seen of it. Nearly Headless Nick stopped me outside the Headmaster's office to inspect my pass again.

"My apologies Mr. Potter, but the Headmaster was most insistent that we keep the students contained and safe today." The old caviler said as he drifted off to complete his patrol.

The only thing going through my mind for the entire trip was what the hell is going on?

The Gargoyle lifted an eyebrow while waiting for me to give him the password. There was just something about that snooty bit of stonework. "Bloodpop."

The statue slowly moved out of the way while never losing its expression of exasperation. I made my way up the moving staircase to the door and knocked.

"Come in Harry," the old man called from his desk. "I'll be with you in just a moment, I need to complete this thought."

I entered and took my place standing before the old man's desk. He continued with the document he was writing, so I had a chance to observe the man. He appeared oddly... exhilarated. Something was going on, and hopefully I was about to find out what.

I watched as he signed his name with more than a little flourish, then look up at me. "Ah, Harry. Welcome. It has been a trying day, but a great day. Greater than you might imagine."

"What has happened Professor?" I asked.

"There was a massive battle. Tom marshaled his Death Eaters against the Ministry. Hundreds died. Unfortunately Harry, your absence has been taken as evidence that you have joined Voldemort."

"What? Did you tell the Ministry that I was here under lockdown?" I couldn't believe this. Why was this happening to me?

"Sadly, once the bureaucracy gets an idea in its collective mind, there is no changing it."

"But Professor, surely you can do something," I was panicking, what could I do? "I mean, you're Albus Dumbledore!"

The old man's brow furrowed as if he were trying to make a decision... He drew his wand and with his left hand removed an empty candy dish from a drawer in his desk. "Portus!" The candy dish glowed blue for a moment.

"Harry," he said, "I think you're ready to find out some things. It's a tribute to your maturity I'm allowing this. Take this portkey back to your apartments. It will activate automatically at precisely 3 pm. On the other side you will learn some very important things, things that are likely to save your life. When you are satisfied, the portkey will return you to your apartments, that the return activation phrase is 'I Understand'."

accepted the candy dish. "Thank you sir."

"No Harry, thank you. Thank you for your acceptance of an old man's mistakes. I hope what you will learn today will give you a measure of peace."

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The portkey deposited me in the center of a richly appointed bedroom, where I found a man in what appeared to be Muggle clothing rushing about packing a large trunk.

"Harry!" the man greeted me happily when he spotted me. "So glad you could make it. I begged Dumbledore for the chance to thank you personally and to apologize for everything."

Well, that didn't make any sense. I regarded the smiling man. He was tall, and appeared to be somewhere in that middle age thing that adult wizards do where they don't appear to age at all between 40 and 100. Jet black hair, with just a hint of silver beginning at the temples, he was dressed in khaki cargo shorts and an unbuttoned blue and red Hawaiian shirt over a bright yellow tee-shirt bearing the words '**You say Dark Wizard... I say Grumpy Visionary**' emblazoned on the front with an animated cartoon wizard waving his wand about. He seemed somewhat familiar, but...

My eyes widened when I made the connection and I drew my wand. "Hello Tom," I said extending my wand ready to cast if he made a false move.

Tom Riddle appeared to be slightly confused by my actions but calmly raised his hands in a show of surrender. "Should I assume from your actions that Dumbledore hasn't explained things to you?"

"What are you talking about?" I demanded.

Riddle rolled his eyes. "Damn him." The man who killed my parents and who had made something of a career trying to kill me snapped the fingers of his left hand.

My wand vanished from my hand and reappeared in his. Riddle made much of a show of lowering his hands and placing my wand on the table. "Harry, sit down. We need to talk."

He had disarmed me like I was nothing. I'd never seen power like that before. I sat down at the chair he indicated. "What's with the glamour?" I asked.

The man appeared to be confused for a moment, then understanding flashed across his face. "Oh, you mean this." He gestured at his face. "No glamour Harry, this is the real me."

"But..."

"That bastard Dumbledore was supposed to have already explained all this to you. Typical he sloughs it off to me. The long and the short of it is everything you know is wrong."

I just stared at him.

He sighed. "Alright, let's do it this way." He drew his wand, "I, Tom Marvolo Riddle, swear upon my life and my magic that I will not lie to Harry James Potter about any situation we share an interest in. I will not omit any information that he needs to know, though I reserve the right to maintain my own privacy, but not to the extent that I would endanger Potter or his family."

The pulse of magic that sealed his vow almost blinded me.

"Harry, let's start at the beginning, shall we? Right. Most importantly, as far as you and I are concerned, there is no Albus Dumbledore."

"What?"

"Yeah, shocked me too when Gellert told me," The older wizard smiled. "The man we all know as Albus Dumbledore is in actually Nicholas Flamel."

I guess the expression on my face was in some way funny, at least Riddle felt the need to laugh at it. "The man achieved immortality in the late 1300s. Since then, he's been looking for something to do."

"Something to do?" I echoed.

"Yes. In his original life he became a philanthropist with the money he made with his stone, and then he became a series of artists from late 1400s through the early 1600s. Then he was the Dark Lord Dilligaf through the 1700s. Somewhere in the early 1800s he decided that he would try to be the hero for a while and he created the Dumbledore personae."

I struggled to figure out how Voldemort was managing to tell me these things without coming into conflict with the magical oath he had taken. The only thing I could come up with was that he was telling me the truth.

A hero needs a villain, but the villain must be credible. Old Nick... Let's just call him Albus had gotten so powerful that no one could stand up to him. This meant he had to amplify the power of another wizard to the point he could appear to actually give Albus a run for his money. So in the late 1800s he approached Gellert Grindelwald with this great plan to expand Gellert's power. Albus claimed to have found a ways to counter the negative effects of the Harem Effect. He lied of course."

You're telling me that Albus Dumbledore created Gellert Grendelwald in order to be the hero that defeated him?" I asked incredulously.

"Quite. Gellert had just finished at Durmstrang, top of his class and he intended to become a curse breaker for Gringotts," Riddle smiled fondly at the memory. "Gellert had a bad case of wanderlust and wanted to see the world, solve the great riddles of the ages and get rich doing it. But before he could really get started he met Dumbledore who spun promises of great power."

I hated to admit it to myself but this was beginning to make sense.

"Before Gellert knew it, Dumbledore had him married off to three women. By the mid 1920, a much more powerful Gellert Grendelwald started making a move for power in Europe."

"But why?" I asked.

"Like you surmised a moment ago, Dumbledore created Gellert as to the villain he defeated. By that time Gellert really had no choice. But what ever else he is, Dumbledore takes care of his pawns. The conflict that Dumbledore forced Gellert to precipitate came to an end in the mid 1940s, and it was time for Dumbledore the Hero to defeat Grendelwald the Villain."

"So... World War II was nothing more than a plot to make Albus Dumbledore look heroic?" I asked incredulously.

"Well, that's a bit of an over simplification, the Muggles had their own political problems as they always do, but Dumbledore's manipulations of the leaders of the various Muggle nations certainly didn't put the conflict off. Dumbledore knew that Gellert had run his course as the villain of the Wizarding world and he started looking for a replacement. After all, Heroes can be around forever, but if the Villains persist as well... That makes the Hero look a bit incompetent."

"And he found you?"

"Exactly. There I was, a minding my own business in Slytherin, wanting nothing more than to make my mark on the world, after my parents were killed at the end of my fourth year." Riddle seemed to notice something about my expression. "What?"

"It's just the way you spoke of your parents just then. It seemed odd when I think about how you spoke about your Muggle father back in my second year."

It seemed that I had confused him. "Your second year? I spoke to you when I was doing my Quirrell impression during your first year, but I didn't see you again until that phony rebirthing ritual Peter and I did at the end of your fourth year."

"Lucius Malfoy gave your diary to Ginny Weasley," I wondered if it was possible that Malfoy had never told Riddle what he had done.

"My diary? I've never kept a diary... well that's not strictly true. When my father introduced me to the works of a few diarists over the summer before I started at Hogwarts, I tried to keep a journal a few times, but it never lasted more than a week before I abandoned it."

"But it held your shade. It claimed to be a magical manifestation of your memories." I searched my memories of the event. "It even showed me how you got 'I am Lord Voldemort' from your name."

A blush spread across Tom Riddle's face. "That whole anagram thing is a result of a charms project third year. I thought that it was really cool and tried to get everyone to call me 'Lord Voldemort.'" He shrugged. "I was thirteen and an idiot. Then that's the name I'm known by when I 'go dark' and I'm stuck with it. Why else do you suppose I put so much energy into making sure that no one used it? Being referred to as 'You Know Who' has been annoying, but it's better than constantly being reminded of what an idiot I was as a boy."

I must have smiled because he kept going.

"Oh, don't feel so superior. Purely out of curiosity I anagrammed your name Harry, and if you're not careful I'll see to it you're known as Pyjamas The Terror."

I winced a bit. After learning where 'I am Lord Voldemort' had come from second year, I in fact had experimented in anagrammizing my own name, though I was more partial to 'Raja Rhyme Protest' than 'Pyjamas'.

"So," Riddle continued. "I never had a diary. That must have been one of Albus' little plots."

That made more sense than I really wanted to admit at the time. "But why?"

Riddle shrugged. "Because I've been his villain for most of forty years, and it's time for a new evil dark lord. That will be you. His tests throughout your school years were to determine if you had the potential to be my replacement, and you quite obviously do, which is why he's tied you to your wives."

"You're in a group marriage too?" I asked.

"Yes," Riddle said, his eyes losing their focus for a moment. "Our wives are how he jacks up our powers to make us credible threats, and they are how he controls us."

"That old bastard has controlled me my entire life, ever since you killed my parents." I stood up from the chair. "I'm going back there and I'm going to let everyone know about him. Then I'm going to find a way to kill you for everything you've done to me, at his orders or not."

"Harry! NO!" Riddle all but screamed as he rose from his own seat. "You... You can't do that..." his voice trailed off, and then he started again.

"Damned oath." For the first time since I had arrived Tom Riddle no longer met my eyes. "When I found out what he was doing back in my 6th year, I challenged him, and he punished me. Don't challenge him Harry, please don't."

I don't know what was shocking me more, everything I had learned about Dumbledore, or the fact that Tom Riddle seemed to be intent on protecting me as best he could. "What happened? What did he do to you?"

"When he bound me to my wives, he... he did something to them. When I challenged him, he killed my Myrtle. But just killing her wasn't enough, no, he bound her soul to the Castle, forever. She has no peace, she has no solace, just unending loss and torment. Possibly worse of all, whatever he did removed her memories of us. Of me and my other wives. Sweet little Myrtle knows that she's forgotten something, something important to her, but she just can't recall what it was. What he did was like ripping my arm off at the shoulder."

I sat back down. His oath ensured that he couldn't lie to me. Dumbledore had killed Myrtle?

Riddle sat as well. "I'm sorry Harry, I really am. Don't challenge Dumbledore, just do what he tells you to do. He's a twisted bastard, but he will reward you for following his instructions," he looked down again as if the memories were almost too much for him to bear. "And punish you in horrible ways if you don't."

I just couldn't let it go. "So you killed my parents on his orders?"

"No," he shook his head. "I didn't kill your parents. I was already gone when they were killed. Originally Dumbledore was to have defeated me, but then you were born and Albus recognized the seeds of great power in you. Albus Dumbledore killed your parents Harry. The first time I ever laid eyes on you was the day Hagrid brought you into the Leaky Cauldron."

The shocks kept coming. "But if that you didn't... How do you explain your Death Eaters?"

"Blood purists all. I'm more than a little ashamed to admit that I enjoy disciplining them. You will be gathering your own grouping in a decade or so. Albus doesn't like there being dark forces he isn't controlling running around. When you become the next 'Dark Lord' you will spend the first decade or so purging those groups that won't join you."

The door to the room opened and a woman entered pulling a wheeled trunk behind her.

"Tom? Are you about ready?" That was when she spotted me. "Oh, I'm sorry."

Long black hair, full lips, her eyes... I rose from my chair again. "Bellatrix!"

Riddle hesitated. "Yes Harry, Bellatrix. Bellatrix Riddle. My wife."

The woman no longer had that look of madness that I had seen at the Ministry of Magic, rather a general sense of calmness that was somehow even more disturbing.

"I do want to apologize for what happened at the Ministry Mr. Potter." Her eyes shone almost as if she were fighting back... tears? "I want you to know, I didn't kill Sirius."

"I saw you!"

"You saw what spell I used."

"A stunner." I responded.

"And what happens when someone is hit with a stunner?" she asked.

"They fall..." it suddenly dawned on me what she was saying.

"Exactly, they fall. There is nothing in a stunner that could have thrown Sirius through the veil." She sat on the arm of Riddle's chair. "Tom and I have discussed it at length. We suspect Dumbledore did it to remove you from Sirius' influence."

I sat back down, still staring at the two of them.

"You're thinking of the age difference, aren't you Harry? After we lost Myrtle, my surviving wives and I went into a long mourning period. Then when I was back in Britain working on my first so called rise to power I met this lovely woman in the late 1960s. We married in 1970" Riddle gazed at her lovingly. "For the first time in a long time, we felt... complete."

"We've been married twenty seven years," Bellatrix noted serenely.

"So, you didn't kill my parents, and Bellatrix didn't kill my Godfather. Was Peter Pettigrew actually the one who betrayed my parents?"

"Yes," Riddle nodded. "Peter happily told Dumbledore where they were. He's Dumbledore's man through and through."

"So, what happens now?"

"Now, I leave Britain, as I suspect that you will soon." He grinned a bit. "I'm dead you see. Permanently this time. I fell to the wand of the Great Albus Dumbledore in the atrium of the Ministry of Magic in front of hundreds of witnesses, but then after it was confirmed that I was very dead, who else but Harry Potter portkeyed in stole my body and vowed vengeance on those who had killed his master."

It was very moving.” Bellatrix said with a smile.

“Who?” I asked.

“Peter under polyjuice. My time is done and now you are the rising Dark Lord. Dumbledore plans for you to disappear for at least a decade and then reemerge to form your empire.”

“Tom?” a new voice called out, and Peter Pettigrew entered the room. “Good, you’re all here. Albus wanted me to remind you that we’re on a schedule here. Tom, you need to leave so that Harry can get back to Hogwarts.”

“I’m going to kill you Pettigrew!”

“Calm down boy,” the short man said shaking his head. “We all serve the same master.”

Riddle stood with a sigh. “One last piece of advice. Chose one of your wives to be your Bellatrix. I know that your first instinct will be to keep them safe, but you cannot know the comfort that your most ardent supporter will give you when you are on your rise to power. Things became so much easier when Bella joined me.”

Riddle and Bellatrix gathered their trunks and were reaching for an oddly out of place tankard, obviously a portkey.

“Wait!” I called. “Before you go, who killed Amelia Bones?”

“Peter did.” Bellatrix said. “Snuck up behind her in his rat form and struck her down like the coward he is.”

And the couple disappeared as the portkey activated.

I turned to find Peter grinning at me. “What are you going to do Potter? Tell everyone that a dead man killed that bitch Bones?”

“Why Peter? Why did you kill her?”

“Dumbledore’s orders.” The rat animagus shrugged. “He needed little Susie to be available to you. It was easy, all I did was...” His voice cut off when the entrails expelling curse hit him in his gut and his belly opened allowing his internal organs to spill out.

There was a shimmer to my left as Susan threw off my father’s cloak and followed her first curse with a dozen more, reducing Peter Pettigrew to a bloody stain on the floor. It wasn’t until she hesitated whole looking for the largest remaining piece of the man to curse next that I managed to pull her into my arms.

It was several minutes before she could speak.

“I’ll be your Bellatrix, Harry. To keep the others safe, I’ll be your Bellatrix until we can deal with Albus Dumbledore.”

“I thought you might be.” I whispered in her ear. “I think we need to get back, if ‘I’ was seen taking Voldemort’s body then Dumbledore must want me arrested or has arranged for an escape.”

I picked up my wand. I was going to kill Albus Dumbledore, just probably not today. “Put the cloak back on Sue. No sense giving up our advantage.”

She wrapped herself in my father’s cloak and disappeared. I felt her wrap her arm around me and the weight of her touching the portkey. “I’m ready Harry.”

“I understand.” I said to activate the magical transport.

. ==ooOoo==

The portkey returned us to our sitting room, which almost appeared to be an abattoir. There was blood everywhere, the furnishings were destroyed, and crucified against one wall was... Romi?

She took my hand through the cloak, reassuring me that she was still there. For the thousandth time that day I asked what the hell had happened. Who had done this to sweet little Romi?

I never heard the petrification spell that hit me, causing me to fall forward oh to my face.

“So ye’ve returned to the scene of your crimes have ye Potter?” McGonagall’s voice was full of hatred. “You were one of mine. How could ye do this? Whaur are the others Potter? Have ye sacrificed them as well? Whaur are their bodies boy? Ye’ll be tellin’ the Headmaster!” I’d never known that McGonagall’s brogue got thicker when she got angry.

My former Head of House levitated me from the floor. I was amazed at Susan’s restraint, if it was me under the cloak, I’d have been hexing anything that moved as soon as the first curse was thrown. I guess that’s why she kept harping about restraint and situational awareness in our sessions together.

As soon as McGonagall’s levitation charm had me upright she had be moving from our former home. I wanted to ask where my girls were, but I was locked in my frozen state. Susan would touch me every so often to let me know she was still there. Unlike earlier in the day, the halls were full of students, all of them staring at me.

Evidently the word was out that 'I' had taken Voldemort's blood and sworn vengeance on those who had struck down my lord. The reactions from the students were an interesting mix, mostly along house lines. The Gryffindors were universally horrified; the Hufflepuffs seemed confused, the Ravenclaws aloof and above it all, while the Slytherins seemed torn between cheering my defeat and capture and rushing to help me.

Outside the Headmaster's office a small crowd had gathered. As the gargoyle slid out of the way Neville Longbottom pushed through the crowd and putting all his weight into it, punched me in the face. "We trusted you," he spat, "and you joined HIM." One of the teachers pushed him away before he could hit me again.

I wished I could blame Neville, but I couldn't. My last sight as I was levitated up the moving stairs facing backwards, was a furious Neville holding a sobbing Hermione Granger.

Dumbledore had fucked me proper, that was for sure.

Once I was in the office, Dumbledore took control of the levitation charm and released me from being petrified before he forced me to sit in the chair before his desk.

"How could you do it Harry? Tell me, how could you do something so evil?"

The old man was shouting at me, from the corner of my eye I could see that the door was still open and I understood. This was for public consumption.

"You were the Chosen One!" he continued, "It was prophesized that you would, destroy Voldemort, not join him. It was you who would save the Wizarding world, not leave it to the Darkness."

That sounded like a line from a bad movie. Dumbledore... Flamel... Whoever the hell he was waved his wand at me and I was bound to the chair in heavy chains.

"Everyone out of my office." He barked. "I will be calling the Minister and the head of the DMLE and we will be interrogating Mr. Potter. Professors, take charge of your students. I will be making a few announcements at the evening meal."

Like good little Robots, like I would have done only the day before, everyone filed out of the office, and the door sealed behind them. Suddenly Dumbledore's anger was gone.

"It is good to see you Mrs. Potter; I was worried something had happened to you."

I'd forgotten that he could see people hidden by cloaks. Recognizing that she wasn't truly hidden, Susan pulled the cloak from her body.

"Where are the rest of my wives Old Man?" I spat from where I was sitting. "Who did that to Romilda?"

"All of your wives are safe Mr. Potter, and that thing in your quarters is not really your youngest wife, rather a rather convincing creation of my own design. I doubt her own mother could tell the difference. No, your wives are safe Mr. Potter, and you will be joining them soon so that your powers can continue to mature."

"You had my Aunt killed." Susan growled.

"I did. She was in my way. It was for the greater good," a smile crossed his lips. "My greater good."

Susan whipped out her wand and froze until a chair materialized behind her and she was suddenly sitting down with a bewildered look on her face.

"Mrs. Potter please. I know you have gotten something of an increase in power since your marriage, but compared to me, you are almost nothing. I am allowing you to keep your wand because you are going to need it to escape in a few moments.

From a drawer in his desk, he removed an old sock, and cast portus on it. "Mr. Potter, I'm sure you will be cursing my name for many years to come, but just remember the price young Tom once paid for disobedience. At a time of my choosing, you will return to Britain, raise an army of darkness that I will destroy and you will be rewarded for good performance. In the mean time, spend time with your wives and raise your family. Mrs. Potter, you will now stun me, free your husband and use this portkey to escape. I warn you, the use of any other magic against me will result in one of your fellow Mrs. Potters dying in a most horrific manner."

. ---ooOoo---

It was an exceptionally long portkey ride, one that ended in darkness and both Susan and I on our knees vomiting violently.

On my knees I noticed first that I was in sand, and then that there was water lapping against my legs.

"Lumos!" Susan cast, and the area around us lit up from the sphere of light on the tip of her wand.

A beach. We were on a beach. Evidently our arrival (or perhaps Susan's Lumos) had been noticed because several people were rushing toward us. Susan and I were mobbed by our three other selves and I tried to hold them all at the same time until the fourth person with them spoke up.

"Welcome home Harry." Tom Riddle said. "Come on; let's get you two into your house. Tomorrow I'll show you all around the island."

"You live here too?" I asked stupidly.

No, I'm the next house down the beach. We're neighbors." The man I had spent my life hating and fearing since I'd first heard of him clapped me on the back. "Don't worry about it Harry, you'll get used to living in paradise.

At least until Dumbledore called me back to hell, was a thought we both left unsaid.

. ---ooOoo---

As it turned out, I never became Dark Lord Potter. Twelve years after we fled Hogwarts, and just two months before I was supposed to return to Britain to begin my rise to power, Albus Dumbledore lost his immortal life to a stupid pointless accident. Evidently his form of immortality meant he wouldn't die of old age, not that he couldn't be killed.

He was in Ottawa Canada for a major meeting of the International Confederation of Wizards, and while on a break from the conference wanted to demonstrate to a younger colleague his mastery of blending in to the Muggle world by taking said colleague to lunch outside the magical quarter of the city.

Following what was reported to be a sumptuous meal; the old man was leading his friend back to the conference when he looked the wrong way crossing the street and stepped in front of an oncoming city bus.

A healer might have saved his life, but the wizard with him panicked and ran from the scene leaving the famous Albus Dumbledore bleeding in the street, and to the mercies of the Muggle medical system. The hospital he was taken to did its level best, but the injuries were just too severe.

Albus Dumbledore passed from this life on August 12 2009, and my family and I were free. Not that we could return to Britain, but we were free.

. ---ooOoo---

Four figures enter my room, and I know I've lost.

I'm not surprised, I always lose. We've been doing this for 142 years now.

"You made us work for it this year Harry," Susan said, her hair still as vibrant as ever, my First Wife's figure still takes my breath away, even after four children and almost a century and a half of marriage.

Millie gestures toward my shelf and I am lifted down with great gentleness. "We aren't kids anymore Harry, we can control ourselves now. You haven't had an injury serious enough to need a healer in twenty years." Millie missed being First Wife by six hours. I don't think she ever really forgave Edgar for beating Michael 'out the shoot' so to speak. Oh she still spoiled him, after all, 'Momma Millie' turned out to be the most maternal of my wives. It might have been because complications with Michael's birth meant that he was the only child of her body.

Marietta pressed her breasts into my back and wrapped her arms around me, licking my left ear. "Come on Stud, you know what we need." Of all my wives, Mari was the most consistently sexual. She enjoyed having children and never skipped a chance to knock my legs out from under me and some howland on top of me accidently naked. She and I had eight children over thirty five years. Just as she did with me, she took it upon herself to ensure that all of our family's children knew how to be students.

"Forget these fossils Harry," Romilda snarked. "I don't blame you from hiding from a bunch of old women, but you've still got me, and I'm still young enough to have urges..." Romi became the firm hand of our family, she somehow became responsible for maintaining discipline in our household. She and I had two children together, but she was the Boss of the whole herd over the years. Me included.

Our fifteen children had children of their own, and so on and so on. I'm told at last count we are the Great Great grandparents of 163. I get briefed on the names whenever they come visiting.

The pheromones are getting to me, as the women peel my clothing from my body, I find I'm rising to the occasion.

I surrender to the situation. The sex is still fantastic, but I'm 159 year old. I don't heal as fast as I used to.

I'm doomed.

But it's a good kind of doomed.

---ooOoo---