

The Younger Potter Twin

By

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Chapter I

July 31, 2010

Luna Weasley and Hermione Weasley met Dora Lupin outside of 12 Grimmauld Place, which was still under a Fidelius Charm. "And where are your husbands today?" the former Tonks asked mildly.

"There's an ill griffin," Luna said simply. "Charles would not duck out of Harry's birthday."

"Ron would," Hermione said darkly. "It's been over twelve years since Ginny died in the Final Battle. I think the only person who blames Harry nearly as much as Harry is Ron."

"It was not Harry's fault. . . ." Luna started, but stopped when Hermione raised her hand.

"Believe me, I know," Hermione said gently. "Ginny should have stayed with you at the Castle, as we had all agreed. We all knew that she would be susceptible to Riddle's Imperius no matter what training she had. Harry had no way of knowing that killing Riddle when he did would not only kill all those with the Dark Mark but Ginny as well."

"She had already stopped Harry from killing Riddle three times and had crippled him physically and emotionally," Tonks pointed out. "He would have had no real choice, even if he had known. Now, stop refighting the war and come in."

"How's Remus doing?" Hermione asked as she did so. It was only four days until the next full moon.

"He's having one of his good days," Tonks said. The years of angry transformations before the Wolfsbane Potion had finally taken their toll on Remus. There was little doubt that one of the transformations would soon kill him, and some days his mind wandered as well.

Even though it was high summer, Harry and Remus sat in Bath chairs near the lit fireplace. "Hi," Harry managed. "Come entertain the invalids with tales of the wide world of magic?"

"As if I weren't talking to the most powerful sorcerer on Earth," Hermione snorted.

"Who can only walk a few dozen steps at a time without magical help," Harry retorted. "I see Ron is being his usual busy self?"

"He is," Hermione admitted.

"Well, since we're all among friends," Harry said, "do you have any news for me? Real news, I mean?"

"What did you ask her to find out?" Remus asked suspiciously.

"If there was any way to send his memories and magical core back in time," Hermione said frankly. "I'm sorry, Harry, but I couldn't find anything even close."

"Why would you do that?" Tonks asked. "Trying to rewrite history?"

"Of course I am," Harry said. "If I could go back to an earlier version of myself, but with my current memories and power, Voldemort could be defeated with less hurt to everyone concerned."

"Oh, Harry," Luna said, shaking her head. "Why would you ask Hermione to look for such a ceremony? Would you expect it in the open records of the Ministry? Or even the Restricted Section of the library at Hogwarts?"

"I am the Transfiguration Professor, and have wide access. . . ."

"Hermione, you know I love you like a sister, but the type of ceremony Harry would need would be considered a very Dark blood ceremony, involving death as well as blood, and those are not going to be available to anyone except old families and in the Department of Mysteries."

"Where you happen to work," Tonks pointed out.

"I am allowed to neither confirm nor deny, as the silly phrase goes," Luna said. "I will merely point out that the Black and Potter families are very old, and you have their books and manuscripts in this very room. And, in fact, if you really wanted to do this, you would need that gold and burgundy book on the third bookcase there, fifth book in on the second shelf."

The other four blinked.

"Obviously, Harry's body must die, as must two others, plus there must be someone to cast the actual spells. The problem with the spell is . . . wait, let me make certain. It has been several years since I read that one." Luna moved over to the shelf and took the hand-written codex off the shelf and flipped through it. "Yes. You cannot go back to your own body. You must go back to a blood relative's body within the last seventy years, whose body was not destroyed by that death. Serious injury is fine as the rejoining will fix most injuries short of dismemberment, but not poisonings or deadly illness, and your core will bind with the one you join, adding the powers to some degree." Luna looked up. "Considering that you are likely the most powerful magic user since Merlin, perhaps of all time, that would make little real difference to you. The first question would be, who could you go back and take over, if you were to do such a thing?"

Hermione opened her mouth to protest, and found that Harry had cast a silencing charm on her without moving. "Hermione, I wouldn't be hurting anyone if I were to take over someone's body who died. My first question would be, 'would this ceremony really work?'"

Hermione felt the hex lift, but only crossed her arms and said "H'mph."

"I have no idea," Luna said. "If this ceremony has been used before, we wouldn't know it. It would certainly kill you and two other people. However, if you went back in time, the time stream could be reset."

"Are you certain?" Hermione put in. "Some theories state there are endlessly diverging universes. If, and that's a big if, if this worked, we might be left with three dead bodies and never know if it worked."

"True," Luna said to Hermione. "Actually, I agree that is the most likely outcome with a jump more than a few years into the past." She turned back to Harry. "Also, Harry, the body you take over is likely to be in a coma for up to three days."

"Damn," Harry said. "I thought for a minute maybe I could take over Dad. But by the time I woke up, Sirius would already be in Azkaban, and even if I could get him cleared on most charges, he might still face some on those murdered Muggles."

"Not to mention the fact that it is barely conceivable that Voldemort might notice you weren't as dead as he thought. You could hardly defend yourself," Remus said. "More to the point, I take it Harry would enter the body almost the same instant that it died?"

"Correct," Luna said.

"The house collapsed when Voldemort was separated by his body, and James' body was crushed. You could be killed almost instantly. The same was true of Lily to a lesser degree. I understand you were pretty battered, which is why you weren't taken to the Dursleys that next morning."

"Damn again," Harry said.

"You know something," Tonks accused her husband.

Remus nodded. "I do. I know who Harry can become if we do this."

"Who?" Hermione demanded.

"Harry, you never bothered with your family history, did you?" Remus asked.

"Not the immediate family, why?"

"Hermione?"

"Not really," Hermione admitted. "I mean, I read about Harry before I met him, but I didn't learn much about his family."

"I could draw this out," Remus said, "but simply put, James was the elder of fraternal twins. James Harold and Henry John."

"Really?" Harry asked.

"Really," Remus said. "Voldemort's first act of large-scale terrorism was an attack on a group of veterans and their families who had fought against Grindelwald in May, 1971, perhaps because it was the first reunion Dumbledore was scheduled to miss. Henry was killed then, along with a few dozen other people plus a dozen Death Eaters. There wouldn't be another massacre like it for years, probably because of the Death Eater casualties." Remus frowned. "I'm not sure, but I think a bit of James' arrogance came from the fact that the only Death Eater captured, Jacob Prince, was caught because James had hit him with a rock he had thrown." Remus grinned. "Apparently, he had played a lot of village cricket and was already a good bowler."

"Prince?" Hermione asked.

Harry caught on. "One of Snape's relatives, I take it?"

"Snape was a Prince?"

"His mother's family," Hermione confirmed.

"That could explain a lot," Remus said.

"Harry, if you did this, you could do a lot of good," Luna said. "But think of what you're asking us to sacrifice. Even assuming we survived in this time stream, our other selves would likely never know you in the alternate time line, because James and Lily would likely not come together as they did, and even if they did, they might not have sex at the particular moment they did when you were conceived. We might not even exist, and even if we all did, the odd series of events that brought Charles and I together would never happen. Our five children would not exist. . . ."

"Five?" Tonks asked.

"You're preggers again?" Harry asked. "Congrats!"

"Thank you," Luna said.

"In 1971, there were . . . four Horcruxes, not six," Harry mused, now mostly ignoring Luna. "I would know where the ring, the locket, and the cup are, and Riddle would still have the diary. He didn't locate Ravenclaw's codex until 1977. I would also have the power to destroy Riddle's body if nothing else at any confrontation. You would be risking your alternate selves, but according to Hermione there's a good chance your current time lines would continue."

"And who would die with you here, ending those time lines?" Hermione asked.

"I would, of course," Remus said simply. "I probably wouldn't last more than a few more moons anyway." He turned to Harry. "If we do this, you need to memorize the Wolfsbane Potion." Harry nodded. It had been the transformations of the 1980s and early 1990s, when Lupin had been alone, depressed, and angry, which had done the most damage to his body as well as to his spirit. His anger had turned on himself each month, and his body had never recovered.

"And I wouldn't want to live without these two," Tonks said simply. "You two have lives outside of these two, and I've given my life to them for over ten years. If this time line continues, you'd be hurting your families. Mine is dead. My lovers would be dead."

"Remus will be dead in less than a year," Harry said. "I've only lived as long as I have because of my raw power. I doubt I'll last more than three. Even Madam Pomfrey doubts I'll make a full three more years."

Hermione and Luna looked at each other, three suspicions they shared now confirmed. "I am always difficult to track down," Luna pointed out. "I would have lunch with Hermione, walk here while invisible, do the ceremony, and then, if this time-line continues, walk back to my alibi." Ron and Hermione had a small house nearby, which Ron, a coach for the Cannons, used during the season and where Hermione lived during the summer holidays.

"How would you pull it off?" Hermione asked Harry. "At the other end, IF this worked?"

"I would imagine there would be the residue of Dark magic all over Henry," Harry said, to which Luna nodded. "I would claim massive amnesia, and use my Occlumency to block any memory probes."

"You're going to do this, aren't you?" Hermione stated, knowing her friends and knowing she would end up going along as she almost always did. Harry and Remus nodded, and then Tonks did as well.

She pulled out a notebook. "Then we'd best decide what has to be done before you three commit suicide. Let's start with this time line and then think about what Henry here has to know in the other. First, let's talk about wills. . . ."

That night, as Harry sat in his bed memorizing the formula for Wolfsbane, Dobby popped into the bedroom. "Mister Harry?"

"Yes, Dobby?"

"Youse is really going back to 1971?"

"I guess I shouldn't be surprised you heard," Harry admitted.

"May Dobby make a request, Mister Harry?"

"Of course," Harry said.

"Dobby was young elfling, just starting to serve his Mistress, Mistress Jordan. Mistress died in the Massacre. Dobby therefore had to go to a family member. Dobby first asked Mister Harry's grandfather, who asked family, but none wanted extra elf. Then Dobby asked four other branches of family before nasty Master took Dobby in."

"Lucius, you mean."

Dobby shook his head. "Master Malfoy's father."

"Oh, of course."

"If Mister Harry utters a Call when he awakens, Dobby will be called to his true Master. Dobby would have to be bonded to Master Henry, but for you, Mister Harry, Dobby would be happy as loved slave."

"Teach me the Call," Harry said.

Harry learned a bit about his family the next day. His family had been strong in the fight against Grindelwald. Henry's grandfather and father had both fought. His father's first wife had been killed in 1942, soon after their marriage. Harold John had remarried in 1955 and his second wife had the twins on May 1, 1960. Harold's mother, younger sister, and young daughter had been killed in the Massacre, and his father, Henry James, was seriously injured, dying in August, 1971. Henry James had been head of the MLES at the time of the Massacre, and there was little doubt he had been a primary target of the attack. Harold was out of politics, nursing the family fortune.

Harry did know that the Potters were a very old family, directly descended in the male line, Harry had already known, from Godric Gryffindor, although many thought they had merely married into the family. They tended to marry for love, but also tended to marry witches from the younger Pure-Blood families, especially from the commercial classes, making the Potters one of the richest magical families in Europe. Harry knew that part, at least, from taking over the family fortune in 1997.

Unlike the Malfoys, the Potters did not flaunt their wealth or status. At times, however, they did tend to flaunt their magical or political power. James, it appeared, was rather more guilty than most, in part because of his well-aimed stone. Remus had also wondered if James might not have been over-spoiled in the months leading up to his going to Hogwarts because he had lost both a twin brother and a younger sister, as well as an aunt and grandmother.

They had arranged the ritual for noon on August 3. Ron was with the Cannons, and the three Granger children were playing in the small back garden of the London townhouse. Hermione looked at them, and wondered if she had done the right thing by not trying to stop Harry.

'Right,' she told herself. 'When did I ever really STOP Harry? The most I could ever do was get him to slow down, which I managed to do a bit this time.' At that moment, 12:12, Hermione felt something tear at her magic a bit, as well as at her very being.

The ceremony must have been completed, she knew. Harry, the only man she had loved (and in every sense) other than her husband, was gone from this world. This time line would continue, and she wouldn't know until she entered 'the next great adventure' if he had been really successful or not.

Six minutes later, Luna returned to the town house. The pair merely sat and looked at each other for a moment. Hermione could not bring herself to speak.

Finally, Luna said, "To all appearances, it worked, but of course we shall not know for certain in this lifetime. Harry gave me Voldemort's wand to use, and then I snapped it into three pieces. The spell will be untraceable, both in content and in caster. No doubt it will be blamed on a surviving unMarked Death Eater or sympathizer. So long as no one is directly accused, however, there is no need for us to speak of this ever again."

Hermione nodded. "I agree."

The two sat there, sad, until Luna said, "While I did the spell correctly, I wonder if I should have told Harry there was a thirty-three percent chance he would end up inside his aunt rather than his uncle."

Hermione looked at her best friend and managed a smile.

The 'murders' of the Lupins and the great Harry Potter were indeed attributed to some pro-Death Eater faction, although none ever claimed direct responsibility.

Dobby came to Luna and Charlie's service. They named their fifth son Henry John. Charlie refused to allow their only daughter, born two years later, to be named Nymphadora. Charlie, who had taken over Hagrid's position as Care of Magical Creature Professor at Hogwarts, used the share of the Black fortune Harry left to him to fund research into studying how to apply Muggle veterinarian techniques to magical creatures. Luna used part of her share to finally prove the existence of Crumple-Horned Snorkacks.

The Weasley twins used their share to bring out a line of Muggle pranks, dedicated to their late partner and backer, as well as appropriate products dedicated to Remus and Tonks.

Hermione used her share to fund continued research for find a cure for lycanthropy, and for a yearly reward for the best students taking Defense at Hogwarts. Ron, to her disgust, bought several collectable old racing brooms, the final card he needed for his 'Series E' chocolate frog collection (in circulation 1982-1998), and a large supply of the most expensive fire whiskey -- intending to celebrate the death of Harry Potter each night with half a shot.

Ron and Hermione divorced less than a year after Harry's death. Ron upped his toast to a full shot.

The parts of the Potter Trust and Black fortunes which could not be split apart was made into the Potter/Black Educational Trust. There were many indigent magical people, living much as the Gaunts had the century before, surviving only on their magic. This would allow them the chance to study at Hogwarts. Hermione, Luna, Charlie, and even the twins were named officers of the new Trust -- Ron was not.

In short, life went on.

Friday, May 7, 1971

"I'm sorry, Mister Potter, but that's all I can tell you."

Harry managed not to show any sign of being awake, but he wondered who was talking to him.

"I don't understand. What's wrong with my son?"

'Dad?' Harry thought, and then he remembered what Luna had tried to do. This would be his grandfather, or possibly his great grandfather. Then Harry remembered they would now be his father and grandfather respectively.

"As strange as it may sound, it looks as if he survived a Killing Curse."

"How is that possible?"

"It may have been mis-cast, or perhaps the caster had second thoughts. Remember, you really have to want to kill for the curse to work," the healer said. "That curse scar on his forehead came from something unknown and he showed signs of being hit by a powerful Dark curse, and that seems the most likely."

'Shit,' Harry thought, 'the bloody scar came with me.' Since it had faded entirely away within six years of Voldemort's death, he supposed it made some sense that it would again exist now that he was sharing time with Voldemort again.

"But why can't anyone touch him other than that bloody elf?"

"Be glad the elf showed up," the healer said. "Your son needed plenty of fluids and needed to be cleaned up. He could have died already without that help, and he would certainly die in a few more days without that help. As for why no one else could touch him, I can't say."

'I guess I managed to unconsciously Call Dobby,' Harry thought. 'And I forgot to cancel with wards I developed for myself.' These 'switched on' automatically whenever Harry was asleep or

unconscious, and kept him from being attacked by anyone he had not keyed to the wards. He and Hermione had developed them after the ninth assassination attempt following Voldemort's death. By then, the Pure-Bloods knew they could not successfully kill Harry when he was awake, and they had managed three attacks when he was asleep.

"So can't you tell me anything more?" Harold Potter pleaded.

"Not until he wakes up."

Harry opened his eyes, and was pleased to see that unlike his old self or his father-now-brother, he did not need glasses. "Hello?" he managed to croak.

"Well hello there," the healer said, walking over. He waved his wand and said, "The raw magic that was surging is gone and you seem fine."

"Head hurts," Harry muttered.

"Yes, you seem to have taken a nasty curse of some kind," the healer said. "What's the last thing you remember?"

Harry frowned. "I . . . I can't seem to remember anything." He looked over at the other figure in the room. "Did I hear right? Are you my father?"

Harold and the healer looked at each other, and the healer called in the specialists.

Chapter II

The next two days were very uncomfortable for Harry, as he suffered being questioned, poked, and prodded. He used his Occlumency more than he had in years and managed to convince the healers that his personal memory was gone.

Dobby was mostly kept away, although the little elf showed his loyalty by continuing to try to be near his new master. Finally, Harold accepted that his 11 year old son had his own elf and managed to convince Dobby to go to Potter Manor in Godric's Hollow to wait for his young Master.

Harry did meet his 'mother', Mary Jordan Potter, as well as James. ('Jamie' to the family, just as Henry had been called 'Harry'). Harold's father made a brief appearance in a Bath chair, obviously crippled and dying from the hexing he took in the attack. Harry noted that all four Potter males had the same hair and similar features and builds. Henry James, Harold, and James all had the same light hazel eyes. Henry had his mother's brilliant blue eyes. Harry noted with a slight smirk that Mary had strawberry blonde hair. Obviously, their obsessions with redheads was not confined to James and Harry.

Harry was told Saturday afternoon that he had one more person to meet the next morning, and then the healers would decide if he could go home.

Sunday, May 9, 1971

Harry had been pleased to see that Madam Pomfrey, just out of her master training courses, was the healer on Sunday duty. He had a pleasant half hour talking with her, as St. Mungo's had emptied out from those injured in the Massacre.

Harry's last examiner showed up a little after 9:00 that morning, and it was Albus Dumbledore. Harry studied the canny sorcerer as he introduced himself. He of course had known Dumbledore while in his 150s, and had seen him as he was at 100 in Riddle's diary. Then, Dumbledore had still looked to be in his early fifties, his dark red hair just starting to silver. The Dumbledore of the 1990s was completely silver-haired.

The Dumbledore of 1971 was mostly silver-haired, with some faded red still detectable in the bright morning light. "Good morning, Mister Potter," he said taking a seat. "I am Albus Dumbledore. From what I've been told, you've never heard of me."

Harry pushed the Legilimency probe away, to the surprise of Dumbledore but having no choice, even if he had wanted to put this off for months at the least. Furthering the Headmaster's shock, Harry raised his hand and flicked it, creating an area of privacy around them.

"What. . . ."

"Hello, Albus, it's nice to see you."

"Who . . . who are you?" Dumbledore demanded, trying and failing to stand, as Harry had stuck him

to his chair.

"I need you to swear an Unbreakable Oath not to reveal what I tell you without my permission," Harry said. "If you prefer not to, I'll simply Obliviate you, plant the idea in your head that you examined me, and send you on your merry way."

Dumbledore thundered, "I am Albus Dumbledore. . . ."

Harry cut him off, "You are an interfering old fart who tries to play chess with people's lives and who played with me too often. I will swear I am not a Dark Sorcerer, if that's what you're afraid of. Now decide."

"Who are you?"

"Ob. . . ."

Dumbledore held his hand up, and then made his Oath.

"I am Harry Potter," Harry said.

"Impossible! No eleven year old. . . ."

"I am Harry James Potter, not Henry John Potter."

"You're trying to tell me you're the Harry Potter I went to Hogwarts with?"

Harry smiled. "No, I'm the Harry Potter who was born at the end of July in 1980, who got this scar not a few days ago but on Halloween, 1981, when Voldemort tried to kill me after killing my father, James Potter, and my mother. Instead, it destroyed Voldemort's body but not his magic or his essence. You made a unilateral decision which put me in a loveless Muggle home where I was then abused for ten years. Skipping over a lot of now- alternate history, you were murdered in 1997 by an agent of Voldemort's who was pretending to be your spy. I and some friends managed to do what you failed to do. I killed Voldemort in June, 1998, as I had been prophized to in 1980, but at a very high cost, including to me, physically and emotionally. Some other friends and I performed a fairly Dark ceremony in 2010, causing my death and the willing deaths of two of the three participants -- one a dying man and the other our mutual lover. I don't know if that future is erased now, or if I'm in an alternate time line, although I believe the second to be the most likely. I was sent back to my uncle Henry's body, because he was killed in the Massacre."

Dumbledore shook his head.

"I can still Obliviate you," Harry offered.

"What . . . what are your intentions?" Dumbledore asked.

"To stop Voldemort with less cost to society this time," Harry said simply. "Maybe this time, I'll survive with fewer injuries, the chance to find love, and hopefully with less fame this time. I don't want to end up in your position, either having to be so active that I draw every political attack possible, or badly playing chess with people's lives behind the scenes."

Dumbledore winced.

"As for what I can do for you now, I can give you the names of all the Death Eaters I know of, although I'm sure you'll point out at annoying length that the ones who are too young to have already joined, or who haven't been born, are totally innocent and that those wearing the Dark Mark. . . ."

"The what?"

Harry rolled his eyes and explained the Dark Mark, before going on in a dry tone of voice, "Now that you tried to derail me, the problem is you always look for the good in people. That's a good thing in the Headmaster, but it's dangerous in a war leader. Voldemort is a terrorist. You or I -- well, I could if my body matched my power -- are about the only two people in Europe who could stand up to him one on one. But his thugs are just that. Over-bred thugs for the most part, but thugs. Don't let him really scare people. By 1975, people started calling him 'He- Who-Must-Not-Be-Named' or 'You-Know-Who'. People started rolling over and dying or giving him payoffs because they were afraid of his reputation."

Dumbledore still looked like there were a dozen different directions he needed to go in. Harry took care of some of his doubts by making his own Unbreakable Oath -- that he had no desire to become a Dark Sorcerer and that, if he was ever told by people he trusted he was heading in that direction, he would change or leave society.

Dumbledore was relieved, but still torn.

"Look in that drawer when you go," Harry said, gesturing at the nightstand just outside the privacy zone he had established. "You'll find the names I told you about, and congratulations."

"For what?"

"You'll be famous for one more thing . . . because I also wrote the directions to something called the Wolfsbane Potion, which a large team of Potion Masters and Alchemists, including yourself and the Flamels, worked on from the mid-1970s through the late 1980s. Granted, you'll need to have it tested independently, but you'll need it for a new student in the autumn . . . won't you?"

"How. . . ?" Dumbledore frowned, and then he realized what this potion must be connected with. "Oh, of course. You are from the future."

"2010," Harry confirmed. "You or Professor Slughorn will need to brew it. It's not a cure, but it does keep werewolves from mutilating themselves, and the ones who hate the condition most, the ones who feel the most guilt over something they can't control, those are the ones who hurt themselves the most. And that especially will include Remus, while werewolves like Greyback, who revel in the bloody nature of the werewolf, thrive. By the time I get full control of my magical core, which should be in well under a year, hopefully much less, I may be able to help Remus directly, but I'm not certain."

"Then thank you," Dumbledore said. "We don't have a great deal of time. Is there anything else you can tell me today?"

"Riddle plans on making six Horcruxes, and to date he has made four. I have no idea where one is right now, and you can only easily get to one other. The location and a strong warning are in the notes. We should destroy it together. Grab it now and hide it."

Dumbledore thought hard for over a minute. Finally he nodded. "I find you mentally competent,

and will suggest your family accept your amnesia and try to build new personal relationships with you."

"Thank you, Headmaster."

Dumbledore stood. "And Riddle?"

"Should be down-sizing his attacks for more than two years, or at least that's what he did last time. He might have hundreds of supporters around Europe, but he only semi-trusts his Marked followers. He only had between thirty and forty Marked Death Eaters and he lost what? twelve or so? He needs to rebuild. Still, there will be a lot of strong-arm tactics used on those potential recruits. It's all in the notes."

"Then I shall see you on the First of September, if not before." Dumbledore left, a very confused and thoughtful man.

Harry looked into the nearest corner. "Did you get all of that, Great-Grandfather?"

Henry James faded into view. "How did you know?" he asked. "I can even stay hidden from Albus."

"I'm more powerful than Albus," Harry said. "I couldn't see your aura, as he could without that spell, but I did detect the actual spell. Maybe your spell was weaker than normal, since it had to cover the bath chair."

"Are you going to Obliviate me?" the injured man demanded.

"Do I need to?"

Henry James looked at Harry thoughtfully. "I'm dying, aren't I?"

"Sometime in August, I believe, sir," Harry answered sadly.

"And Henry was really dead when you took over his body?"

Harry nodded. "It wouldn't work on someone who was torn apart or dying of a long-term disease or anything like poison, but yes, he was dead."

"Did I understand that Albus is letting a werewolf into Hogwarts?"

"He's a very good man, or will become one," Harry said. "The Potion will make it easier for him and safer for everyone else."

"Fair enough. So, you're really James' son. Who did he marry, if you don't mind my asking?"

"A Muggle-born redhead who was brilliant at Charms and Potions," Harry answered.

"Technically, you are now a Pure-Blood," Henry James pointed out. "That might make things a bit easier for you. I probably can't teach you much, at least not by showing you. Still, I can tell you a great deal."

"I would appreciate that, Great-Grandfather." Harry raised his hand to stave off a protest. "I know,

from now on, just Grandfather. Constant Vigilance and all that."

"You knew Alastor?"

"I did. He was a good man. He was killed in 1997."

"He and I fought when we were at school. I was the most Gryffindor of the Gryffindors, and he was the most Slytherin of the Snakes. We fought, but it was all clean competition, and we went through auror training together, and were partners for almost twelve years in the late Thirties and through the war." Henry James smiled. "Let me tell you things about the Potter family you might not have been able to learn, Harry."

As May faded towards June, Jamie Potter was a very confused young lad. Before the attack, he had been the slightly spoiled, brilliant, favored son of a fairly prominent and very wealthy family. Harry had always been in his shadow, smart but not brilliant, active but not athletic, shy not outgoing as Jamie was. Jamie was glad his brother had survived an under-powered Killing Curse (having lost their sister, aunt, and grandmother, Jamie knew that losing both his siblings would have been worse), but this seemed to earn him nearly as much interest as Jamie's knocking out a 'Death Eater' with a well-thrown stone to the temple.

Worse, the family dynamics had changed a great deal. Grandfather had been the powerful patriarch, but now he was physically becoming a shell although he was still mentally and magically still himself. He was also spending most of his free time with Harry. Father was busier than ever -- that was his way to deal with having lost his mother, sister, and daughter, had nearly lost a son, and would likely soon lose his father. Mother was still crying over her daughter and was also spending more time with Harry than with Jamie.

The biggest change was in Harry. It was as if he was a totally different person. For one thing, Harry could now actually out fly Jamie, which had been far from their previous relationship. Jamie was still more athletic than Harry, but Harry was working out and even running -- soon Harry would surpass Jamie if Jamie didn't start training as well. Harry even had his own elf, although it now mostly cared full time for Grandfather.

Harry had been the butt of many of Jamie's minor pranks over the years. There was now something about Harry that made Jamie realize that while Harry seemed to have a better sense of humor, it might not be a good idea to cross him.

"Aren't you ready yet?" Mrs. Potter asked, sticking her head into Jamie's room.

"Sorry, Mum," Jamie said.

"Are you alright, sweetie?" Mary asked, concerned.

"No," Jamie said in a rare fit of candor.

"Life is very different," Mary agreed. "We all miss your sister. Your brother has changed. Your grandfather was seriously injured, and to be frank, he may not recover. That is going to affect your father, myself, and you. We can let these things embitter us, or we can learn from all these things and become better people."

"I suppose," Jamie said moodily.

"Your brother could have just laid back and whined about how unfair life had treated him," Mary pointed out. "Let's be honest. That would have likely been his reaction before he lost his memory. Now he's determined to take control of his life. That's something most people never learn. You have a lot to be proud of, and so do the rest of us."

"Thanks, Mum," Jamie said.

"Now, do you want to go buy your things for Hogwarts or not?"

Jamie smiled and ran to give his mother a hug.

"Is everyone ready?" Harold asked.

Jamie and Harry nodded while Mary reached for the floo powder.

"Any questions before we go?" Harold asked.

"No, sir," Jamie said. "But. . . ."

"Go on, son," Harold said.

Jamie looked at his family, including Grandfather, sitting in the magical Bath chair off to the side. "I was wondering, would you mind if I went by 'James' instead of 'Jamie'? I don't want everyone at Hogwarts calling me by a nickname."

"If you wish," Harold said. He looked at Harry.

"I like 'Harry'," Harry said. "I suppose I'll have to get used to being called 'Henry' at Hogwarts, but I'll answer to either."

"Then let's go. Who goes first?"

Harry gestured to James. "You're the elder, James."

"Thank you, Henry," James retorted with a bow. He took some floo powder and tossed it into the fire. "The Leaky Cauldron."

Harry endured the snickering James made when Harry landed on his arse. 'Now I remember why I hate the floo,' he thought as they made their way through the pub. He had not used the system for over twelve years. Glancing at Tom, Harry smiled to himself as the barkeep flashed them a toothy smile. Harry hoped the innkeeper would not lose his teeth to a torture session in the late 1970s this time around.

Diagon Alley looked much as Harry had seen it on his first trip, if a bit busier. Their books and potion ingredients had been pre-ordered. They had access to family three compartment magical trunks and a large number of cauldrons and most of the other supplies and equipment they needed.

All they needed, therefore, were their school robes, cloak, and hat, and of course their wands.

'Madam Malkin' turned out to be the mother of the Malkin Harry had dealt with, while the daughter was a senior assistant. Harry was glad there were no Malfoys or other nasty types present as they entered.

Part way through their fittings, however, just such a witch showed up with two sullen boys. "You," Mrs. Black snapped, "behave for once. Come Regulus." Regulus stuck his tongue out at Sirius and then scurried away.

"I'd say something bad about brothers, but seeing the two of you, I guess I'd better not," Sirius said, standing on a platform to get measured.

"If you do, say it to James, here," Harry said with a grin. "He's the older by what? Twelve minutes?"

"Nearly fifteen," James said haughtily. Sirius snickered.

"I remember you from some stupid Ministry functions and such. You're Sirius Black, and if you don't remember us, I'm James Potter and this is my ickle twin, Harry."

Harry waved with his left hand, as his right sleeve was being hemmed.

"I was sorry to hear about your sister and the others," Sirius said.

"Thanks," Harry said.

"What did your parents say?" James asked nastily.

Sirius winced. "Nothing nice, but I'm not them."

"Sorry," James said.

"Did you get your wand yet?" Harry asked.

"Eleven inches, walnut and dragon heartstring," Sirius said. "You two?"

"When we're done here," James said.

"Have you met anyone else from our year?" Harry asked.

"No one new," Sirius said.

"His brain works, but his old memories are wonky since the attack," James said. "And we only know the Ministry families and some of the business crowd."

"The Pure-Blood social scene is so bl . . . err, so boring. My cousin Narcissa is the worst of the girls -- she'll be a First year -- and Rastaban Lestrangle is worse, although he'll actually be a Second. Oh!" Sirius said. "That's right. They did bring along a greasy little tagalong named Snape last week who will be a First year. I forgot about him" He sighed. "I'm glad I've met you two, or else I'd have no one I'd want to talk to."

"Why?" Harry asked. "We'll all be students. What difference does it make if some of us have parents who work at the lower levels of the Ministry, or work for the store instead of own it? If they have magical ancestors or if they don't? Who would you want for your Quidditch keeper? A Pure-Blood who can barely stay on his broom or a Muggle-born with skill and reflexes?" He sniffed. "People who want everything to go by blood are just idiots who have nothing but bloodlines, people like that idiot Voldemort who killed our sister."

"Strong words, wittle boy," came a mocking voice from the doorway. "You'd better watch what you say and who you say it to. Your betters won't like it."

Harry saw it was Bellatrix Black. He glared at her, and she actually had to take three steps back as he restrained his magical aura. It was still powerful enough to raise all the hairs on James and Sirius' necks, as well as the three attendants. Narcissa was nearly in tears while Bellatrix was almost shivering. "Listen to me, girl," Harry said coldly, "if all you believe in is blood, then don't even think about comparing bloodlines with me. And if you want to be the slave of that half-blood bastard who's trying to take over, leave the rest of us out of it."

"Harry!" James hissed.

"What?" Harry asked. "Voldemort is the illegitimate son of a retarded Pure-Blood witch and a Muggle she used a love potion on. His name at Hogwarts was Tom Marvolo Riddle, Head Boy 1944-1945." He shrugged. "He's been running away from that for twenty-five years."

"I don't know who you think you are. . . ." Bellatrix snarled, pulled her wand.

"Enough of that!" Madam Malkin stated from behind Bellatrix, grabbing the wand away. "I've had enough of the lot of you. Out! Take your custom someplace else."

The two Black sisters left the area. Harry wondered if that meant Andromeda, the oldest, was already out on her own. Malkin glared at Harry. "I'm sorry if I cost you some customers," Harry said.

Having heard the noise, Harold and Mary were standing behind Malkin, obviously trying to decide who they should be upset with. Finally, Harold tried, and said, "Harry. . . ."

"I'm sorry Father, but if people forget the truth because they're afraid, it will only make matters worse," Harry said. "I lost my sister, aunt, and grandmother to that lying terrorist, and I refuse to stand down."

"Then I hope your grandfather has been teaching you some way to defend yourself, because that type of person always tries for revenge," Harold said simply.

"He's right," Sirius said. "I think the only sane members of my family are my uncle, my cousin Andromeda, and me, and I'm not too sure about me."

"I am," James said.

Chapter III

"Ah, I am happy to see you and yours," Mister Ollivander said. "Eleven inch beech wood and dragon heartstring, and nine inch ebony and phoenix feather. And I always enjoy matching twins, although I'm sure you two know yourselves to be different enough not to be surprised if your wands are completely different."

"I would hope so," James said.

Ollivander smiled. "My old friend Albus Dumbledore wagered me that one of you could guess at what wands might match. Which of you would like to guess?"

"I'd guess . . . oak and dragon for me and rose wood and unicorn for Harry," James said, half teasingly.

"Eleven inch mahogany and either dragon heartstring or a griffin feather for James, and an eleven inch holly and phoenix feather for me," Harry said convincingly. He knew that Dumbledore had likely set this up as a test, one which Harry was reluctantly going along with.

"I don't use griffin feather," Ollivander said, stunned. "However, I do sometimes trade with a wand maker in North America, and one just came in last week." He went into the back, and when he came back he set six wands in front of James and two in front of Harry.

Harry quickly picked up his holly and phoenix feather wand, and the shop was filled with bright light and phoenix song for several seconds. "Should I try the other?" Harry asked blandly.

Ollivander recovered first. "I have NEVER seen that powerful of a reaction from ANY wand, not even a custom designed one."

Harry merely asked, "Father, may I have a wrist holster for this?" as James tried his wands out.

Needless to say, Harry and James both got wrist holsters, and James matched the mahogany and griffin feather wand.

That night, Harold was telling his father about the trip. "So," Henry asked his son, "what bothered you the most? His confronting the Black girl with the truth, his being able to predict the wands, or the reaction he had with his wand?"

"All three," Harold admitted. "Ignoring the predictions, it was bad enough that James set himself up as he did by knocking out that thug last May. Now Harry has set himself against everything this Voldemort and his hangers-on value." Harold frowned. "Was Voldemort really this Riddle?" Harold had left Hogwarts a few years before Riddle had been a First year Slytherin, and therefore had had no reason to notice the scruffy orphan.

"According to Dumbledore, yes," Henry said. "Young Harry has changed a great deal after his encounter with the Killing Curse. Part of that has to do with something which we will likely never understand, and which I doubt could ever be replicated."

"And what's that?" Harold asked.

"Harry's magical core has somehow changed," Henry answered. "He has become a natural magic user."

"A what?"

"That's what I call it, anyway," Henry said. "That boy already has more control over his magic than I ever had, and more power, too."

Harold's jaw went slack. His father's power was nearly on the order of Dumbledore's.

"Add to that a noble streak as wide as any Potter's, and at least I know this boy will never tempted to be really Dark," Henry went on. "Now, son, I don't think I have much time left on this old Earth." Henry sighed. "I have some ideas I need to talk to you about, and then we can come back to the two remarkable boys you have."

It was almost a week before Harold caught up with his younger (by nearly 15 minutes) son. James was outside, riding his Shooting Star. "Not up for broom riding?" Harold asked.

"Not today," Harry answered.

"Why not?"

Harry looked torn.

"Just spit it out, son," Harold said. "I really want to know."

"I don't know what I used to be like, but I think James must have over-shadowed me," Harry said. "Now, it's like he lost his brother and is competing with a stranger. It doesn't help him, although it does me, that Grandfather seems to favor me over James, just like it helps him but not me that you and to a lesser degree Mum feel the same way about me that James does."

"Oh, Harry," Harold said, realizing that it was true and feeling very guilty about it, "I'm so sorry. . ."

"I understand," Harry said. "You probably feel at times like I'm a cuckoo in the Potter nest, except that you do love me. And I don't think James hates me or anything, let alone you or Mum feeling that way. I think he resents me, but I think he might actually like or at least respect me a bit more than he used to."

"I suppose," Harold said, still feeling his way. "I know this has been difficult for you, son. I hope you can forgive all of us."

"I do, Dad," Harry said, his eleven year-old emotions overtaking him. Harold pulled Harry into an embrace, and Harry luxuriated in feeling paternal love.

Harry blossomed emotionally over June and July, under the love his new father, mother, and grandfather showered on him. Harry was also working out a decent relationship with his brother. The main cloud on the horizon was the deteriorating health of Henry. He was only in his late 80s, solid middle age for a wizard of his power, when he died in early August.

The funeral was large, as Henry Potter had been a popular, powerful, and well-respected member of the Ministry for almost seventy years. Harry didn't know most of the people who came to pay their respects to the family after the services, and only recognized Alastor Moody because he had appeared slightly less damaged than the Moody he knew from the Pensive memories he had seen during his Fourth year -- Harry never would have seen this man in the Moody he had known personally. This Moody was actually in pretty good shape, and cautious rather than paranoid. He had obviously had a very hard war the first time around.

The only people invited to the will reading in mid-August were Harold and Mary, James, Harry, and the childless widow of Harold's younger brother, Charlus, who had died from a German 'buzz-bomb' hitting his house during the closing months of World War II.

Mrs. Potter left after being assured that her pension would continue and that the lease on her house was still a life-lease. Harry and James had been surprised to learn that their grandfather had also left them each a vault ('and contents'). All else, other than some personal mementos, went to Harold.

After they were finished, Harold took his two sons to Gringotts, while Mary went back home. The three Potters took the ride down into the vaults, stopping first at vault 696. "This is your personal vault, James. You and Harry were each left the same amount of Galleons, 90,000 at the moment." James and Harry's eyes went wide. "You get 60,000 more when you turn 17, and the final 60,000 when you turn 20. He also left each of you an invisibility cloak. Well, he bought a new one for you, James, and I'm giving you, Harry, the one he used at work. He may have left each of you other things as well. Now, neither of you are to spend that money without your mother or I knowing about it," Harold warned. "Anything else is yours to do with as you think best. Do you both understand?" James and Harry nodded.

"Now, as I said, this is your vault, James. Ragnok will take you to see yours, Harry."

"Yes, Father." Harry got back into the cart, and was not really surprised to end up walking to vault 687. "Thank you for taking the time to take us yourself, Honored Ragnok," Harry said in Gobbledegook.

Ragnok blinked in surprise.

"I see from your uniform that you are the Head of the Vault Servers," Harry said. Harry knew Ragnok would become the Head of this Branch in his own time line.

"You know a surprising amount about us, Master Potter," Ragnok observed in the same language.

"Unlike most, I honor you as my magical cousins, as truly my family, not my servants," Harry replied as Ragnok opened the door.

"You may be a wizard worth knowing for more than mere personalities," Ragnok agreed. "Remember. . . ."

"I am not to TAKE any money," Harry said. "Could you invest, say, 50,000 for me in Muggle businesses and use 10,000 in your commodities exchange with the Muggles, or is that only for

goblins?"

"It is for goblins, and friends of goblins."

"I shall owl you a list of businesses I wish to invest in," Harry said. "Should you ever find me worthy, I shall send along my permission for the other investments."

Harry glanced around and collected the invisibility cloak. He frowned at the only other thing in the vault, other than the pile of Galleons. Harry lifted the end off the barrel and his eyebrows went up. The small barrel was filled with jewels -- emeralds, rubies, diamonds.

"Your Grandfather had great faith in you, Master Potter," Ragnok said. "We shall watch your investments and let you know if we will allow you in on our most profitable investment."

Harry bowed. Hermione had done some quick research for him, and he had a list of businesses to invest in if he had the chances, which would grow some six times faster in its worst year than the stock market indices and would need only one major adjustment in 1980, when Harry would have to move some money into tech stocks. He might have done a bit better, but wanted to invest 1000 Galleons into Grunnings, just to keep some options open should he ever have to deal with Vernon Dursley.

These investments would earn him entree to automatic investments with the goblins in late 1972, although they had considered him a 'friend' before then.

Once the three Potters were back in the cart, Harold said, "We have three other vaults. One is a security vault, number Seven- eleven. We will visit it sometime after you two turn seventeen. We have a larger treasure vault, number One hundred-and-two. We also have what is called a Trust Vault, number Twenty-one." Harold smiled. "The first ten vaults are special vaults. The next ten belong to the bank itself. Numbers Twenty-one through One hundred are the family trust vaults. Should a family truly die out or fully merge with another with a similar vault, or even go totally bankrupt, the Trust Vault will disappear. The remaining Trust Vaults expand to take up the room, they are not re-let." He turned to Ragnok. "Excuse me. How many Trust Vaults are there now?"

"We have forty-two still active, Mister Potter," Ragnok said as he started the cart. "Twelve others are somewhat inactive, as the families still exist but really live overseas."

"The Potters are one of the oldest families as we are now organized," Harold said. "We have also been more interested in commerce than most, magical and Muggle."

"What about families like the Blacks and the Malfoys?" James asked.

"We came out of the so-called Dark Ages early," Harold said. "The Potters start with Harold the Potterer back in the late-Tenth century. We ran the major magical pottery business in Britain for the next three hundred years, and still have investments in the pottery and porcelain industries, magical and Muggle. The Blacks are about two generations later, and the Malfoys a generation after that."

"Who do the first ten vaults belong to?" Harry asked, although he already knew.

"That's where we are going," Harold said.

James was thrilled to see several security dragons as they made their way into the depths of the system. The cart line ended at a small plain door with six goblin warriors standing guard. Ragnok

talked with them and then gestured to the three Potters.

They walked through the door and into a long natural cavern, a fair sized semi-circle with ten large bronze doors, each with a nine inch clear quartz circle at the center of each door.

"Here we have the Founding Vaults," Ragnok said. "The first is the vault of Merlin himself. Well, it has relics of his, at any rate, according to legend. No one has been allowed access since Godric Gryffindor. The next three belonged to the other great wizards who actually created the start of this system, but which now seem to be inaccessible. The next vault was Salazar Slytherin's, then Roweena Ravenclaw, Helga Hufflepuff, and Godric Gryffindor, the Founders of Hogwarts, in other words. Any blood descendent may ask for access to their vaults as may the Heads of the individual Houses, but none may remove anything original from one of the Four Founders' vaults. The next vault is accessible by the Headmaster of Hogwarts alone. The final vault stores the magical treasures of the British royal family."

"Now, anyone who has the right of access to any of these vaults may ask for access to the others. If you are willing to take 'no' for an answer, there is no penalty. If you ever try to force entry, you will die. Merlin himself guaranteed that, as he came up with the spells, which his successors used here. There are no known actual treasures in any of the vaults, other than Hogwarts' and the Royal Vault. What the Founders' Vaults do have are records from the Founders and other such items."

"We are the senior branch descended from Godric Gryffindor still resident in Britain," Harold said. "We are also descended from Helga Hufflepuff. Your mother is descended from Roweena Ravenclaw, although there are more senior Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw families. You should touch at least those three quartz panels. The guardian will talk with your mind. Do NOT argue it." Harold glared at them, and the sight of their usually mild-mannered father doing so impressed the two boys. "It will likely say either you may be permitted someday or are not currently allowed entry."

James of course wanted to try all ten. He was pleased that he someday would likely have entree to the Gryffindor and Ravenclaw vaults, but would have to behave better if he ever wanted to access to Hufflepuff's. Harry said that he had been granted access to all three of those Founders' Vaults.

In reality, however, Harry had been told he could access any of the vaults other than the royal one. He had the longest conversation with Slytherin's vault, trying ascertain that the diary was not hidden there and to convince it not to allow Tom Riddle access ever again. The vault had replied that Riddle had stored nothing, and that it would have to verify the evil Voldemort was now engaged with, but acknowledged that seemed to be only a formality. It recognized Harry as being a magical heir to Slytherin. As an acknowledged heir to all four Founders, Harry would have access to the Hogwarts vault as well, although he would not be able to touch any of the monies in the first chamber of that vault system.

Neither Harold nor James noticed the shocked look on Ragnok's face, for he had some idea of what the vaults had told Harry. The boy was an Heir to the Founders, to the Vault Makers (as they were known to the Goblins), and even to Merlin.

He was indeed a young wizard to watch.

Two days later, Harold approached Harry with an offer from Dumbledore to stay for a while at Hogwarts, from the next day (Thursday, August 19) through the following Monday at Hogwarts. The excuse Dumbledore had made was that since the castle would be empty except for Dumbledore

and Hagrid (and the elves), Dumbledore would try Legilimency to see if he could recover any of Harry's memories.

Instead, they had other things to do.

That very first night, they went down into the Chamber of Secrets -- Harry surprising Dumbledore by his knowledge of Parseltongue. Despite many gentle inquiries over the rest of Harry's time in the castle, he refused to reveal any of his other powers. Harry's possession of mage sight and his Animagus ability, among others, would be useful, he knew, in part depending on how secret he kept them.

They killed the basilisk with crowing roosters, as that sound was lethal to any basilisk. Dumbledore would spend many weeks reducing its corpse to potion ingredients, placing a 1/3 share of the profits into Harry's Gringotts' investment fund (Dumbledore also took a third, and they donated the rest to Hogwarts itself).

After the great snake was dead, Harry led Dumbledore through the exit of the Chamber deep into the mountains beyond Hogwarts. In a Chamber mirroring the Chamber of Secrets near the final exit, they seized Hufflepuff's Cup. Dumbledore warded the exit and various spots along the way back to the school, so that Voldemort would not have easy access, and no access without giving ample warnings.

The next night, they recovered Slytherin's locket from the tidal lake filled with Inferi. Harry had managed to give Dumbledore a good idea of what the potion in the basin might be and so Harry was able feed Dumbledore an antidote after they had left with locket. Dumbledore would still be weak for the next week, despite the antidote.

Sunday morning, they destroyed those two Horcruxes and the ring Dumbledore had recovered from the Gaunts'. Harry kept the broken ring, while Dumbledore would place the other two founders' relics in the vault at Gringotts. Only the diary stood in the way between Voldemort and true death, but they had no idea where Voldemort might be hiding it.

Lucius Malfoy would be a Fifth year student and his father had been a few years ahead of Tom Riddle, but had become an unMarked supporter, Harry knew, in the early 1950s. However, just because the diary had ended up at Malfoy Manor at some point before November, 1981, was no reason to be certain that it was there 10 years earlier. Voldemort was currently suspected of being behind the Death Eaters, but the public had not yet made the connections. That hadn't happened the last time until 1973, which was when Voldemort had been outlawed. Even then, the Ministry had taken little action against suspected supporters.

Most of their free time during the days were spent with Harry recounting as much as he knew about Voldemort's first and second rise to power. Dumbledore was surprised at how manipulatively he had treated Harry Potter in the original time stream. He also had to reevaluate how passive he had been in dealing with Tom Riddle, as a student and afterwards.

For over twenty years before Riddle had been a student, Dumbledore had been active in the struggle against Grindelwald, who was using magic to try and destroy Muggle civilization. Grindelwald had triggered several minor wars and what became World War I, and had helped push the Russian Revolution into its more blood thirsty massacres, although he had in turn been surprised at how ruthlessly the Bolsheviks had turned on his wizarding stooges in 1920. From there, Grindelwald had turned towards manipulating the extreme right in Germany, and ended up helping Hitler rise to power.

Several groups around Europe had tried combating these actions, and Dumbledore had been one of the instrumental founders of one such group in Britain in the 1910s, and in coordinating several groups across Europe in the 1930s and 40s. He had had little time for seeking out one illegitimate Half-blood orphaned baby in January, 1927. He had noticed how powerful and even Dark young Riddle was becoming, but had no free time to follow up on it through the 1940s.

Dumbledore had been spending time collecting information about Riddle since the early 1950s, but now knew he had never effectively battled 'Voldemort'. He had reacted, but never actively enough. That pattern had obviously continued even after he had reactivated his 'Order of the Phoenix', the group he had co-founded back in 1913 to challenge Grindelwald -- something he had just been starting to consider at the time of the Massacre.

Dumbledore knew he would have to make adjustments to his strategy, lest Harry do it for him.

This came home to him Monday morning as he awaited Harry to join him for breakfast. Harry had gotten up early and had run two miles and done twenty minutes of work outs. In his previous life, he had been crippled so long that part of this was training and part of his activities were just for the pure physical joy of being young and healthy again.

Dumbledore therefore awaited Harry to come from getting cleaned up by reading his collection of Muggle and magical newspapers. He hoped Harry would hurry along, as his appetite was back for the first time since he had drunk that awful potion Friday night.

By the time Harry showed up twenty minutes later, Dumbledore had skimmed through nine newspapers and lost most of his appetite. "Something interesting in the papers, Headmaster?" Harry asked.

"Several things of note," Dumbledore said, his eyes on Harry, who looked merely curious. "For one thing, the Riddle House in Hangleton burnt down just after midnight Saturday morning."

"Strange," Harry said. "That didn't happen last time until the early autumn of 1997."

"I presume that Malfoy Manor was not gutted by fire last time either, was it?" Dumbledore asked severely.

"Not until 1997, a few weeks after the Riddle house," Harry answered. "Too bad that all the Dark Artifacts stored in a hidden cache were destroyed, but that the diary wasn't anywhere in the Manor. I am also willing to bet that the six Death Eaters who died last night didn't die until much later in the 1970s last time, either."

"May I see your wand, Harry?"

"Of course," Harry said. "I still have not cast anything with it, other than sparks."

Dumbledore could not read Harry's mind, but he could still tell truth from falsehood, and Harry had just told the truth. Harry Potter was obviously more powerful than he had even suspected. "Are you certain that this is the correct path?"

"No," Harry answered, which slightly reassured the elderly wizard. "Still, it should send a shockwave through the people who support Voldemort. They slacked off their major attacks twice in the 1970s. In 1971, I mean this year, after the twelve Death Eaters were killed and one captured

and Kissed after the May Massacre, and again in 1978, when an attack on Hogsmeade went wrong and nine were killed. Usually, they attacked and killed without real opposition. They are bullies and cowards. When they have a bloody nose, they run away and hide until they figure it's safe. Now instead of two bloody noses in seven years, they have two in four months. I have a list of six others I intend on executing if I can locate them. Five Marked Death Eaters who continued to kill up until their own deaths, and Fenrir Greyback, who was unMarked but if anything more evil than almost any other of Voldemort's supporters."

Dumbledore sighed. "I don't know how you did it, but I would not be able to protect you if you were caught."

"I know that, sir," Harry answered.

"How will you prevent the Ministry from searching for you, not to mention Voldemort and his people?"

"I can raise the Dark Mark on any who were Marked," Harry answered. "Those six will be found in public places, and the Ministry officials who support Voldemort won't be able to hide all of them." Harry frowned. "What can you tell me about Colin McFadden?"

This was who had taken over the MLES from Henry Potter.

"He is honest, bright, but not very ruthless," Dumbledore said. "I would expect he will help the aurors and hit-wizards grow to meet the threat, but will be unable to actually lead them well against the Death Eaters. If you know the reference, he would be a General McClellan."

Harry had had little to do for over ten years, other than read. "Meaning someone who can build a great army but can't lead it?" Dumbledore nodded his head. "At some point, Barty Crouch will take over, or did take over, and may have gone to the other extreme, being too ruthless."

"Colin comes out the aurors, while Barty works on the judicial side," Dumbledore mused. The two ate silently for a while. Finally, Dumbledore said, "I have accomplished all I had hoped with this visit. Have you?"

"I wouldn't mind having a chat with the Sorting Hat before I leave," Harry said, his eyes twinkling even more than Dumbledore's.

Dumbledore wasn't certain how to reply to that, other than to agree.

Chapter IV

In a nearly-deserted semi-ruined abbey in the northwest of England, Voldemort seethed. He would have loved to turn his anger on the two followers present, but dismissed them instead. He did not yet have enough followers to treat them as he would like.

What had gone wrong? He had built his organization slowly over a twenty-five year period, developing the Dark Mark in the late 1960s. Once taken, no one could completely elude him or completely betray him. He had planned the first large initiation of new recruits for that previous May, and had sent them on the attack on those who had defeated Grindelwald.

In terms of a battle, he had won. His forces had taken out over three times more than he had lost, and crippled one of the two men he needed dead, Henry Potter, who had since died. However, his people had not anticipated dying at all, and he had not anticipated so many would have been killed. For the previous year, when they struck they had had overwhelming numbers and force. No Death Eater had been seriously hurt. May was different. Ten recruits killed and one captured out of the fifteen initiates, and two Marked members killed, had been a hard blow to take.

Malfoy Manor, the home of his wealthiest supporter, burning to the ground two days before had been shocking. The execution of six of his oldest supporters the night before was even more so.

There was a new player in the game, one who did not play by the Ministry's rules and who was not holding back as Dumbledore did. If anything, the player might be nearly as ruthless as Voldemort himself.

Voldemort went over everyone he knew of in Britain and Western Europe, wondering who might fit the criteria of the new player.

He came up with no one.

That worried Voldemort even more than his opponent's ruthlessness.

Wednesday, September 1, 1971

Harold looked up from his paper, shaking his head over the article about the body found on the Isle of Wight. Like the six a few weeks before, this one had the so-called 'Dark Mark', just discovered to be the sign of a Death Eater. An editorial finally suggested that the Death Eaters were the enforcers of the self-proclaimed 'Lord Voldemort', the most extreme of the pro-Pure Bloods.

Unlike the previous six, there was a note with this Death Eater: "All Death Eaters must turn themselves in to the British, French, or Benelux Ministry of Magic before midnight, December 31. All other Death Eaters are to be considered open targets after that date." It had been signed by 'The Archdruid of the Order of Founders,' which confused everyone.

Harold's frown disappeared as he heard James and Harry thundering down the main stairs. "Slow down, boys!" he called. "The train won't leave for two hours!"

"But won't the floo get too busy to use if we wait?" James asked eagerly as he rushed into the breakfast room.

"You may be right," Harold gravely agreed. "Go ask your mother when she'll be ready." James rushed off. Harold smiled more widely. He had waited for just the right woman to marry, and met her in his late twenties. She had been killed soon thereafter in the War. He hadn't found anyone else he could really love for over ten years.

Mary had been engaged to a well-known explorer, and had been planning on marrying him when he returned from an expedition to Tibet. He had been killed by the Muggle Communist authorities, already determined to exert their authority over Tibet. She had only met Harold two years later.

They missed their pretty daughter, but Harold celebrated his two sons. Now in his mid-fifties, his wife in her late-thirties, they were glad to be seeing their boys off to Hogwarts, a rite of passage Harold had wondered if he would ever get to enjoy twenty years before.

As James and Harry waited impatiently for their parents, James said, "I wonder if Sirius will be there early."

"If his parents or uncle are with him, or those Black sisters, we'd be better off waiting for him on the train," Harry pointed out.

"After what you said to Bellatrix, you're probably right," James complained. He knew few children around their age, and had only met Sirius a few times over the past four years. Still, there was something he recognized as a kindred spirit in Sirius. 'At least Harry likes him now,' James thought. Henry had always thought that Sirius brought out the worst in James, which was true enough.

"Sometimes, I think the only thing that hasn't changed about you is your inability to stand up when walking through the floo," James teased as Harold dusted Harry off.

"Just think how insufferable we'd be if we were perfect," Harry teased back as his mother walked through.

James smiled and looked up. "Wow," he said.

"I agree," Harry said. "Wow." There seemed to be about 25% more students than Harry was used to seeing. He realized that he had grown up with the effects of the war without really understanding it. Even the post-war baby boom was based on a population much reduced, both by deaths and by emigration.

"You were right about the Blacks," James murmured in Harry's ear. Harry glanced at where James was looking. He saw four adults and four children, the two girls, Sirius, and the younger boy who had to be Regulus.

As ugly as Harry had thought Walburga Black's portrait had been, he again thought that it had been a good representation. "What?" James asked.

"Looking at Sirius' mother, I can see why Muggles think witches are nasty and ugly."

"Henry John!" Mary hissed. She leaned over. "Not so loud, or the ugly mean witch might hear you."

"I miss you already, Mum," Harry said, kissing her cheek.

"You catch that scamp's eye and then make for the back carriages," Harold advised. "Pick up a few other First years along the way -- the carriages seat six. This is the best chance you'll have to meet people not in your House."

"Good ideas. Bye, Dad," James said.

"Wait! Here," Harold said, handing each boy two money bags. "Put those two deep into your pockets. There are twenty Galleons in each of these. There are thirty Sickles and five Galleons in each of the others. Try not to get sick on the sweets." Harold made certain the feather-light charms were holding on the trunks and money bags, and sent the two boys set off.

Sirius saw James and Harry, and caught James' subtle look and head movement towards the back of the train. As soon as the adults stopped nagging, he'd be off.

"That red-head looks lost," James said. "She must be a Muggle." Muggles of course could not come onto the platform, and this girl had no adults anywhere near her, as she bravely tried to figure out what to do next. She also looked very young.

"Or at least raised that way," Harry agreed. He saw it was his mother. "Let's get a nice selection. I'll grab that tired looking chap and the red head. That other girl with all the messy brown hair looks like her father is leaving."

"She's almost as cute as the red head," James said, then blushed.

"Come on," Harry said.

"All filled up here?"

"There you are, Sirius," James said. "We saved a place for you."

"Hi, Sirius," Harry said. "This is Sirius Black. Remus Lupin, Lily Evans, and Ellen McGregor." Harry smiled at the girl with the longish brown hair, whose eldest daughter or niece had been Natalie MacDonald in his time-stream. Harry wasn't certain yet which.

It hadn't been like this the first time around, Harry knew. Sirius had talked about it over that one Christmas holiday, deep into his fifth fire whisky. James and Sirius had sought each other out, having recognized their common traits over their few meetings. Snape and some other future Slytherins had to pick out a target to harass to prove themselves to the older and nastier Slytherins, especially Bellatrix. It had been Remus, just a few days from a transformation, although of course they had only learned that detail years later. The pair had hustled Remus off to a compartment with just one student in it -- Peter.

These six traded stories about themselves. Sirius seemed unsure how to react to the Half-blood Remus (Full-blood father and Muggle-born mother) and Ellen (Half-blood father and technically

Muggle mother, as three of her grandparents had been Squibs) let alone the Muggle-born Lily Evans. Harry rather enjoyed teasing nasty stories about Lily's older sister out of her. James and Harry treated the others to magical treats when the woman pushing the cart came by.

Harry had never known what to make of his mother. At times, he thought of her as a less vehement Hermione with red hair and a better sense of humor. He found he had learned more about his mother on that train ride than he had ever known about her before. She was as smart (although more intuitive, and without the driving need to prove herself that Hermione would have), stronger, and even more humorous than he had guessed.

In fact, Harry felt a little intimidated by the brains in that compartment. While he had not over-extended his brain while in school, he had surprised himself at how much he could actually learn once he had been crippled. However, he knew that with his original attitude towards school intact, James, Sirius, Remus, and Lily would have outshone him nearly as much as Hermione had, and Ellen was no slouch.

It was at this point that the door to the compartment slid open with a BANG. Harry sighed when he saw it was Bellatrix Black, Seventh year Slytherin, with a gaggle of Snakes and two First years, Snape and Narcissa, slinking just within sight. "So dare's the bwave wittle boy," she sneered.

"Do you have a speech impediment, Black?" Harry demanded. "If so, I won't make fun of you. If not, grow up."

"I never did learn your name, boy. . . ."

Harry stood and stated coldly, "My name is Harry Potter, or Henry John Potter if you prefer." He said it projecting a bit of his aura (and therefore his mood as well) outward. And Harry's mood was very clear. He loathed Bellatrix Black. Had he known for certain if she had already killed as well as taken the Mark, he would have been tempted to kill her on the spot. Everyone who heard his voice shivered, and they were all shocked to actually see Harry's magical aura visibly flickering. "Now, slither away! You give all Slytherins a bad name!"

Bellatrix opened her mouth, but Harry beat her to it. "Begone!" and with a wave of his hand Bellatrix was driven out of the compartment doorway and into the three boys behind her. With a flick of his finger, the door slammed shut. Harry then stood there, glaring.

Bellatrix stood, obviously angry enough, and possibly stupid enough, to try something else. Harry merely stood, hands on hips, and looked back.

Finally, the group slinked away.

Harry turned around and saw the look of fear on their faces. "What?" he asked calmly.

After a moment of silence, Sirius exclaimed, "That was bloody brilliant! I have never seen Bella shut up so effectively!"

"Brilliant, but scary," Ellen said.

Harry quirked a smile at that phrase.

"How did you do that?" Lily asked.

"It's just a knack I have," Harry said. "I hope I didn't, I don't know, shock or even scare anyone."

"It was . . . startling," Lily said, which made Ellen nod her head. "Why was she acting worse than my sister? Is she just a bully?"

"This is something five of us already know, Lily," Harry said. "You wouldn't, coming from the larger Muggle world. We're a little community. How many of us are there? Less than forty thousand all told in Britain and all of Ireland?" James and Sirius nodded, as that sounded about right. "As a culture, we tend to think in terms of class and ancestry more than you're used to. It's more like Eighteenth century England for many people, especially people like that lot." He jerked his thumb in the direction Bellatrix and her followers had gone. "To us, we care about the person, not their class and background. To them, well, to be blunt James, Sirius, and I would be the gentry or even the nobility. Remus and Ellen would be from the minor shopkeeping class."

"What does that make me?" Lily demanded. "A peasant?" she spat.

"To them, yes," Harry said frankly. "Not to me. Not to us. And not just because we know you. You can't tell me Muggle Britain still isn't class-conscious, even if they are no longer as bad about it as we are."

"So what are they going to do? Call me names, or really try and hurt me?" Lily asked, a little worried.

"They will certainly call you names," Ellen said.

"Forgive me for saying it," James said, "but they'll call you a 'Mudblood'."

"'Filthy Mudblood'," Sirius corrected, coloring. "I should know. My family has some of the worst people in it."

"Like that crazy woman," Harry agreed.

"Is she your sister?" Ellen asked.

Sirius shook his head. "First cousin, and that's too close a relation. That girl our age is her younger sister, Narcissa. Her older sister, Andromeda, is nice, though. She just ran off with a Muggle-born wizard named Ted Tonks and married him last week. They're still in hiding from the family." Harry knew they had fled to America, and had not returned in the other time line until 1983.

"Every generation or two or three, there's some loony who comes along, calls himself a Dark Lord, and tries to take over part of Magical Europe," Harry went on, finally sitting back down. "The last one was named Grindelwald. He hated the Muggle world, and tried to get it to destroy itself. He was partially behind World War One and the Russian Revolutions, and then behind the Nazi movement and World War Two. While the Muggles did all the bombings, his people did manage to whip up some of the firestorms out of the fire bombings which wiped out some towns, most famously Coventry and Dresden." Harry did not mention that many of those firetroopers, as they had been called, had been petrified and executed in July 1945, as test subjects to the first atomic bomb test. "They nearly succeeded in London, but a volunteer group from Diagon Alley managed to stop the fire from destroying St. Paul's Cathedral and then made it manageable enough for the Muggles to handle it."

"What happened to him?" "By late 1943, the magical world had undercut most of Grindelwald's people, and that allowed the Muggle Allies to really beat back the Nazis. Grindelwald himself abandoned the Nazis in late 1944, and started trying to get the Soviets and the United States to go to

war as the war against the Nazis wound down. He basically let his followers fend for themselves, and a group including Albus Dumbledore, who's the Headmaster of Hogwarts now, tracked him down and, well, we don't know exactly what Dumbledore did, if he killed Grindelwald or stripped him of his power or what, but he announced that Grindelwald had been defeated and was gone forever." Harry knew, of course, but couldn't say as few others knew.

"That . . . that was a generation ago. . . ." Lily said nervously.

Harry nodded. "A Half-blood descended from one of the Founders of Hogwarts named Tom Riddle has given himself the title of Lord Voldemort. Over the last ten or fifteen years, he's managed to get nearly everyone to forget what he was and to think of him as the great defender of Pure-Blood rights and traditions, which he claims are being eroded away by, quote, blood traitors and Mudbloods." The magically-raised squirmed a bit.

"It's mostly nonsense, of course," Harry went on. "The Great Families still mostly control the Ministry. They would totally control it if so many of them weren't too lazy to actually work."

Sirius broke in, "My father and grandfather and uncles all complain about what the Ministry does, and each one could have walked into a mid-level position the day after they left Hogwarts but didn't. Each one gets offers of serving on commissions every month or so, but they turn down most of them. They think they're too good to do any real work."

"Our grandfather did just that, and ended up as the head of Magical Law Enforcement, one of the four main jobs in the Ministry," James agreed.

"Anyway, there have also been more and more attacks on the so- called 'blood traitors'," Harry said. "The terrorists are called Death Eaters. They wear white masks and black robes, and generally attack one house with overwhelming numbers. The one time they attacked a large group, twelve of them were killed."

"Of course, lots of regular people were killed and hurt, too," James said sadly. "Our little sister was killed, Grandfather died from being hurt, and we almost lost Harry."

"Do these Death Eaters work for this Voldemort?" Lily asked.

"Yes, but it hasn't been officially proven," Harry said.

"Why not?" Lily asked.

"Are you sure?" Sirius demanded. His parents really glorified Voldemort but denounced the killings.

"I'm sure, because Grandfather was sure. As for their influence, well, One Death Eater was captured," Harry said. "Instead of questioning him, he was Kissed by a dementor two hours later." Harry turned to Lily. "Dementors are evil embodied demons. They feed on emotions, and can literally suck your soul and consciousness from your body. That's called 'the Kiss' and is how the British Ministry executes people."

"They . . . they just had a person killed, just two hours later? No trial?"

"The trial took about ten minutes," James said.

"How. . . ? Never mind. Why didn't they question him?" Lily demanded.

"Now that's the question," Harry said. "Our grandfather was angry. He had been seriously injured, and so had no say in what happened. We don't know if they were just being stupid, or if, since there was no way to save the killer, some ally just made certain he was Kissed before he could make a deal."

With that, conversation died down for about an hour. Each child had a great deal to think about. Finally, to break the silence, Harry broke open a large package of Bertie Botts, and while they were trying to guess the flavors, got Lily to tell him how Muggle students exchanged mail with their parents. (It was done by the owl postal workers in Diagon Alley, who exchanged the letters between the two systems for a small fee, taking or picking up the letters via the nearest large post office in Charing Cross. Harry was also interested to learn that the same system could be used to order magazines and other items from the Muggle world. He vowed to somehow set up a current account in a Muggle bank and wished he had inquired about this while a student the first time around.)

Finally, they arrived at the Hogsmeade train station. Harry led his brother and four friends directly over to Hagrid, who, having met Harry briefly that August, stooped to say hello. "It looks like your brother has two girlfriends," Sirius teased James as he and Remus joined James on one boat while Harry went with Ellen and Lily. "Really, James, how did he do that to Bella?"

"I don't know," James admitted. "I never saw anything like it."

As the arrived students awaited Professor McGonagall, the Hogwarts ghosts made their usual appearance, startling most of the First years. Harry was grateful that Peeves hadn't put in an appearance.

Glancing around, Harry saw Peter off in the back, near a very mousey girl. He hoped that separating Pettigrew from the Marauders would keep him away from Voldemort's notice, should the war last so long.

With the air of a connoisseur, Harry decided that while the Sorting Hat's song wasn't as happy as during his first year at Hogwarts, it wasn't as gloomy as the later ones, either. Harry ignored the Head Table and memorized his new classmates as they were Sorted. Unlike his class, which had started off with 42 students, there were 51 to be Sorted.

Harry frowned when Narcissa Black was Sorted into Slytherin. He had had a long talk with the Hat, and had hoped that it might make some different decisions. Still, the Hat didn't have total free will in the matter.

Harry was happier a few minutes later when Pettigrew was Sorted into Ravenclaw (much to Harry's surprise). Harry went next.

"Hello again, Mister Potter," the Hat said. "I felt your disappointment when I sent young Miss Black to where she belongs. There really was no other choice for her. With her attitudes, I would have had to send her there even if one of her parents had been Muggle-born and the other had been a Muggle."

'I understand,' Harry thought. He knew that only a total Muggleborn, like Lily, could not be sent into Slytherin, although there were few Slytherins with a Muggle parent.

"I survey each student when they enter the Hall, and know nearly all their placements before I sit on a single head," the Hat said proudly. "I am making the two other adjustments you asked for, and adjusting a few others to make the numbers come out fairly even."

'Thank you for your help,' Harry thought.

"I am proud to help the entire Order of Founders," the Hat whispered back. "I still think you would do well in Slytherin. Still, GRYFFINDOR!"

Harry frowned a bit when he saw Snape go off to Ravenclaw to sit next to Pettigrew. 'That will likely be unhealthy in some way,' he thought. In the end, there were 11 students in Gryffindor (4 boys, 7 girls, including Ellen as well as Lily), 11 in Slytherin, 15 in Hufflepuff (almost always the largest House each year), and 14 in Ravenclaw. Harry recognized the Head Boy towards the back end of the Gryffindor table -- Frank Longbottom. His future wife Alice Grant was the Fifth year girls' prefect, while Gideon Prewitt, Molly's youngest brother, was the Fifth year boys' prefect. He also saw Caradoc Dearborn, who had been an Order member killed in 1980.

Harry saw other people he knew in the other three Houses. At the Slytherin table, Madam Rosmerta was the Head Girl, Quirrell was a prefect, and so was Lucius Malfoy. Harry had known that Professor Sinistra had been a Slytherin a few years older than his parents, and he was not surprised to see Skeeter, Lockhart, Bagman, and Bertha Jorkins, as well as Avery, Rosier, and of course the Blacks and younger Lestrangle.

At the Ravenclaw table Harry thought he recognized Luna's mother amongst the Sixth or Seventh years, while Kingsley Shacklebolt was a bit younger. At the Hufflepuff table was Stubby Boardman and, he thought, the boy who would become Skeeter's silent, long-suffering photographer, nicknamed 'Bozo'.

Harry wondered what it meant that he knew more Slytherins than Ravensclaws and Hufflepuffs together.

Harry knew most of the teachers, of course. Slughorn, Flitwick, Kettleburn, Binns (who had been a ghost since early that century), Sprout (who had been a teacher for a few years, but was just taking over as Head of Hufflepuff), Vector, Hooch, and of course McGonagall (who was announced as the new Deputy Headmistress -- obviously the previous Head of Hufflepuff had been the Deputy). The Astronomy, Divination, Runes, Muggle Studies, and of course Defense instructors were unknown to him. Madam Pomfrey was introduced as the new Infirmary, and Professor Vector as the new Arithmancy professor. The Defense Instructor was introduced as Glen Burke. Harry remembered that he was an auror who had been seriously injured in the May Massacre. It was also announced that Mister Pringle, the caretaker, had taken an apprentice, Argus Filch. Harry was glad that neither man had a kneazle half-breed with him.

Chapter V

Sunday, September 5, 1971

Harry almost bounded out of bed, although he did it quietly as Sirius and James were still asleep. He dressed quickly and was on his way to the Room of Requirement before 6:30. That was where he was jogging and doing a light work out for 45 minutes every morning.

Harry mulled over the first two days of class. Well, first day, really, as they had just one class Friday. In two weeks, they would start their flying lessons at 10:30.

The Gryffindors would have Herbology from 8:00 to 8:50 on Mondays and Wednesday followed by Charms from 10:00 to 10:50, both classes with the Hufflepuffs. All the First years had History at 1:00, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. They would have Potions with Slytherin Tuesdays from 8:00 until 9:45 and Transfiguration with the Ravenclaws Thursday from 1:00 until 2:45. They had Defense, again with Slytherin, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 until 10:50. Astronomy was Thursday nights, from 10:00 pm until 12:30.

This, Harry knew, would be their basic schedule for the first five years. They would be adding their two or three electives around those times. Most would be scheduled for the late afternoons and Fridays.

Defense had been all about wand care and wand safety, which had made Harry think about Moody. He had never found out who, if anyone, had lost a buttock by having their wand in a back pocket.

Harry had won two points in Transfiguration for his 'match into a needle' on his first try after taking forty minutes of notes. He remembered that only Hermione had been able to even start the transformation the first time around. Here, James had accomplished the full transformation fifteen minutes after Harry (earning one point), and Sirius, Lily, and Remus had matched Hermione by the end of class, while Ellen, Snape, and Pettigrew weren't far behind. McGonagall had been impressed, and told them that they were the best all-around class of First years she had come across, and then warned them that she would therefore expect more than from any other class.

Harry had been given a note at breakfast, and therefore before supper escorted Remus to the Infirmary, where Madam Pomfrey had dosed Remus with the Wolfsbane Potion for the first of three nights. Remus had been very frightened and embarrassed that Harry knew his secret. Harry had just shrugged and told him not to worry about it.

Friday, having had the day off, the First years were mostly kept in the library in the morning. Harry had talked to Lily, and convinced her to order some Muggle astronomy magazines. Astronomy, Harry knew, was one area that even most Pure-bloods had to admit the Muggles were in the lead. The Muggle moon landing had caused an uproar across the Magical world, and many convinced themselves that the whole thing was a Muggle hoax. Harry promised to pay Lily the wizarding equivalent for the magazines, which they would share with the other First year Gryffindors. Saturday had been mostly spent outside. Harry escorted Remus to the Infirmary each night, and Remus had spent Saturday night in the Shrieking Shack.

After his workout, Harry went to the Infirmary, where he was pleased to see that while Remus looked very tired, he hadn't injured himself. The Wolfsbane had worked. The pair walked to breakfast, and Remus seemed more comfortable.

Thursday, September 9, 1971

Most of wizarding Britain awoke with a chill that Thursday, and none were more chilled than Voldemort and his Death Eaters. Nearly every household with an adult witch or wizard had received a packet of letters, sealed with a large green wax seal with a mistletoe impression in the center, surrounded by the raven, lion, badger, and snake -- the 'official' seal of the 'Order of Founders'. Even Voldemort had received one.

None could figure out how the letters were delivered, except that they had been delivered between 5:00 and 6:30 that morning, and that any household where a witch or wizard had been awake at that time did not receive a letter. In truth, Harry had arranged everything through Dobby, and most of the other elves of the realm had agreed to help, arranging matters so that if any were asked by their master or mistress what they knew about the letters appearing in their own households, they could honestly say they didn't know.

Slaves have ways around their owners, especially when it was for the good of both the slave and their owners, at least in the minds of the elves. Dobby easily convinced a few elves with like leanings, who then persuaded the majority of elves (who felt much as Winky had), and they all combined to 'help' the Masters and get around those elves like Kreacher. In any event, elves were so much in the background (as was their magic, unless they wanted it to be detectable by the Ministry) no one even thought to ask.

One sheet of high quality paper (Muggle-produced, and so impossible to trace by the Ministry) had the names of most of those with the Dark Mark and noted that the head of the Death Eaters was 'Tom Marvolo Riddle, a.k.a. Lord Voldemort', followed by the anagram 'tom marvolo riddle=i am lord voldemort'. After that came a list of nine names listed as 'candidates or strong supporters of the Death Eaters', and included the names of Bellatrix Black and Fenrir Greyback. Harry had extracted that information as well as the names of those Marked from the mind of the Death Eater he had executed on August 30 -- Bellatrix had taken the Mark just a few days before. Voldemort had not yet started organizing his people into cells, so they were mostly known to each other.

There followed a two page summary of the life and career of Tom Riddle, including accusing him of being the one to have opened the Chamber of Secrets and causing the death of Myrtle Smith in 1943. It pointed out that Riddle did not really care for Pure Blood customs. He was in this to try and transform himself into a being which would live for centuries, and he wanted political power while he did so. The Pure-blood agenda was merely his tool to do so.

The next page was a sheet of suggestions on how to teach the Muggleborn-and-raised more about the Magical community, and how to teach the magical community more about the Muggle world.

The final sheet was much simpler. It read:

Magic can do many amazing things. Some things, however, it cannot do. It cannot bring true love or true happiness, and can certainly not bring about absolute power or true immortality. Equally, it cannot create good government. It cannot guarantee freedoms.

People, however, can bring most of these things about. You must also defend yourself and not rely on the Ministry to do so. You have been trained to defend yourself, and you have a wand with which to do so. There are at least three different, inexpensive books on sale in Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley which will tell you how to ward your home. There are many Muggle devices which can help you do the same.

Every one of you has the right to attend and even speak at the quarterly public meetings of the Wizengamot. How many have exercised that right in the last twenty meetings? Fifteen individuals, all Pure-bloods, speaking for a total of twenty-four times. Nine speeches demanded lower taxes even though the taxes in Magical Britain and Ireland are the sixth lowest in the magical world (while our services are the lowest in the world, the pay to the lower Ministry grades are the third lowest in the world, and the pay for the highest grades are the third highest). Six speeches demanded that rights be taken away from 'creatures' (goblins, centaurs, werewolves, vampires, those with some giant, veela, or other blood, etc., and one was on taking rights away from giants, even though there are no giants in our lands), while the remaining nine demanded more rights for 'Pure-bloods' and more restrictions on everyone else.

Every member of the Order of Founders is a 'Pure-blood' and we all honor our ancestry (and most of our ancestors). We, however, believe in a meritocracy. In the interests of space, we merely point out that every single current member of the Ministry who is a sub-Department Head or higher is a Pure-blood. Also, note that 48 of the 50 members of the Wizengamot are Pure-bloods and the other two would still be considered 'Full-bloods' (ancestors fully magical and mostly human for between three and five generations respectively). Every teacher at Hogwarts (but one) is a Pure or Full-blood, as are all the examiners for the O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s (which is no doubt why the questions on Muggle Studies exams are so stupid), and so are every shop owner (as opposed to shop worker) in Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley, the editors and proprietors of The Daily Prophet, the WWN, Witches Weekly and Teen Witch Weekly, the owners of all the Quidditch teams, the officials of the Quidditch League, and the owners of the Knight's Bus.

According to the last census released (1955), there were then 36,678 magical persons in Britain and Ireland. 1,338 were classified as Pure-Bloods, 3,726 were classified as Full-Bloods - - less than 1/7 of the population controls all the top positions in our world. Where is the discrimination against them? Why the fear of the Muggleborn? There are fewer than 10 of them born in any given year. There were 726 alive in 1955, along with 5,793 Mixed-bloods (one non-human ancestor within five generations, two in six generations, etc.), and of course the largest groups, making up the 'Half-bloods' -- those having at least one magical parent and still with at least one Muggle grandparent. There were 603 with four Muggle grandparents, 3,087 with three Muggle grandparents, 8,862 with two, and 12,543 with one Muggle grandparent.

Hardly a tidal wave of the overly-Muggle.

These statistics have been available since 1956 but have always been ignored. Look at your prejudices. Look at our society. Right now you have the society and government you deserve -- a weak and semi-corrupt government which caters to the elite and an evil opposition led by a self-declared 'lord' who wants to control society to make up for his own lack of morals, class, sense, and ancestry.

Many might remember that there was a census recently. What does that data show? The actual numbers are classified, but they would show that there are a few hundred more Pure-bloods, and a few hundred more Full-bloods.

It would also show that our magical population has contracted by over a thousand people, do to emigration. Where have they gone? North America, Australia, and New Zealand have built magical societies which keep the best of the old and have merged it with Muggle ideas. Africa and Asia (outside of most of China and North Korea) celebrate their old traditions more than we do, and co-exist with their Muggle neighbors better than we do. South America and the Middle East occupy places between those extremes. What are we doing wrong? What do you intend to do about it,

besides whine that you were given this warning?

THE ORDER OF FOUNDERS

As Harry predicted, most of the editorials and letters and speeches reported complained about the 'invasion of privacy' the letter represented and never addressed the issues.

Harry was therefore also not surprised when he received a note requesting him to come to the Headmaster's office that coming Saturday at his convenience. He went after his morning workout.

"Good morning, Harry," Dumbledore said. "Shall we have breakfast while we talk?"

"If we're going to be a while, otherwise hot chocolate would be fine."

Dumbledore produced a lovely Victorian hot chocolate set and poured cups for each. He then gestured at the food. "Feel free to help yourself."

"Thank you."

Dumbledore looked at Harry, then said, "I don't suppose you'd care to enlighten me how you had those letters duplicated and delivered?"

"Sorry," Harry answered.

"May I ask why?"

"Why tell them the truth when few want to hear it, you mean?" Harry asked. Dumbledore winced but nodded.

"Barring a slip, I should be able to destroy Riddle once we get that diary. However, for most of the last millennium there have been at least two would-be Dark Sorcerers showing up somewhere in Europe every century -- there hasn't been one in the Americas or Africa for over a hundred years, only the one in Asia since the last were slaughtered by Grindelwald's people in 1909, and there's never been one in Australia or the Pacific. I don't really want to face down two or three more here in Europe, should I live as long as you. What did you do to try and make our little community safer, or even saner after Grindelwald died? Oh, that's right, you came back here to teach. Shall I remind you how many of those lovely little Slytherins and Ravenclaws have already murdered people?"

Dumbledore was getting angry, but Harry ignored it. "I know perfectly well that the Muggle world is huge, complicated, and dangerous. No part of the magical world is all that much better, but Europe is the worst, and Britain is one of the most in-bred parts of Europe. A small clique drawn from one seventh of the population controls nearly everything, while a smaller clique from the same group wants power. Both cater to the prejudices of that one seventh, and abuse and insult and now kill people from the rest." Harry grinned nastily. "I think that may set the tone of the next letter I send out. I'll send it out to the majority, asking why they're allowing themselves to be controlled by thugs and in-bred cretins."

"Do you want to start a civil war, Harry?" Dumbledore demanded.

"There is a civil war going on now, Headmaster," Harry retorted. "One side disgusts me -- and the other I loathe. Yet I am expected to fight for the disgusting parasites and save them. That's who

ended up reaping the rewards my first time through this." Percy Weasley came to Harry's mind, who had just become a Junior Department Head a week before his suicide, and was thought to be a likely Minister of Magic in fifty more years or so. "If it happens this time, I'm off to America or Australia or New Zealand."

"Harry. . . ."

"Was there anything else, Headmaster?"

Dumbledore slumped down. He was unused to dealing with anyone so much more powerful than he was, let alone one with Harry's point of view. "No. . . . I had hoped to ask about your impressions from the first weeks. . . ."

"Since the Potions Professor did not verbally abuse me with your tacit agreement, they have gone very nicely. Before I leave, I was wondering if any Death Eaters had turned themselves in?"

"Alas, they have not."

"I am as sorry to hear that as you, but not at all surprised. Good morning, Headmaster." Harry drank his lovely chocolate and left.

Several of the Death Eaters would have loved to have given up their masks, but they were too tightly bound to their Master. One who had tried to walk out of an emergency meeting anyway had been subjected to the Cruciatus until she died.

In the original time stream, no Death Eater had been tortured to death until well after the creation of the Fifth Horcrux. The Death Eaters now realized that the letter had been right. Voldemort was in this only for his own power. They were not his followers, they were his minions if not his slaves.

Most of Voldemort's unmarked supporters fell away, however. The Pure-bloods did rally to their own, insuring that those named as Death Eaters were not drawn in for questioning, but that was the extent they were willing to help.

Voldemort was trying to keep his movement together.

Sunday, September 19, 1971

No one was certain where the idea had started, but it was certainly from within the older students of Ravenclaw over a Saturday night discussion. The next morning, fifteen of the older Ravenclaws were sporting small buttons which flashed **MERITOCRACY**, alternating with *An Idea Whose Time Has Come*.

When he saw them, Harry walked over and asked, "Is this an idea anyone can join in on?"

"The buttons are free," Luna's mother said to him. "We're creating a 'Meritocracy League' as well. Five Sickles for the year."

"And what does the League do, Miss?" Harry asked.

"Sorry. Diana Selene. And you, young Gryffindor?" she asked with a teasing smile.

"Harry Potter."

"Well, Potter, we're seeking ways to put in place the meritocracy the Order of Founders talked about in their letter to the Wizarding World."

"I'll take the button now, and if I can attend your first meeting I'll decide if I want to join. I certainly like the idea," Harry replied.

"Join now, and you can be the first non-Ravenclaw to join," Shacklebolt said from across the table.

Harry smiled. "And how many Ravenclaws have paid?"

"Just me," Diana said, now with a smile just like her daughter's.

"Hey!" several Ravenclaws protested.

"You've all promised, but you haven't actually paid," Diana pointed out.

"For the honor of being the second charter member, I gladly pay seven Sickles," Harry said. "How's this for an idea? Draw up a basic charter saying we support meritocracy in the wizarding world, open and free competition for Ministry job placements, and equal rights for all magical peoples and we can sign it. After the first meeting, membership is five Sickles, and the membership can decide where to take the group. Charter members pay six."

"You should have been in Ravenclaw, Potter," Diana said.

"The Hat said I would have fit into any of the Houses," Harry said. "Since I tend to charge into things, though, it put me in Gryffindor."

"Here," another Ravenclaw girl said, handing over a parchment which had Harry's basic ideas well-phrased and written in a very nice calligraphy, under the title *A Charter for the MERITOCRACY LEAGUE*. Diana signed it first, but then frowned. "Should I put my House?" she asked.

"Do Houses matter in this?" another Ravenclaw asked before Harry could.

"I suppose not," Diana agreed.

Harry signed second, followed by the calligrapher. They had attracted a small crowd from Hufflepuff and Gryffindor, but no Slytherins.

"Hey, Remus, do you want to join?" Harry asked.

Remus flushed. "I don't have six Sickles with me," he said. While not poor as Remus had been in the future, this Remus did not have much extra money.

"I'll front the money for any other First year," Harry said, "from any House. Pay me back anytime before the end of the year."

"Calendar or academic," Snape drawled from the bottom of the table.

Harry smiled. "Calendar. If you don't pay by the end of the school year, you owe me an extra Knut per day after next September First."

As students were signing, Sirius and James took Harry aside. "Why are you doing this?" James hissed.

"This might turn into nothing or it might be a big idea," Harry told them simply. "If it is big, I want in on the ground floor. We three have the money, ancestry, and I would like to think the talent and the brains. Money and ancestry will always count for something. If they start counting less, we also have the talent and brains to make it on merit. Why not support it?"

"I can see why the Hat thought you might fit into Slytherin as well as Ravenclaw and Gryffindor," Sirius smirked.

By the time of the first meeting the next Saturday morning, all 105 Hufflepuffs had joined, as had 51 of the 90 Ravenclaws (including Snape, who saw it as a way of getting ahead in his House, and Pettigrew, who wasn't going to be left behind), and 39 of the 81 Gryffindors.

Not one Slytherin had joined however, much to Professor Slughorn's amazement and disappointment.

"I don't understand why," Slughorn lamented in the staff room while the first League meeting was going on. "I can see why some of the more aristocratic members might not be interested, but there seems to be active hostility in my House, and I must say, I do NOT like that."

"I wonder if the hostility might not be even stronger on the parts of a few students than you allow, Horace," Flitwick suggested. "I saw a number of your students generally interested over the past week, but some whispers seemed to drive them off."

"You mean from Miss Black and her crowd?" Flitwick nodded, and Horace sighed. "I was loath to believe that letter, which named her in the same group that included that evil Greyback. However, I have come to believe there was some substance to it after all."

"If she acts on her beliefs, she will get her self into a great deal of trouble," McGonagall grumbled.

Chapter VI

Severus Snape hurried from the dungeons, where he had been talking with Professor Slughorn about some questions he had about potions preparations. He knew he had to hurry, or else he would be late to the second meeting of the 'Meritocracy League'.

Had anyone told him before his arrival at Hogwarts that he would be in an organization dedicated to advancement on merit rather than blood, he would have scoffed at the least. True, his father was a Muggle, and a drunken abusive one at that, and his mother a blood traitor for marrying him. Her brother had taken Snape out of their run-down home and given him nearly a year's crash course on magic in general, especially theory, dark magic in particular, and most especially potions, a subject both his mother and uncle had excelled in.

And then his beloved uncle had been captured in the May Massacre, the only Death Eater captured. Even more embarrassing, he had been captured by a boy a few months younger than Severus himself -- for James Potter had lobbed the stone which had hit Jacob Sergius Prince on the temple. His uncle had been Kissed just a few hours later.

That meant Snape had been sent back to the dreary house on Spinner's End. There, Snape had found his father had died (he suspected his mother had finally poisoned him with a magical potion untraceable by the Muggle authorities). While she had not in any way encouraged his interests in the Dark Arts, she had not confiscated the books he had taken from his Uncle's flat. Instead, she spent the summer teaching her son how to survive at Hogwarts, no matter what House he was placed in, and teaching him more potion theory.

He had been a bit surprised to have been Sorted into Ravenclaw rather than the usual Prince House of Slytherin, for Half-bloods were common in each House. The Hat had assured him, however, that his ambitions for a career in potions ran deeper than his desire to learn the Dark Arts, and would be better served in Ravenclaw.

Observing the Houses over the first weeks, Snape decided he would have spent more time with the Dark Arts in Slytherin than potions, if only for self-protection. He had neither money nor ancestry, and those and power were all that were respected in Slytherin.

He was far from the only impoverished scholar in Ravenclaw, and aside from some teasing about washing his hair more often, he was finding a great deal of support from his House, support which he (correctly) guessed would not have gotten from Slytherin, unless he had been able to force it out of them.

He had also been pleased that there were a few in Ravenclaw who agreed that all knowledge was worth learning, including Dark Magic. They had welcomed him into their little group. When several had expressed shock at his joining the League, Snape had pointed out that being on the inside could be advantageous, and that if he continued his interests in potions of all kinds, he would need to win training through merit alone.

He was a little disappointed in his fellow Ravenclaw First years. They were all interested in brewing their potions perfectly, but had little interest knowing why they worked. The Gryffindor Lily Evans shared his enthusiasm, perhaps even exceeded it, although she lacked his background. Harry Potter was interested in picking his brains, having quickly seen that Snape knew why

ingredients interacted as they did, and he wanted to know why.

Harry Potter did not seem to like him very much, but was willing to work with Snape in order to learn. Snape had seen how powerful Potter was on the train. He thought knowing one Potter might be to his advantage, even if he disliked him in turn.

At least Harry Potter was far better than James Potter. James Potter and Snape could not stand being near each other. Sirius Black, James' sidekick, was nearly as bad. Snape appreciated how subtly Harry Potter kept his brother and Black away from him.

"Look who it is," came a cold voice.

'Shit,' Snape thought. 'Malfoy.'

"Why, it's a Wittle Weaguer," Bellatrix cooed like a poisonous pigeon.

Snape saw that he was boxed in by Black, Malfoy, Avery, and Rosier, all, Fifth through Seventh years. He was in deep trouble. "I had thought you might be worthy of us," Bellatrix went on, "despite your muddy ancestry."

"You might not have had any real choice in your House," Malfoy put in, "but you chose to join the League."

Snape opened his mouth to plead that he could perhaps make a useful inside man in the League, but Bellatrix cut in. "And no excuses. You made your choices, Snape."

"And so have you four." The voice seemed to come from everywhere.

"Ssssilly ssstudentssss," hissed another voice. "I am assshamed of you."

"There is no good that I can see in these four," the first voice, which sounded female, said, "and they threaten one of my own."

"He could have been mine," objected the second voice, "he isss worthy."

"Where are you?" Malfoy demanded as the four looked wildly around.

"Silence!" warned a strong bass voice. The four Slytherins froze, except for their frightened eyes.

"I hate to say it," came a fourth voice, also female, "but I must say they must not just be taught a lesson but must also provide one."

"You are right as well as correct, Helga," the first voice said.

"I certainly agree," came the bass voice. "What about you, Sal? They are yours."

"They dissgrace the Houssse of Ssslytherin," the voice hissed. "I cassst them out, just as I do the bassstard who claimss my blood."

"Run towards the Headmaster's office," the voice which seemed to claim to be Ravenclaw's commanded. "Run, now." Snape ran.

"Did you see Snape?" Diana asked Harry as he came into the League meeting.

"Not since the flying lesson yesterday," Harry answered. "He wasn't in the library."

"Is anyone else missing?" she asked. Everyone looked around, but no one said anything. "In that case, I call the second meeting to order. The first order of business is the introduction of new members."

Snape was glad that he ran into the Headmaster, who seemed to know that there was a problem, along with Professors Flitwick and Sprout. Sprout was told to take Snape to the Headmaster's office.

Flitwick and Dumbledore found the four Slytherins alive but laying on the floor. They appeared uninjured, but did not respond to their attempts to wake them. The professors levitated the quartet to the Infirmary.

"What is the problem, Madam Pomfrey?" Dumbledore asked gently. The young witch looked shocked.

"They are unconscious because of a major shock to their system," Pomfrey said. "There is no physical or mental injury."

"And that shock was what?" Dumbledore frowned. "What was the injury to, if it was not mental or physical?"

"Headmaster . . . Headmaster, I can detect no magic in any of these four, except for that Mark on Miss Black's forearm," Pomfrey said. "I know it's impossible, but it's as if they were drained of their magic."

Dumbledore swallowed nervously at that. This was perhaps the true deepest fear of any magical person who had ever had the thought -- losing one's magic.

It was thought by most to be impossible, unless losing one's magic was part of an Unbreakable Vow, rather than death. Other than that, there was no assured way known of losing one's magic. There was the legend of the anti-magi, people who could absorb magic rather than cast it, but that was it. There were numerous potions which suppressed magic for short periods, but here, the seemingly impossible had happened.

And the Headmaster had no idea of what to do, other than question the one witness, and then the enigma which was Harry Potter.

"What did you do?" Dumbledore demanded.

"Did you know that in many ways Hogwarts is sentient?" Harry asked.

"In some senses it is," Dumbledore agreed. "The castle itself must accept a Headmaster as such if he is to exercise his functions. The Board may nominate, but no more. How does that answer my question?"

"Consult the castle about what happened today," Harry said simply.

Dumbledore frowned. He disliked direct communication, as the castle tended to reflect the personalities of the four founders, and Slytherin was often disruptive. Still, it seemed like the easiest way to deal with young Potter. Dumbledore sat back, closed his eyes, and let his connections to the castle open.

In just a few seconds, his eyebrows went up.

"If Slytherin's echo feels different than it used to," Harry supplied, "it's because we cleaned the Dark Magic out of the Chamber of Secrets. That added a layer from his last, bitter years to his memories the castle had access to. In the beginning, he was no purist. It was only after his favorite granddaughter was raped by a roving band of Muggle Vikings, including a barely-trained Muggle-born who managed to overpower her, that he came to loathe the Muggle world. Without that last bitter portion, he's actually quite reasonable. Even Floppy over there should be slightly affected."

"Floppy?"

"Please do NOT call me that," the Sorting Hat said primly. "However, Mister Potter is correct. Slytherin will always be the House of Ambition, but I will be able to be more open to those with mostly Muggle ancestry now. Who knows, in a few years, I might finally be able to add the actually Muggle-born."

Dumbledore frowned at this, but decided to get back to the main point. "Regardless, the castle could not have stripped the magic out of those students, nor would it have harmed them like that."

"Wrong and wrong," Harry answered, "or rather, partially wrong and wrong. The castle would not have allowed anyone, even me, to strip an innocent student of their magic. Avery and Rosier have already cast the Killing Curse and Cruciatus on Muggles. Malfoy has cast those and the Imperius. They've tortured beyond that, of course. Bellatrix is already a Marked Death Eater, and is far worse than those three -- I just put her name out as a possible instead of a Marked Death Eater to see what people did about her. The answer was 'nothing', just as they have really none nothing about any of those Marked. They were hardly four innocent little students who might be redeemed from error, they are hardened racist sadists."

"But. . . ."

"But nothing," Harry snapped. "There are two things you had better understand. First, I don't give a rat's arse if someone can be redeemed or not once they've willingly killed or tortured, especially if I catch them in the act or if they've enjoyed it. I'm not going out of my way to punish people, either. Crabbe and Goyle weren't there, and from what I've gathered from what passes for their brains, they haven't done much beyond serious bullying." Both were Fourth years, too young to be trusted by the older pro-Death Eaters. "I'm not holding future actions against anyone, I'm just keeping an eye on people. Otherwise, I would have killed Snape, who killed you and several other people I cared about, not to mention his abusing me for six years when I was his student."

Harry stood straight. "Second, I am the direct heir, magical and biological, of Godric Gryffindor,

not to mention Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw to a lesser degree. This damn curse scar that came back with me, amongst other things, Marks me as a magical heir of Slytherin. The vaults of all four Founders have Marked me as having the right to Speak for the Founders, as have the Vaults of Merlin and the Triad Council. . . ."

"The who?" Dumbledore demanded.

"The Triad Council, whom Merlin taught and who in turn taught the Founders," Harry stated, and then added with a smirk, "You know, the personifications of the three vaults between Merlin and Founders -- maybe someday the Hogwarts guardian will trust you enough to allow you past the inner vault to the other eighty percent. You're just allowed into the money and general storage areas." Dumbledore could not hide his surprise that he was not allowed into most of the Hogwarts' vault. He had not known more even existed. "All accepted me in the last lifetime, so I figured they would again, and they did."

Dumbledore's mouth was now opening and closing in shock. "But . . . impossible!"

"Well, Ravenclaw told me in the first time-stream I needed to be more studious," Harry admitted, "and Hufflepuff told me to trust my friends more. I did better this time." Harry's face hardened. "Why was I even there to help Snape? They were going to torture him to death, and then Bellatrix was going to leave Hogwarts and join her Master, as she has just turned seventeen. Voldemort ordered it to show the wavering people he wants to recruit what would happen to them if they continue to defy him. Even though Snape would have begged to turn spy to save himself, they were going to torture him to death."

"So. . . ."

"I will ask the castle to whisper to him that his little gesture has been forgiven this once, but that he had best decide on a side and stick with it," Harry stated firmly. "I was there because the castle read their intentions and was literally screaming for help. You should be as tied into the wards as I am, if not more so. Why couldn't the castle attract YOUR attention? Why was it only actions against Dark students, not Dark actions BY students, that drew you? Think about that."

From the look on Dumbledore's face, he would certainly be thinking about that, and didn't like the prospect. What he asked however, was, "And what happened to their power?"

"I absorbed some of the magic, and the castle itself absorbed most of it," Harry answered. "I don't like stripping away people's magic, but if I must, I will."

"I could. . . ." Dumbledore started, but he stopped with a shudder, while Fawkes squawked in protest at the wave of magic threatening the Headmaster. It was not from Harry.

"Don't threaten me within the boundaries of Hogwarts, Headmaster," Harry said. "The castle doesn't like it." Harry comforted Fawkes, and then left.

That night, as a rather smug Severus Snape went to bed, his eyes suddenly opened. The ambient noises from his dorm mates had disappeared. He tried to sit up to see what was going on, but he found that while he was breathing and his eyes could still move, nothing else did.

"Ssshame on you, Sssserveruss Sssnape," a familiar voice whispered.

"It was a plan of survival, but not one of honor," the other male voice agreed.

"You must decide, young Snape," one female voice stated. "You must be loyal to more than just yourself, or you will juggle the situation until you finally fail."

"Remember who you are, young Ravenclaw," the final voice reminded him. "Make the intelligent decision."

"You have the intelligencce," the first voice concluded. "You have the ambition."

"You have the allies," the first female pointed out.

"The question is, do you have the fiber, the guts?" the second male voice asked.

"We will not give you another easy way out," the second female concluded. "However, the final choice is always yours."

Snape realized that the charms were off him, and now that he could react freely, his heart was pounding.

There were weeks of screaming and inquiries in the aftermath. Most, however, were directed against the Ministry, as the four students had disappeared the very afternoon the Ministry had insisted they be sent home to their families. Their tortured bodies were discovered the next morning in Diagon Alley -- and for the first time, the Dark Mark floated in the air. A note left with bodies merely noted that these had been mercy killings, since they had had their magic stripped away. A return note from the Order of Founders to various members of the press, Ministry, and Wizengamot outlined the teens' crimes, and made the (accurate-but-unsupported) claim that it had been Voldemort who had killed them. Snape's memories had been pulled, placed in a pensieve, and well-examined by the Ministry. No one knew what to make of the claims of the voices that they represented those of the Four Founders.

Snape reacted to this attention by actually becoming somewhat shy. His Housemates did two things. First, they rallied behind him to protect him from inquiries from the other students. Second, they took the rather scruffy, oily child and made him clean up his act. "At the moment, you're a public face of all Ravenclaws, as well as Hogwarts," Carolyn Fortescue -- the Seventh year Ravenclaw prefect was both the daughter of the owners of Fortescue's and grandniece of the current Madam Malkin -- told him. Somehow, she managed to clean Snape up without him feeling like he was being given charity.

Harry frowned as September turned towards October and yet another inquiry committee came to Hogwarts. Harry only knew one of the five members, but that one was Augustus Rookwood, Unspeakable and, at some point, Death Eater. Harry could not tell at the distance he was from Rookwood if he was already Marked or not. He had a great deal of confidence in his passive Legilimency, but detected nothing from any of the group, which suggested they might all be Unspeakables. The fact that they had refused accommodations in the castle, and instead camped in a large tent on a side lawn merely reenforced the idea.

And Harry was not about to try any active Legimency on an Unspeakable. He would have to try and

get within five or six feet of the man. If he reached for the Dark Mark from further away, a sensitive target might detect the probe, although there would be little he could do about it. Still, Harry did not want to draw attention to the students.

It took Harry over two days to pass close enough to Rookwood without alerting him that his Mark was twitching and sending off a faint response to an inquiry.

Harry smiled nastily at the Unspeakable, who sneered back.

Friday, October 1, 1971

"Where is that git," Florida Fawltly-Forbisher demanded. Each Unspeakable had a turn in the rota for cooking, and this morning it was Rookwood's turn.

"Hey, Augie!" St. John Smith-Smythe called out. "I don't smell bacon!"

"I think we should wake the little bastard up," Leighton Lancaster suggested. "Perhaps if we shoot an icicle up his bum?"

"You aristocrats are so childish," Sonya Sarum pointed out. "I would think teasing anyone as accomplished as any of us over failing to correctly set up a 'wake-me-up' charm would be adequate entertainment."

"Really?" Smith-Smythe drawled.

"Well, that and the fact that a rectally inserted icicle with enough velocity to penetrate through blankets and whatever nightwear dear Augustus favors might be more than merely painful," she pointed out.

"Good point," Fawltly-Forbisher had to agree.

"How about four buckets of ice water?" Lancaster suggested.

"Much better," Sarum agreed. The four grinned and stood up.

Unspeakables tended to have much in common. Nearly all were Pure-bloods, and all were raised with deep understanding of magic. Few loathed the Muggle world, however, and often pursued University degrees. For centuries, they had studied Philosophy and Mathematics, and had added Physics, Engineering, and Archeology in the twentieth century.

The four stopped smiling as they entered Rookwood's suite and saw that not only was he very dead, but that he had the now-infamous Dark Mark on his left forearm.

Chapter VII

Sarum was the first to see what was beside the body, shouting, "Hey, there's a note!"

The four approached the note cautiously, lest it be hexed in any way. To their surprise, it wasn't, and later study showed that not only was there no magic on the note, neither were there any traces of the writer. Sending it on to a Muggle forensics lab told them nothing, other than the fact that the paper was moderately high-grade and common in the stationary section of almost any large shop in Britain which sold such supplies, while the ink was equally unremarkable.

Dear Unspeakables:

You are all noted for being clever. If you are as intelligent as you are clever, you will not worry too much about how four evil students lost their magic or how Rookwood lost his life. We are Hogwarts. The last magical blood heir of Slytherin, Tom Marvolo Riddle (Voldemort, in case you folks haven't been paying attention) has been magically disinherited. All of Hogwarts, all of the Founders' magic still in existence, now answers to nothing Dark, nor will we tolerate anything Dark to act upon that Darkness upon our grounds. We are Hogwarts, and our Order helps watch over Britain.

If you were as wise as you are clever, you would seek out the other Unspeakable who bears the Dark Mark (there is at least one other besides Rookwood), and be more worried about that person's and Rookwood's infiltration of you than you are the loss of Rookwood or the loss of magic in for Dark students.

If you need a stronger hint, stick around. We warn you, you will not like it.

The Founders

PS The second page has a list of the Unspeakables we are fairly certain do not have the Mark. Rookwood burned out his own mind rather than allow us to take the information. These others, who may be on your list of candidates, are also free as best we know.

"Wands out, so we can stun one of us if necessary?" Florida Fawltly-Forbisher suggested, no longer looking as foolish as she often did.

The other three nodded, and Leighton Lancaster gently pushed the top sheet off of the bottom with the butt of his wand, so that they could all tell he wasn't doing any magic. Each was relieved to see all four of their names were on the list, along with twenty-three others.

There were always 60 Unspeakables in Britain. When one died, the remaining members decided on the replacement. Harry had known about Rookwood, and had also known that the only two additional Unspeakables who bore the Mark in his original time period had been recruited after Dumbledore's death. Therefore, when he had seen in Rookwood's mind, just before the Unspeakable's suicide, that there was at least one other, he knew it could be none of the Unspeakables he had known who were already active. Nor was it any of these four. Which of the other 32 remaining Unspeakables it was, however, he could not be certain.

"I do believe our mission here is best . . . suspended for the moment," Smith-Smythe suggested.

The other three agreed. They had a meeting to arrange with twenty-three of their fellows. Unfortunately, none of the senior Unspeakables from 1971 had survived until Harry grew to know the members of the Department in 1998 and beyond, so all twenty-seven cleared members were at best in the middle-ranks of the department.

"Good morning, Mister Potter."

"Good morning, Headmaster," Harry answered. "Aren't we being formal this lovely morning," Harry teased.

"I would hope you would not be offended by the fact that I have been verifying what parts of your story I am able to," Dumbledore said.

"Of course not."

"So, you are the de facto Heir of Merlin and in some fashion, to all Four Founders," Dumbledore had to admit. "And I mean that in the legal sense, not just the magical sense, which I did not doubt."

"Which means you know that despite being physically just eleven, I have the right to fire and appoint nearly anyone I wish to the Board of Governors, and may occupy at least two or three of them myself once I turn seventeen, or ignore the Board altogether when I turn seventeen and run Hogwarts myself, if the other heirs don't come forward," Harry said with a smile. "And unlike most other of the world's Ministries, ours has always claimed it is the successor of Merlin, in part because of his reputation throughout the entire magical world, which has always allowed our Ministry to claim to be 'first among equals', and in part because Merlin had no blood heirs, and the last declared magical heir was Gryffindor."

"Until now," Dumbledore said.

"Until now, if I declare it officially," Harry agreed with a wide grin.

"And those other three vaults?" Dumbledore almost pleaded for the information.

"Maybe some other time," Harry said standing. "Right now, there are four frightened Unspeakables on their way here. I have just enough time to leave before they get to the base of the your stairs." Harry started for the door.

"Four?" Dumbledore frowned. "Where is the fifth?"

"Him?" Harry said darting out the door. "He was a Death Eater."

Dumbledore sighed.

"Are you alright, Harry?" Remus asked. The four First year Gryffindor boys were good friends, but they had quickly split into two pairs of best friends -- James and Sirius, Harry and Remus.

Harry shrugged, and Remus frowned. His parents were a pleasant, average, magical couple. His

father's various ancestors were only magical for between three and five generations, while his mother had been Muggle-born. They ran a small shop in a village -- the only shop in the village, in fact. 'Lupin's -- Post Office and Stores' sold mostly to Muggles, and had a special 'back room' for the few magical families nearby.

Remus had been bitten in part because his father had helped kill a truly nasty werewolf from the area. The werewolf's mentor, who went under the name Fenrir Greyback, had bitten Remus in retaliation. Remus had been kept partially sequestered from nearly everyone since he had been bitten six years before.

Because of all this, Remus was a very well-read lad, both by disposition and by circumstance (there was little else for him to do at home but read and tend the family greenhouse). He therefore had no experience in social settings, and tended to be shy. He had been very glad to meet someone like Harry, even if his knowledge of Remus' curse had been disconcerting, to say the least.

Sirius and James were much like Pure-bloods liked to pretend all Pure-blood children should be -- amazingly bright and boisterous, and (usually unintentionally) condescending to their social inferiors. Remus was amazed at how easily the pair did magic compared to everyone (other than Harry) in their classes. If it hadn't been for the fact that the Muggle-born Evans and the Half-blood Snape and himself often came so close (and always outdid the other Pure-bloods), Remus might have wondered more often if the propaganda wasn't true if he didn't room with the pair of them.

Sirius and James spent a fair amount of time in the common room, having fun and socializing. Only Remus and Harry knew that for at least an hour every day, the pair was in their dorm, reading and practicing magic like crazy. Their brilliance was not a sham, but the ease of magic they had in the classroom and in the common room was in part due to that hard practice done out of sight.

Harry was on a different level altogether. James and Sirius were convinced that Harry was doing much the same as they were, but during the time in the morning when they were all asleep and Harry (who seemed to only sleep four or five hours a night) was awake. Remus, who often slept poorly because of the Curse, believed that Harry was so powerful because he could not yet imagine his limits.

Remus said nothing, in part out of pure friendship, and because Remus realized that sooner or later, Sirius and James could figure out his secret. They would then (drawing from his limited experience and his parents' fears) either put up a fuss or blackmail him. Having Harry as his friend would likely protect him from the former and help keep the payments low on the latter.

Remus still wondered if Harry might not betray him or blackmail him as well. After a month, however, he had decided that Harry would never betray him unless he had done something particularly vile to Harry first.

"Are you ready to do some flying?" Harry asked.

Remus nodded. "I don't think I'd want to be a Quidditch player or broom racer, but flying is more fun than I expected."

"I just wish First years could try out for Quidditch," Harry complained, not for the first time. "I think I could make Seeker, and James would have at least a shot at Chaser."

"Sirius is the most Quidditch-mad of the three of you," Remus said. "You don't think he could do it?"

"Sirius is a Beater, through-and-through," Harry answered. "He has the flying skills, but he needs to be a bit older and put on some muscle before he can out-beat the older students."

"Good point," Remus agreed, ignoring the four Unspeakables rushing past them.

Sunday, October 17, 1971

"Potter!"

Harry paid the yelling girl at the entrance to the common room no mind as he read the old edition of Dark Lords Through the Ages. That was a mistake, as Lily Evans bent down next to Harry's left ear and screamed, "POTTER!"

"Arrrgh!" Harry screamed in turn as he fell out of his chair, to the collective giggles and chortles of many in the room. "What the bloody Merlin are you screeching about?" Harry frowned. "And since when do you call me 'Potter', Lily?" Harry added in a pout.

"Do you know what your no-good, immature, pranking arse of a brother and his clone did to me?"

Harry looked at Lily. "At a guess, they somehow turned your red- hair hot pink, except for your eyebrows, which are acidic green, and your eyelashes which are . . . some sort of. . . ."

"They're fuchsia!"

"Okay. Why scream in my ear about it?" Harry asked, curious.

"This would take at least Third year charms and probably Fifth year finesse!" Lily claimed. "Do you think I should believe those two stooges could do that without your help?"

"Honestly, yes," Harry said. "Sirius is always too excitable, but they are both good researchers. When James wants to, he has quite the steady hand. In any event, I didn't do it."

"You promise, Harry?" Lily asked, calming down.

"Yes. Unless you do something to me, you don't have to worry about my pranking you," Harry said.

"Thank you," Lily said. "And I'm sorry I accused you and yelled in your ear."

"And?"

Lily looked meek, unusual for her. "Can you cancel the spells?"

"Of course," Harry answered.

Lily looked at Harry, who looked back. After several seconds, Lily huffed and asked, "Would you PLEASE cancel the spells, Harry?"

"Of course," Harry said, saying the spell and waving his wand. Lily's auburn mane with red

highlights appeared.

"Thank you," Lily said, stalking away and muttering about Potters in general.

"Are you sure you don't like her?" a Third year girl teased.

"I like her like a sister," Harry replied. The girl winced, knowing the only feelings less likely to lead to romance were revulsion and boredom.

Harry put off going back to his 'reading' (he had not only read the book in the future, but he and Hermione had done a new edition). Instead, Harry went back to eavesdropping on the Seventh year students, discussing magical politics.

Harry had not been surprised that none of the Death Eaters had turned themselves in, although he had hoped. He had been slightly surprised that none of those he had publicly exposed as being Death Eaters had been so much as brought in for questioning, at least according to Dumbledore, who was in a position to know. The only Death Eater exposed so far was a second mole in the Unspeakables -- and when she had been exposed the group had then stopped questioning the other members.

Harry was beginning to wonder if he had been brought to a slightly different universe than his own, one where the wizards were even more stupid and illogical than in his own. So far, checking as much as he could from Hogwarts, he could find no evidence to support that theory.

Harry smiled as he remembered the American historian he had seen once on a cable show in 2009, who had declaimed, "You can never underestimate the power of stupidity in setting the course of historical events." Harry felt he was in the middle of a prime example. He knew his presence had to have had some effect on Voldemort and his followers, but had no idea if his effects on wizarding Britain in general were good or bad.

At Hogwarts, things seemed a bit different at least. He knew that Bellatrix had not left Hogwarts early the last time, and that the departure of her and her three fellow future Death Eaters had sweetened the atmosphere in Slytherin. Eighteen of the Slytherins had actually joined the League, pointing out that ambition could be meritorious.

Harry had plenty of time to consider such things. The practical side of his classes were of course child's play, and the theoretical side was nearly as basic. Harry therefore was spending his time exercising and reading everything he could that was 'age-appropriate', magical and Muggle.

Harry was sad but not really surprised at how anti-Muggle wizarding literature and the related arts were. The Adventures of Martin Miggs, the Mad Muggle was only the tip of the iceberg. Everything, right down to 90% of the songs on the official WWN, were designed to remind the wizarding world that wizards were wonderful; Muggles were dangerous, duplicitous, and childish; and that other magical beings were irrelevant and should be subservient.

Harry wondered more and more if the British wizarding world was worth defending once Voldemort was gone.

Sunday, October 31, 1971

Albus Dumbledore worked hard. One thing he looked forward to was sleeping in on Sunday mornings. He would awaken at 7:30 and have a sweet breakfast in bed from 7:45-8:15.

Dumbledore was enjoying his third cup of dark hot chocolate when he heard a knock on his out chamber door. He sighed, and thought of the Poe poem. Albus sighed again and merely sent a bit of wandless magic to open the door.

A few seconds later, Filius Flitwick came in. Flitwick closed his eyes with a sigh for a moment, seeing the Headmaster in a stripped orange and violet nightgown and an open lime green dressing gown with dancing fiery red elephants. "Yes, Filius?"

"I thought you should know that there has been another letter sent out by the Order of Founders," Flitwick said.

Dumbledore frowned and looked around his bedroom.

"You would not have received one, Albus," Flitwick said gently.

"Why not?" Dumbledore asked, but he realized he already knew the answer as soon as he had asked the question.

"I would imagine that I was the only member of the teaching staff to get one, as I had a grandfather who was a goblin," Flitwick said. "Hagrid no doubt got one as well. No Pure-bloods, no Full-bloods, received this."

Dumbledore sighed again as he took the papers. The first page was filled with statistics, most drawn from studies put out by North American groups which opposed ancestry components in governments. As far as Dumbledore knew, their numbers were accurate, as they showed the breakdown of the membership of the British Ministry of Magic, and worse, showed the relative salaries. It was clear that no one not at least a minimal Full- blood could reach even a mid-grade position, other than with the aurors and hit wizards, and even there, there were none in the very top positions. It was also clear that no Pure-blood currently working for the Ministry had ever been hired at any of the five lowest pay scales, nor had any Full-blood been hired in the lowest three. For those with the same pay scales and years in grade, Pure-bloods averaged 18% higher salaries over average, Full-bloods 12%, despite the fact that the others usually had more total experience, because of their start in lower grades.

The next page again outlined the breakdown of how few Full-and- Pure-bloods there were, and then how their economic stranglehold was nearly as powerful as their political one.

Next came the actual letter.

Friends:

In our last missive, we told all of the adults in magical Britain and Ireland who most of the known Death Eaters were. How many of them have been interrogated?

None.

The Pure-blood Clique running the Ministry is protecting their own, even as the Death Eaters strive to destroy the Ministry.

Is this oxymoronic, or merely moronic?

Or is it treason?

The only Death Eater dealt with by the Government was an Unspeakable, and even she was caught only because our senior advisors had already caught and executed one other Marked Unspeakable/Death Eater and informed the Unspeakables there was at least one other in their ranks. They looked until they found one and apparently allowed her to commit suicide instead of questioning her correctly. If there was more than one, they chose not to look.

What does this tell us about the Death Eaters, their Master Tom Riddle/Voldemort, and the Government? It tells us that the Death Eaters and Government share the same basic common values. Both want those not of 'the best blood' to know their places. Both demand that beings who are not human or fully human who are both intelligent and magical have even fewer rights. One group controls all power and wants to keep you, the majority, disenfranchised from political, economical, and social power. The other group wants you dead or enslaved.

The choice your 'government' is giving you is fighting true evil and therefore tacitly accepting your own status of being an inferior or dying. They want you to fight to keep them in power, not because they care about you, but because the other side will treat you even worse than they do.

The solution is not for us to fight Riddle and his Death Eaters for you. We vow to end Riddle's life if we can, but will that really solve your problems, either with the Government oppression or with the Death Eaters who want to rule without even the minimal rules the Ministry follows?

Do NOT wait for us to solve your problems. You all have a wand, most of you know your magical neighbors. Band together, train together, plan together. Do not allow Voldemort and his bullies hurt you. If they attack, destroy them. The only one you would probably not be able to defeat is Riddle himself, who is a powerful sorcerer, who has also managed to enchant himself. You all know the three curses the Death Eaters will get away with using on you, but which the Ministry will punish you for using. Don't use those. If the Ministry tries to pass laws forbidding you to organize, forbidding you to protect yourselves and your families, then get rid of the Government as well.

The Founders will work hard to protect your children at Hogwarts from the remaining Pure-blood extremists there, and from the minor Pure-blood prejudices of some of the staff. The Order will eliminate any bearing the Dark Mark we come across.

YOU must decide what kind of magical world you want you and your family to live in. One dominated by a few old families, or one where merit may win out, at least in Government.

Some might worry that we are trying to provoke civil war, or at least civil disobedience. At this point, we do not recommend either. It is the Ministry who will determine everyone's next step, not us, not you, not even Tom Riddle. Will they put most of their efforts into capturing Riddle's Death Eaters, cutting off the flow of tribute which support him and his? Or will they put their investigators on to us? Or will they react by issuing new decrees, attempting to keep all of you in your 'proper place' -- under the thumb of the small faction of Pure-bloods?

Time will tell.

The Order of Founders

Dumbledore couldn't help himself. He sighed.

Voldemort silently burnt the copy of the letter which had been left for him. Part of him was outraged, but still, he realized the letter was correct. He had succeeded as much as he had because the Ministry was corrupt, incompetent, and filled with those who had some sympathy for his message if not the violence. The next move was up to the Ministry. He could only hope it would maintain its long record of doing the wrong thing.

Chapter VIII

"So," Dumbledore said, "you are trying to start a civil war."

Harry shrugged. "It might turn out that way," he agreed.

Dumbledore stared at Harry.

"What?" Harry demanded. "As I said in the letter, the next move is up to the Ministry. If they are so stupid as to devote most of their energies into investigating 'The Order' and harassing the average wizard instead of attacking the Death Eaters, then they'll reap what they sow." Harry grinned. "And just think, two more Death Eaters were executed last night, as was that bastard Greyback." Harry snorted. "I'm sure HIS death will be trumpeted in the press, since he was a werewolf, even if I did claim he was associated with Riddle."

Dumbledore simply gaped at Harry.

"Look," Harry said, "Aren't you the Chief Mugwump or Head Pooh- bah or something? Don't you have any real power at the Ministry?" Harry's eyes narrowed. "Or do you just want to keep power within the little Pure-blood clique? Is that why you protected the children of Death Eaters as they became Death Eaters in turn from their own actions in my time?"

Dumbledore was stunned for a moment, realizing that he was the member of the staff whom the letter had accused of harboring Pure-blood bias. He shook his head and tried to jump back a point. "Harry, you were, I understood from what you told me, basically Muggle-raised. Democracy is a fine thing, in theory. . . ."

"If you say ANYTHING about mob rule, I may have to hurt you," Harry growled. "Representative democracy has many faults, but that isn't one of them. I am certainly not trying to create, let alone force, pure democracy on anyone. I know that is mere rule of the opinion of the moment. And believe me, I saw how the Muggles messed up trying to shoehorn democratic ideas into cultures that weren't ready for them, from the falling communist states to over-thrown dictatorships." Dumbledore blinked at that, since he was well-aware of the 'cold war' then currently going on.

"Some failed totally, because cultures cannot be forced to be democratic. They have to grow into the idea. The ones that worked grew into the forms with some birthing pains. Some of which were pretty ugly, corrupt, and even bloody. In almost every case, though, the resulting society was a hell of a lot better off than the dictatorship or oligarchy it replaced, and in none was it worse in most ways. Believe me," Harry concluded, "the only thing I'm trying to force people to do is think, which is difficult enough."

"You have given me a lot to think about," Dumbledore admitted.

"So I have," Harry said. "If the Ministry spends most of its resources on going after the Death Eaters, then they don't have to worry about my writing any more letters for a while. Unless you somehow clue them in, I doubt they can ever get after me directly. If they go after the majority of wizards who just want to live a quiet life, they will stir up a sleeping giant which would make the actual giants seem tame and reasonable."

And with that, Harry took his leave. That left Dumbledore to try and direct forces he only had

nominal influence over towards the proper goals. Dumbledore had decided that if the Death Eaters could be neutralized (and if he could ever locate that diary/Horcrux, which would allow Harry to destroy Voldemort), then the wizarding world (by which he meant Britain) could go back to the ways things should be.

He hoped.

From what Harry had told him, the Death Eaters had become by late 1973 or so the most directly violent of any Dark force in history. Grindelwald had caused more death, stirring up several Muggle wars, plus the wizarding confrontation which had lasted over a generation, but there had been more direct murders perpetrated by the Death Eaters. The May Massacre had equalled the worst of any previous such attack in European wizarding history.

The Old Families had failed, many backing Voldemort tacitly if not openly. The Ministry had been largely ineffective. The International had left the British alone (at their own request).

'Maybe,' Dumbledore thought, 'I should just let Harry alone, other than finding that cursed diary. The quicker Voldemort is stopped, the better chance society has of surviving in its current form.'

Harry returned to the common room to see James and Sirius mutely hanging in cages from the ceiling. Harry shook his head and pinched the bridge of his nose. "What did they do this time?" he asked in resignation.

"The little buggers took my broom," Georgia Anderson, one of the Chasers snarled, "flew up the stairs to the girls' dorms, and crashed into the main showers."

"We ought to blind the little pervs," one of the other girls shouted.

"Two questions," Harry said. "First, why did you leave your broom lying around the common room?"

"Well. . . ."

"I think we can guess," Harry teased. Georgia flew after breakfast on Sundays with her boyfriend from Hufflepuff, and then shared the gossip with her friends in a corner. Georgia blushed, knowing that even the First years knew what she was up to.

"Second," Harry went on, "what makes you think they knew it was the shower room? It could have been an accident."

"They were dressed as pirates, shouting 'where are the wenches?' as they flew up the stairs, and sang a chantey about 'sea chests' as they blew through the shower room door," Alice Grant retorted drily. "Not to mention what they said to those two."

Harry noticed then that Lily and Ellen were sobbing quietly in a corner, hurriedly dressed and still with wet hair.

"What did you say to them?" Harry turned and snarled at the pair. James and Sirius winced, but were obviously under silencing charms.

Alice considered, and then leaned over and whispered, "Your brother said, 'we can see some chests, but those two are just boards'. Black said, well . . . he said, 'and look at those ugly knotholes'. Do I need to tell you where they were pointing?"

Harry glared at James and Sirius, who both winced. Harry took a deep breath and said, "If you leave them up there too long, someone will have to change their diapers, and it isn't going to be me. It will be whoever put them up there."

Several girls wrinkled their noses.

Harry went over to Lily and Ellen. "I apologize for my idiot brother and friend." He leaned over and hugged each one, kissing them on the cheek in turn. "Assuming you don't retaliate, I can promise you, they won't prank you again this term." Harry stood and glared at James and Sirius. "Swear on your magic," Harry demanded.

James and Sirius looked appalled.

"You went over the line, and you both know it," Harry stated. James and Sirius both silently had to agree with that. "You both know a mere apology won't cover it, and we all know that you won't be able to hold off past Christmas anyway. So, the truce will be your apology, and if they prank you, the truce is off."

James and Sirius considered that, and James nodded his agreement. Sirius scowled and then did the same.

"Could someone let them out so we can go to our room?" Harry said. "I need to yell at them some more."

Harry led the shame-faced pair to their room, where he did scold them for ten minutes on why they had gone over the line, which, when they understood the implications and the possible official punishments they could have been given, made them sorry they gone as far as they had.

"Do you two have anything else to say?" Harry demanded.

"We really can't prank until Christmas?" Sirius pouted.

"You can't prank Lily or Ellen until then," Harry pointed out. "The rest of them are fair game."

"Oh," Sirius said, brightening, "that's not so bad then."

"Nothing else? Then I just have one more thing I want you to tell us about," Harry said severely as Remus came in and closed the door.

"What's that?" James asked, worried.

Harry smiled. "Tell us about the other girls' tits."

As Harry had predicted, there were strong calls for the Ministry to seek out and punish 'The Order of Founders' for killing alleged Death Eaters, and demands from Pure-bloods to pass strong measures against any group trying to create 'militias' or 'self- defense groups', pointing out that these

laws would also apply to 'real' Death Eaters.

Instead, thanks in part to the behind-the-scenes whisperings of Dumbledore, the Ministry took a 'wait-and-see' attitude on those issues. This was because the Ministry and Wizengamot members with the real power understood that if they could quickly deal with the threat of violence that Voldemort posed, they might still avoid a confrontation they likely could not win against the majority of their own citizens.

All the Death Eaters Harry had listed were brought in and questioned under Legilimency and truth serums, and all were found to be Death Eaters, naming a few others, plus supporters who were sending Voldemort cash (including Sirius' mother, behind his father's back, as well as her brother). None had bothered hiding, because they did not believe it necessary. In the original time line, the Ministry had only become serious about tracking down Death Eaters around 1976 and had never thought to track any other money until 1997.

By Christmas, all of Voldemort's Death Eaters but nine were serving ten years to life in Azkaban. Three had escaped altogether, while six had been Kissed. Each of the financial backers had been fined twice the amount they had donated (Mrs. Black's was one of the lowest fines, at 2000 Galleons, while the Malfoys had to pay the highest, 240,000).

Voldemort himself, however, would still be at large, having killed the six aurors and three hit wizards who had gone to bring him in for questioning. That fight had brought Harry the first twinges in his scar since he had arrived in the past.

Despite extensive searches in all the properties of the Death Eaters, the diary had not surfaced. Voldemort was still not killable in any real sense.

Flying under the Ministry's fairly incompetent notice, several extended families tried to band together, along with several groups of friends. These various group all quickly discovered that their knowledge of magical theory fell short of what they needed to do, as did their conception of exactly what they would need to do to protect their properties and families. Granted, the books that 'the Order' had recommended helped them set basic wards. However, those wards could only do so much.

A few of these people, however, had Muggle relatives, and they sought out their relatives' advice on how they protected their homes and other properties. This resulted in three wizards and a witch accidentally arriving at the same home security firm looking for information at nearly the same time. Recognizing each other for what they were, they joined together in their researches.

Stonehedge Security Services was born at that afternoon in mid- December. Calling in expertise from their families and friends, including Muggles and Squibs who knew about the magical world, the company launched an underground recruiting drive just before Christmas. In early February, 1972, they sprang the surprising result on wizarding Britain -- moderately priced home security. This included: 1) Muggle-inspired alarm systems (the rules on enchanting Muggle items for wizarding use were looser than they had become in the 1990s of the original time line; so long as the objects were not hazardous to Muggles or let loose in the Muggle world, they were legal) which easily tied into the wards 'the Order' had recommended and which alerted a central office which could respond; 2) the central office itself, which would not only alert the aurors but which also had its own small security force, led by three retired aurors; 3) a few skilled individuals who could cast stronger or more specialized wards.

A few of the more elitist Pure Blood Families protested, if only because it undercut their feelings of superiority to know that about half the wizarding population could now afford similar levels of protection as they did in their ancient estates. Since SSS had filed enough paperwork to show that they were working to help the aurors, and not against them, the Ministry bowed to the 'bourgeois progressivism' this move represented. By the start of the next summer, there were two other similar companies, prices had lowered by 20% (so that by then nearly 3/4 of the families could afford some extra protection if they chose to), and the already low general crime rate was down almost 60%.

As Voldemort was not yet captured, it also gave people the confidence to continue demanding that the Ministry keep hunting for him. They all (including the Ministry) ignored the fact that while the new security measures would help against any new Death Eaters, they would not be enough to stop Voldemort himself.

It was the second home security company -- Magi-Watch! -- which captured just over half of the total non-governmental market within two years. even though they announced their company a few weeks after SSS. This was in part because they also employed goblins, house elves, vampires, and werewolves in addition to wizards, Squibs, and Muggles who had magical relatives and therefore knew about the magical world. While SSS had a larger share of the actual home security business (not everyone wanted a vampire watching them by night), MW! had over 80% of the business market. Their success in the business/home security market was mostly due at first to an enthusiastic young Pure-blood lured from his position in the Ministry -- Arthur Weasley. When Harry had set up the company with the goblins and his father over Christmas (he was just a bit behind the founders of SSS, but had thought of the idea independently), he made certain he made Arthur's employment a condition.

Back at Hogwarts that autumn, however, Harry had decided after the broom incident that James and Sirius needed direction. Therefore, he coaxed them into forming the Marauders a bit early (the original four had done so at the end of their First year). Their long-term goal was the creation of what Harry knew would become the Marauders' Map, from an idea of James'. There also followed a series of minor pranks perpetrated against Fifth through Seventh years in all Houses as well as some on all the Slytherins. This was helped by the one other potion Harry had bothered memorizing besides the Wolfsbane Potion for the journey to the past. This other potion, combined with two charms and a minor hex, would infuse any foodstuff with an almost undetectable version of 'the Canary Cream Effect'. Harry justified this to himself by promising to seek out the Weasley twins if they ever decided to open any type of shop and invest in it.

It was Sirius who came up the idea of how to modify the potion to arrange different colors for the canary. Those dating members of other Houses would therefore be turned into the appropriate House colors. Most of the Slytherins caught, however, turned the most lurid color combinations.

Having turned Lily's hair different colors, James and Sirius were the main suspects, but only Dumbledore was prepared to believe that First years could really pull off such a prank, as no one realized that the Marauders existed as a team of four (as opposed to just James and Sirius). The pair actually diffused the idea that they might have been involved when they offered to turn all the House members' hair to the House colors for the late autumn Quidditch games. The other students reasoned that anyone that open about their mastery of coloring spells would not be the pranksters.

As the autumn term wound down, Harry felt that on the whole he could congratulate himself. He had maintained good relationships with James and Sirius, and had made real friends with Remus, Lily, and Ellen. He was also friendly with a wide-range of students, across the Years and Houses, mostly due to the League. Between the League and the absence of the most rabid future Death Eaters, Hogwarts itself was actually a fairly pleasant place, at least compared to the 1990s.

In almost any other year, Harry would have stood out like a beacon. Not this time, however. The teachers did not know what to make of many of the new First years. Sirius and James were the two most natural magic users to come along since Tom Riddle. Remus was just a short distance behind them, and Snape and Lily were barely behind Remus. Lily and Snape both had a drive to really understand magic, with James almost at their level and Remus and Sirius just trailing James. Behind those five were the normal range of students, from the dull to the brilliant (such as Ellen). Harry outshone all of them, of course, but with a little effort on his part he could tone it down to merely being the most brilliant First year student in the history of Hogwarts in the most brilliant class in well over a century and a half.

Dumbledore understood much of what was happening, of course, and was totally uncertain about what to do about Harry and what he represented and what he hoped to do. Therefore, as Harry had expected, Dumbledore mostly did nothing, and what he did do smoothed the way for the 'Order of Founders'. His own 'Order of the Phoenix' would also finally be up and fully running by Christmas, and Dumbledore planned to feed bits of information to Harry when he deemed it necessary.

James loved the holidays. His mother and father had promised to take him and Harry to Diagon Alley for some proper Christmas shopping this year. He knew he couldn't take much out of his vault, but he hoped he could get away with taken perhaps twenty Galleons. Harry had approached him, however, and reminded James that it would be difficult to slip any presents to Sirius without the Blacks finding out. Considering what had happened to Bellatrix and the other three students, the old guard Pure-bloods were still howling, and no doubt the first Gryffindor Black would be under closer observation than usual by his relatives.

James decided to let Harry get an envelope bespelled so that it would appear in Sirius' trunk Christmas morning with I.O.U.s from the Potter brothers in the card. James would simply owl Remus a card. That decided, James went back to thinking about what pranking items he could buy for Sirius, which Sirius could share with the other Marauders if needed. Dung bombs ruled, of course, that went without saying.

James decided to do things properly, and work up a list and then see what he could afford to buy.

Sirius was not looking forward to going to his parents' over the break. There would be no Christmas tree or stockings ('Filthy Muggle customs' in his parents' opinions). Nor would there be presents ('We supply you with what you need,' his mother would say). No, there would be a formal family roast beef dinner Christmas day, alternating between six different Pure-blood households. This year, it would have been at Malfoy Manor, had it not mysteriously burnt down. No doubt it would be at Grimmauld Place a year early.

His parents would be off to the formal Ministry Ball on New Year's Eve, and he and Regulus would have to be hungry until noon, as the twelve hours between midnight and noon New Year's Day was the house elf's yearly vacation.

'Next year,' Sirius vowed, 'I'll try to either stay here or get an invitation some place else.'

Remus was not looking forward to the holidays, and not just because there would be a full moon on Dec 31 at 20:20 UTC. He would have to stay at Hogwarts, so that he would have access to the Wolfsbane Potion. It was awful tasting stuff, and made him feel like he was walking through water. Still, he had not bitten himself once during the entire autumn term. He had not missed one class. And so far, neither James nor Sirius had questioned his not feeling well and spending one to three nights every month in the Infirmary (even though he really only needed to be gone on the night where there was a full moon, the others were there to disguise the timing).

Remus sighed. He would also miss Harry. Remus had never had a friend before, let alone one as close as Harry.

Lily was driving her dorm mates a bit crazy as they prepared and took their end-of-term exams. She just loved magic! and was so pleased to show off what she had learned. She just wished she could show her parents what she had learned. She had been surprised to learn that at least one grandparent on each side of her family had been Squibs, and that many of her great-grand parents had been magical. One great aunt had not only been magical, but she had even met her before she had been killed the previous May.

True, all of this had made her awful older sister even nastier than usual, but then, 'Pew-tunia' (as Lily sometimes called her) had apparently been nasty since their parents had announced Lily's impending arrival.

Ellen liked Hogwarts, but not as much as her friend Lily. She did want to get home and see both her parents and her twin sister, Elaine. Elaine was a Squib, and loved to learn about the magical world she was missing out on. By now, Harry could have told Elaine that while she would never be magical, her children, starting with Natalie MacDonald, would be -- but of course he couldn't.

Severus Snape watched as all the other First year Ravenclaw boys started to pack their things for the Yule holidays. He had no regrets about staying at Hogwarts. His family had never celebrated anything. They had never feasted. His father had thought marrying a witch would insure him an easy life.

It hadn't.

Snape had loathed his drunken, abusive father, and by extension (under his uncle's influence -- John Prince the Death Eater) all Muggles. His term in Ravenclaw and his time in the League had changed his bias to some degree. Now he hated magical bullies as well as Muggle ones.

It wasn't that he now liked Muggles, or Muggle culture. It was more that he had gained some balance. His Housemates had not jeered him or hexed him. He had arrived fully able to hex back, but was now glad he didn't have to. He had even made something of a friend. Peter was a natural

follower, and had elected for some reason to follow Severus.

Snape saw he was appreciated by his teachers and by many of his Housemates -- at least the ones who paid any attention to First years. He still did not get along with James Potter at all -- he was arrogant and had been responsible for the capture of his uncle, after all. Nor did he like Potter's friend Sirius Black. He did admire and respect Harry, however, and knew that as long as Harry was around, he could tolerate James and Sirius.

He wondered what it would be like really celebrating Christmas for the first time.

As Peter Pettigrew said his goodbyes to Severus, he thought about all the lovely treats his mother would have prepared for him. Running around the castle had helped Peter lose a little weight, and his mother would no doubt want to fatten him up a bit before he returned.

Chapter IX

Saturday, Christmas, 1971

Harry woke up at 4:00 and summoned Dobby. "Master Harry?" Dobby asked quietly.

"We haven't had much time to talk, have we?" Harry asked rhetorically.

"Master Harry?" Dobby asked, confused. Why would a master want to talk with an elf?

"I like you, Dobby," Harry said. "I hope you will always work for me. I know it's unusual, so I'll just say that once I leave Hogwarts, you may continue to be my elf, as you are now, or I can give you clothes and you can still work for me, except for pay, or you may find yourself someone else you prefer to work for."

Dobby blinked. After more than thirty long seconds, he said, "Dobby does not understand, but Dobby does think Master wished to say something nice to Dobby."

"I do," Harry said. "First, this is for you, and no, it's not clothes."

Dobby took the soft package, and opened it warily. His eyes went wide as he saw a large piece of magical cloth -- which meant that it could easily take on any color and keep it. "You may continue to wear the Potter pillowcase, if you wish," Harry said, "or that should make two other coverings for you, in any colors you want. If you don't want it use it now, you can later on."

"Thank you, Master Harry," Dobby said sincerely.

"Now if you could, please deliver these presents? I have some special instructions."

"Of course, Master Harry," Dobby said with a smile.

"Happy Christmas."

"Happy Christmas, Master."

As usual, Severus Snape woke up early, just past 6:00. He had nothing to do, but decided to get up anyway. His progress to the toilet was stopped when he saw there were actual gifts at the foot of his bed. He rushed to do what needed to be done and came back, amazed that the packages were still there.

There weren't many, but that was hardly the point. His mother had sent him some utilitarian socks and underwear, needed but not very much in the holiday mode. A single Cadbury chocolate bar, Muggle perhaps, but at least striking the right note, made up for that, as did her note. There was also a card from Peter, which made Snape feel rather low that he had not thought to do the same.

Oddly, there was another, bulky package at the bottom.

Snape opened it, and was surprised to see a kit of advanced potion ingredients, with extra bicorn

horn, boomslang skin, and, most oddly, pickled gillyweed. The note was even more unexpected: *To one of the two people who helps me understand why potions work as they do. Many thanks -- Harry.*

Snape froze and thought hard about this gift. Harry Potter understood potions as well as any other student in class, other than himself and Evans, and his actual brewing skills sometimes surpassed Snape's own. He did not need Severus Snape to get a good grade, yet was even nicer to him than he was to most other non-Gryffindors even if Potter didn't seem to actually like him. It also didn't seem as if Potter wanted anything from him, which was odd to Snape's way of thinking.

Of course, the Potters were some of the real nobility in magical Britain. For all Severus knew, this was how they had become so rich and powerful -- befriending talented people like himself early and then hiring them later on to work for the family.

Severus shrugged. He could never work for twits like James Potter or Black, no matter how charming others might find them.

Harry, however, might be different.

Remus woke up early because his werewolf's sense of smell had been tickling him for hours. When he sat up in bed, he started laughing. Remus had two food weaknesses -- chocolate and tea. And there was over twenty pounds of chocolate laying on his bed, along with his presents and cards. He also discovered tins and tins of various teas. Most of the chocolate and all of the tea was from Harry.

Dumbledore was nearly as pleased with his six pairs of thick, wildly colored socks.

Ellen woke up and smiled when she saw the gaily, magically wrapped package at the foot of her bed. She hoped it was from Harry, and was pleased that it was.

"What did you get?" Elaine asked sleepily. "Do you have a boyfriend?"

"Well, he's a friend and he's a boy," Ellen said, identifying Harry's handwriting.

"Let's see!" All their other presents were downstairs, under the tree.

Ellen was an excellent all-around witch, but she had a special interest in growing things. She was therefore very happy with the dozen packages of magically-preserved flower seeds, along with a Muggle window-box kit. She would take one package back to Hogwarts to grow on the window sill in the box and grow the others later. She also smiled at the chocolate frogs and funny card Harry had sent.

Lily awoke to screams coming from the twin bed next to hers. Lily sat up as their parents rushed in.

Petunia's parting gift to Lily in September had been a very ugly stuffed witch on a broomstick. ('Since that's what you're going to grow up looking like,' Petunia had sneered.) Lily knew she had

left it back in a drawer at Hogwarts.

Now, however, it was attached to the foot of Petunia's bed by string, mostly flying around in a circle. The four Evans' blinked at it stopped and hovered facing Petunia and cackled in falsetto, "I'll get you, my pretty!" and then went back to flying circles.

Despite the falsetto, Lily recognized the voice as Harry's. She thought he must have gotten some older students to enchant the toy, although how he had gotten it here was also a mystery. Obviously, his dislike of bullies extended to the Muggle world.

Petunia screamed again, and pointed at Lily's bed. There was a gift there, and the reindeer on the paper were all dancing. Lily explained away the advanced potions kit by saying she helped tutor a very wealthy boy in Potions, but admitted she had no idea about how it, let alone the toy, had been delivered. "Father Christmas must be a wizard," her mother said with a smile.

Petunia swore then and there never to let any child of hers believe in Father Christmas. Then she remembered what the toy witch had said to her right before she had screamed the first time -- "If you ever abuse a magical child, we will make certain you are punished in your world . . . and by ours."

For some reason, she felt no doubt that voice could carry out the threat.

The Potter twins enjoyed their Christmas. There had been a party the night before, and Harry had met some of his extended family and many of his father's business contacts, and some of the political ones as well. Christmas day, however, was for the household only.

The elves were each given two new pillowcases before breakfast. The magical and Squib staff, who kept the grounds and livestock, were given their bonuses after breakfast. The Potters did not go so Muggle as to have a Christmas tree ('A German custom, and mostly a Muggle one as well,' Mrs. Potter had replied when Harry had asked the day before, 'not an English magical one'), but they did get small presents in magical stockings which they had opened after the staff had left, and there had been presents to open before they had had breakfast. All in all, Harry decided that while he would add a Christmas tree if he ever got the chance, he quite liked a traditional Potter Christmas.

There were only ten students and five staff at the Christmas feast, with Remus and Severus the only First years. To Severus, it was the most enjoyable meal he had ever had. Granted, he wasn't pleased when he opened his Christmas Cracker to find his hat was a rather dowdy thing with a small stuffed vulture on top, but other than that, he truly enjoyed the day.

Of course, he could never figure out why, over the years, every hat in every magical Christmas Cracker he ever opened was a rather dowdy hat with a stuffed vulture atop it, but in the end, he would decide that was one of those annoying mysteries of magic which would never be explained.

The next morning, James was sent out to play on his broom before the weather changed for the worse that afternoon. Harry wondered what his parents wanted to talk to him in private about.

Harry sat and watched his nervous 'parents' fidget. "Is there a problem?" he asked.

His normally shy and retiring mother took a deep breath and demanded. "Exactly who are you and what have you done with our son?"

Harry cocked his head and asked, "What makes you think I'm not Harry Potter? I am, you know."

Mister Potter frowned. "Leaving aside all the other inconsistencies . . . I know most of the family has been called egotistical at one time or another, but I do find it difficult to believe an eleven year old has made better investments than I have."

Harry glared.

"Whoever you are," Mrs. Potter pointed out, "you are living in an eleven year old body. Of course your bank statements are copied to us."

Harry sighed and summoned Dobby. "Master Harry?" Dobby asked.

"Bring me the letter hidden 'under my mattress'," Harry said. There was no actual letter under his mattress, of course -- that was a code Harry had given Dobby to bring a letter that Henry James had left in Harry's care just in case Harold and Mary had become too inquisitive.

Dobby popped back, and Harry had Dobby hand it to Harold. It had been properly sealed, with both the family seal and Henry's personal seal. Only the addressee could open it.

The note was short, and very shakily written:

Harold:

Please listen to Harry. He has a most remarkable story to tell, and oddly enough, it's true.

Remember, my boy, I do love you.

Father

Harold looked at Harry. "Well?"

"I am Harry Potter," Harry said. "Harry James Potter. I was born, from my perspective, some thirty years ago, on the Thirty- first of July, 1980."

"WHAT!"

For the next hour, Harry told them briefly about his personal history, although he left off most of the names. Then, for almost half an hour, he told them about what he had done since entering the past.

"Well," Mary said, "as your fa . . . as Harold said, most Potters are accused of having huge egos. At least you have some good reasons for it."

"Do you object to a little more insider trading?" Harold asked.

"Harold!"

"Not at all, sir," Harry said. "However, the more you follow my tips, the more skewed the market will become, and the less likely some of them will work out."

Harold had to acknowledge that.

Mary had a different concern, "Won't this set up a time paradox?"

"You mean, since I won't be going back in time again to reset things, I won't exist?"

"Something like that," she agreed.

"No," Harry answered. "Both Luna and Hermione agreed that either it wouldn't work, or I'd be setting up an alternative time stream. In the other time stream, they are mourning my death and the deaths of the other two and knowing them, wisely using the fortunes I left them. This time stream is safe."

"You seem certain," Harold said.

"They were two of the most brilliant witches in Europe, but they looked at everything from totally different perspectives. Whenever they looked at anything complicated and come up not only with the same answers, but the same reasoning, it was true," Harry answered. "I hope they're both born in this time stream. The magical world can use people like them."

"Do you think that likely?" Mary asked.

"Actually, yes, but not certain," Harry said. "Hermione's parents are a few years older than James and I are, and are Muggles. I shouldn't have any direct influence on them. Luna's father has already left Hogwarts, and is currently working in North America on a three year study program. Her mother is a Seventh year at Hogwarts and is already in a prearrangement with him, and even if she's heavily involved in the League, she's still planning on joining her fiancé. The odds are, however, that I won't be born, as I am directly influencing James and my mother. They may or may not even get together."

"I hope you don't get together with her," Mary said.

Harry shrugged. "That could be odd. Still, biologically I am not related to her. Psychologically, well, I never knew her. I'm learning to know her as a friend."

"And you won't say who it is?" Mary asked.

Harry shook his head, "Not yet, but I don't plan on marrying my mother." Harry looked at Mary with puppy eyes. "Besides, you're the only mother I've ever really known."

Mary teared up, while Harold rolled his eyes. This boy was indeed a Potter. Most male Potters ran true to two types -- the arrogant, pure Gryffindors, like Henry James had been when younger, who often became heroic if they lived long enough, and the quiet heroes, like Harold himself. Both were often very charming. "Well, then, young Harry," Harold said, "if you have nothing better to do, why don't you come in with me to the office tomorrow. We'll talk business."

"Thank you . . . father."

Harold smiled and also gave into the puppydog eyes. "Harry, in some ways you might be my grandson, but you are still my son."

"Thank you, dad."

"So," Harold asked as he put away his paper work the next evening, "not very exciting, is it?"

"Compared to dueling or Quidditch, no," Harry said. "Compared to politics, yes."

Harold shook his head. At least he understood why Harry so often sounded so much older than 11.

"So tell me," Harry asked innocently, "when were you planning on telling your sons about the entail?"

Harold froze. After a few seconds, he pulled his wand and double-checked the privacy wards in office and then turned to Harry. "How. . . ."

"I ran the Potter Trust for over twelve years," Harry said. "I know that almost every piece of property is entailed." Which meant that it went to the oldest legitimate son. As Harry had been the last Potter, the entail had died with him. "I also know most of the money is tied up with the Trust, which the oldest son will control. Grandfather Henry left me every Knut he legally could. You won't be able to leave me much more, at least percentage-wise. Even if, say, a total of two hundred thousand Galleons is a fantastic lump sum, even twice that amount wouldn't provide for a luxurious lifestyle, considering there's a chance I might live to nearly two hundred, even if James gives me an allowance," he concluded.

"I knew that, of course, which is why I made the financial plans I did," Harry went on. "In fact, I wouldn't mind stopping by Gringotts and making some minor adjustments, and you can join in some insider trading."

"Very well," Harold answered. "I was thinking about increasing your allowance to three thousand Galleons a year, by the way."

"From a Galleon a week to three thousand a year? That's quite a jump."

"I think you can handle it, unlike most First years," Harold said drily.

"Good point," Harry admitted.

"Harry, do you know what happened to Mary and me in the other time stream?"

"I've been wondering about that," Harry answered with a frown. "I was told that you both died of natural causes around 1979 and 1980, but the impression I was always under was that you were both quite old, even elderly, that Mum was at the outer limits of childbearing age, which for witches is what?" Harry's eyebrows went up, "why that's only in their mid-fifties. Even then, Mum would only have been in her mid-to-late seventies. It doesn't add up."

"For Pure-bloods, no, it doesn't," Harold agreed. "We age slower than the Muggle-born, and even more slowly than Muggles." Harold looked like he was in his mid-to-late thirties, Mary around thirty.

"Somehow, I think something got covered up," Harry almost growled.

"Even Muggles, at least in Britain, do not die of old age under the age of seventy," Harold agreed. "I think we'll be on the look-out for poisons. You seem to have rushed the last ten years of this Riddle's attacks and all the counter-attacks into just a few months in a few respects. Some of his followers might become desperate."

"How about an attack on this Ministry Ball?" Harry asked.

"I'll drop a few words in the right ears," Harold said. He knew almost all of the MLES people, since he had been close to his father.

"If there's not an attack," Harry said, "it would also be a likely place for the all Darker, more bigoted Pure-bloods to show what they think of what's happened since August."

Harold nodded. "I'll ask around and see that most of the right people are there, too." He looked at Harry searchingly.

"I told you why I took their magic," Harry said. "I did not kill those students, not even Bellatrix Black, Marked as she was."

Harold nodded.

Harold was shocked to see that Harry's investment meeting took only ten minutes. The rest of the two hours they spent in Gringotts were with the original vaults, where Harry entered the vaults in turn. Before they left the area, Harry had a rapid conversation in Gobbledegook with their guides. At the end of the conversation, Harold's surprise went to new levels as the goblins bowed to Harry, who then bowed in return.

"Do I really want to know?" Harold asked.

"If you mean the conversation, we're just being polite to each other," Harry said. "As for the vaults, well, there are no negotiable treasures or currency in them."

'No,' Harold thought accurately as he got into the cart, 'but I bet there's knowledge.'

Harry got into the cart more than satisfied. He decided to mention his plans for Magi-Watch! to his father and the goblins before they left the bank. The goblins had told him that if his portfolio continued to perform as it had, they would ignore his age and honor him as a goblin friend. If it didn't, his power over the vaults and his acknowledgement that he was behind the Order of Founders would have them give him that same title when he came of age in the wizarding world. Harry knew he would only keep the title as long as the goblins saw that he was acting without prejudice in his relations with the goblins and other intelligent magical beings.

As for Harry, by actually accessing the lowest vaults for the first time in this lifetime (as opposed to being accepted by them), he would be able to access numerous magical sites across Europe and even parts of Asia and Africa. Harry had accessed these vaults in his other life, but knew that he could not risk accessing some of the sites without having been passed by the guardians stored in the vaults in this life as well.

Harry's mouth twitched as he fought down his feelings. Had Dumbledore allowed Harry full access to Gringotts the summer after his Fifth year, he would have been introduced to the vaults then, instead of the summer after his Sixth year. That would have given him, amongst other powers, the ability to control the Veil, to rescue Sirius before the time limit (rescuing any victim was possible when the next equinox occurred).

He would return to the vaults the following summer, Harry decided, and remove some objects for the first time in over 1000 years.

Chapter X

"Kreacher! Kreacher!"

"Mistress called?"

Mrs. Black ignored the elf and turned on her two sons. "We are leaving. Regulus, go take your bath, then you go, Sirius. You are to go to your rooms immediately after bathing, and are not to leave until morning. Kreacher, lock them in."

"Yes, Mistress."

Regulus and Sirius wrinkled their noses, knowing this meant using the chamber pots if they had to. Both knew better than to argue, however.

"Come!" Orion Black was an overly-proud, powerful, and rather bigoted man. Still, while a bully towards most, his wife dominated him nearly as easily as he did any employee. Therefore, when told to get moving by his wife Walburga, he moved.

"What is your problem?" Mary Potter asked her husband.

Harold gave a jerk, which showed that he had indeed been off in his own little world. "Hey?"

"I asked what your problem was."

Harold sighed. "It looks so beautiful, doesn't it?" he asked, gesturing at the decorated atrium. The upper-level employees of the Ministry, plus spouses and a few of their older relations were there, as was the cream of wizarding Britain and Ireland, ambassadors of other Ministries, and several score other VIPs.

"It does," Mary agreed, curious.

"Yet I don't think any of this is real." He sighed. "Just think of what Harry has told us of his time line. Bigots, incompetents, cowards, and victims. That's what we have here. Decadent and lazy, that's what we are. Scum like Tom Riddle and his followers are a sign of just how low our culture has sunk."

"You may be right," Mary had to agree. "Look, there's Orion and Walburga Black, studiously avoiding that gaggle of Malfoys. Butter wouldn't melt in any of their mouths, and yet every one of them should have at least had larger fines levied."

"And here comes dear Gaius," Harold agreed as the elderly head of the Malfoy clan approached.

"Ah, Harold," he said. "I was hoping to see you here. I had thought perhaps you were out of the country."

"No," Harold said, "merely somewhat . . . unavailable." Between the loss of Malfoy Manor and the

high fines the Ministry had levied against them for financially supporting Riddle, the family had suffered greatly in terms of their wealth in ready treasure, just as losing Lucius, the rising star of the family, had thrown the internal workings of the family into disorder. Harold had been approached to provide a low-interest, unsecured loan, and having refused it three times, was not about to discuss the matter again. Gaius, realizing that, merely bowed and made his way to other possible financial backers.

"The loan?" Mary asked.

"No doubt," Harold agreed. "His normal backers were also fined, and if anything, I'm trying to make him sell out some of his resources at bargain prices. I have everyone I can think of aboard, and we'll split his assets, once he sells -- at a low price."

"And to think, that was before we talked with Harry."

Harold merely smiled. "I've always known who our enemies are, I just haven't known what to do about them." His face darkened. Mary understood what he was thinking. The Dark side of the wizarding world needed to be broken.

For good.

Sunday, January 2, 1972

While James and Sirius huddled in the far corner of the compartment, comparing their Christmases, Ellen and Lily each thanked Harry for their Christmas presents with a kiss to his cheek.

"I do wish I had given you something better," Lily fretted. She had given him a hand-made card, which Professor McGonagall had helped her enchant with her voice, saying 'Happy Christmas, Harry' and then singing 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen', and promising him any Muggle candy he might like.

"Trust me when I say I really will treasure it the rest of my life," Harry said sincerely. Lily would always be two people to Harry, the lively girl sitting on one side of him and his mother. The card with her voice singing to him would forever represent the mother, more than the girl. Harry held up the large Mars bar he had asked for, "This, however, I will only treasure until tonight."

You don't think we'll have a feast?" Ellen asked. She was by nature far too nice to be jealous, otherwise she might have felt a twinge. She also knew that Lily, for all her gifts, still didn't realize that Harry was of the highest nobility, and that you either accepted their gifts and friendship, or did not. You certainly did not worry about the cost of their gifts.

"If not, it will be close," Harry agreed. "Still, if Remus has eaten through all the chocolate I gave him, he might be craving more and this wouldn't be safe for long."

"Harry," Lily said seriously, "I won't ask how you got the gifts to me, or even how you knew about that doll my sister gave me, so I'll just say thank you again. It really scared her, and she was actually, well, not nice but at least she stopped being so obviously mean."

"What happened?" Ellen asked. She snorted in laughter when Lily told her. Ellen had never heard a

kind word about Petunia Evans, and while Lily's parents wrote her once a week, there had never been a direct word from Petunia, just news about what she was doing.

"Lily," Ellen said to her best friend that night, "can we talk?"

"Sure," Lily said, sitting on her bed.

Ellen sat near the foot of the bed, drew the curtains, and put up a weak silencing ward, which was the best she could accomplish. Lily looked at her friend, puzzled. "We need to talk about Harry, and the world of magic."

"What about them?" Lily asked.

"Except for growing up knowing about magic, and seeing my father do magic on occasion, my life wasn't all that much different than yours," Ellen said. "We both grew up in solid middle-class parts of the outer London suburbs. Even our parents are similar -- your father is a research chemist at a drug company, my father is a potions researcher associated with St. Mungo's, and both of our mothers are gardening nuts."

"True," Lily agreed.

"The difference is, you really have no idea how the magical world works, and our place in it, and you won't learn here at Hogwarts."

"Meaning?"

"Do you have any idea how the wizarding government works in Britain?" Ellen asked.

"Not really, other than there's a Ministry," Lily said. "Won't Professor Binns get around to explaining that at some point?"

"Apparently not," Ellen said. "You need a crash course."

"And this has to do with Harry?"

"Harry and James both," Ellen said. Seeing Lily wrinkle her very cute nose, Ellen said, "Harry is our close friend, but if anyone has a crush on you, it's James, or maybe Remus, not Harry. Now, listen up."

"The Ministry runs what government we have and was set up in more-or-less its current form in 1662. The European Ministries were set up hundreds of years ago and formalized, and almost fossilized, across Europe in the early 1700s. Still, the basic form of our Ministry was started in the late 800s. That's when the heads of eighty-four powerful English magical families came to together to form the Wizengamot. They put up some of the money for the founding of Hogwarts, and the heads of another sixty or so magical families from Wales, Scotland, and Ireland supplied the rest. They agreed to form a new Wizengamot, including all of their family heads, in 924. Some other families grew powerful while some magical families went extinct. Membership was redefined twice more, in the early 1200s and in 1662, but not since."

"So?"

"So, there are fifty members of the Wizengamot, and any new member is elected by the others." That made Lily blink. "Fifteen of the members have to be drawn from the remaining eighty or so heads of the original Founding Noble or Most Noble Families, either term is used, and fifteen of the others have to be drawn from them or from the heads of the other Noble families. Right now, the other fifteen 'elected' members are also all members of those families. The remaining five are the Minister, the Head of the MLES, and three other high Ministry officials, all named by the Minister. Any member, even the Minister, can be dismissed by a vote of thirty of the members to do so. The only other way to get rid of the Minister is for the Queen to do it."

"Queen Elizabeth knows about us?"

Ellen nodded. "The Minister is technically the Royal Wizard."

"So Harry's grandfather was on this Wizengamot?"

"He was, but he was even before he became head of the MLES," Ellen said. "The Potters are one of the Founding Noble Families, as are the Dumbledores and the Longbottoms. Well, actually, Gryffindor was, and the Potters are currently the oldest surviving branch of the House of Gryffindor. The Blacks are a Noble family."

"So Harry was right when he said he and those two clowns would be considered nobility."

"Yes, but it's actually worse than that," Ellen said. "I rooted around the used bookstores in Diagon Alley, and discovered some interesting things in some old pamphlets and genealogy journals."

"Such as?"

"Such as, as best I can tell, there has apparently never been a Wizengamot member of any of the thirty noble seats who was not at least considered a Full-blood, married to someone considered at least a Full-blood."

"So?"

"So, either Harry or James, whichever is the older, will be the Head of the family some day," Ellen said. "If it's Harry, if he were to marry either of us, he could never be a Noble member of the Wizengamot, and neither could his son or his grandson."

"James is older by twelve minutes," Lily said drily, "and I don't think either of us needs to think about marrying Harry for at least a few more years, and I at least doubt I would ever marry James Potter."

"Lily, there are slightly fewer witches than there are wizards, no one knows why," Ellen said, "plus some wizards maintain an old tradition of having a bondmate and one or two consorts. You'll also notice that about two thirds of any given year will be married within four years of leaving Hogwarts. And while the custom isn't as wide-spread as it used to be, I'd bet at least a third of us will be in pre-arrangements for marriage by the time we start Seventh year. It's never too soon to think of these things."

Lily shook her head. "This world is as crazy as the Muggle one, just in different ways."

It took Lily several days to get Harry alone to talk to him. "What's wrong?" he asked her.

"Ellen had a talk with me a few days ago," she answered. "It bothered me in lots of ways."

"Tell me about it," Harry suggested, and so Lily did. "Which parts are bothering you?" Harry then asked.

"Well, is the Wizengamot really that narrow?"

Harry nodded. "It serves the needs and interests of a few groups within about a seventh of the population, and those who aspire to get into it, or back into it. As for the Potters, we are more often on it than off it. James will be rich enough that he could marry you and still be eligible if you aren't radically-inclined politically, and if your son wouldn't be easy to get on, your grandson would be. Ellen doesn't know how well these issues are ignored when it suits the interests of those in power."

"James will be rich? Not you and James?"

"James doesn't realize it yet, but almost all the property and the Family Trust are entailed. Once I turn seventeen, I'll be able to claim twenty-six thousand Galleons a year, but that will be most of what I get."

"And that doesn't bother you?"

"That James will be one of the five or ten richest wizards in Europe, while I will merely have a guaranteed income greater than ninety-five percent of the magical world? No, not really." Harry put his hand on Lily's shoulder. "Despite what Ellen thinks, we are too young to worry about these things. You will always be my friend. James will always be a bit smitten by you. Remus will always make puppydog eyes at you and Ellen because you are both kind to him, and he seems to have led a very lonely life. James will always be a bit of a prat, but he's really not that bad a person."

Lily smiled bravely. "And was it true what she said about multiple marriages?"

"Yes," Harry answered. "There are actually a few sub-cultures within magical Europe. Some people live in communities that are technically mixed, but where almost everyone is either magical, a Squib, or is related to them. Some are so poor they basically survive only by their magic, by scavenging, and because they pay almost no taxes. There are also some families that hold themselves aloof from both magical and Muggle culture for the most part. This last group is the one who most commonly practice multiple marriages. In all of them, their magical women tend to marry out, while the first and third groups tend to marry non- magical women. Granted, the first group tend to marry Squibs or children of Squibs. The third group often take incredibly beautiful Muggle women as second and even third wives." Harry shrugged. "The multiple marriages are also more common in the rest of Europe than here."

Lily nodded. "Thanks for explaining some of this," she said. She wondered, not for the first time, if her future really laid in the magical world.

The wizarding world was astounded to learn in late January that there had been a prison break, the first in the history of Azkaban. Most of the imprisoned Death Eaters had been freed, although three had been killed while trying to escape. All were on the run, including Voldemort.

In reaction, over the next six weeks a group of the more progressive Pure-Bloods, led by Harold Potter, put severe economic and peer pressure on the Wizengamot. From mid-March through early May, the Minister, the Head of the MLES, the other three Ministry members, and nine other members of the Wizengamot were replaced. The Head of the MLES and the Chief Auror, Alastor Moody, exchanged jobs (much to the dismay of Barty Crouch, who had been angling for the position).

Five of the six members who were replaced were from the hard-core Purist faction, which had numbered a solid dozen. Gaius Malfoy had been the first of all the changes; his obvious ties with Voldemort, and the loss of much of his liquid assets, had helped there. The loss of his great-grandson, whom he had been grooming for his position as head of the Malfoy family, had taken most of the fight out of the elderly Malfoy.

The one member dismissed not directly connected with Voldemort was also one of the most corrupt members of the Wizengamot. He decided that the political winds were changing, and so he retired out of the country without a fight. Harold Potter was named to Malfoy's seat, and he orchestrated the other changes. By June, 1972, Voldemort would find that the climate of Britain was much more hostile than it had been before the attack in May, 1971.

Monday, February 14, 1972

Lily Evans angrily stalked back towards the common room. A contrite (at least for him) James Potter was dogging her footsteps. "Honestly, Evans! It was a mistake! I didn't mean for that to happen!"

Lily halted and turned on James, glaring. James pulled up short. He had given Lily a large chocolate heart, which might have earned him a few points. Unfortunately, he had also thought it would be funny to make the heart beat. He had over-powered the spell, and once activated by Lily opening the package, it had exploded a few seconds later. Lily was still covered in chocolate goo. "Your problem, James Potter, is that you never know when to quit. You have so many ideas bubbling in what passes for your brain that you never actually think out the consequences of any of them. Now, I accept your apology, but if I see you before dinner tonight, I'll show you a new hex I learned. It's called the 'testicle-knot'."

James wasn't sure if she meant 'knot' or 'not', and really did not want to learn which she meant. "I'm sorry. I'll do better next year!" he said before fleeing.

Lily snorted in disgust and stalked off to get cleaned up.

"So, other than the exploding heart, did you have a nice Valentine's Day?" Ellen asked that night.

"Except for that, I suppose so," Lily answered, still a bit cranky. "And you?"

"I doubt I got as many cards as you," Ellen teased.

"I got four," Lily said drily. "Assuming I would want to call the card reciting off-color limericks

from Black as anything more than an annoyance."

"Did you even get to read Potter's before the heart exploded?"

Lily shook her head. "It glopped all over the insides of the card. Not that I care what either of those two apes say."

"How about Remus and Harry?" Ellen asked.

"They both made me nice cards," Lily allowed. "Still, be honest, can you imagine Remus sharing chocolate with anyone?"

Ellen giggled at that, and said, "If he does, it will likely be the same as a marriage proposal."

Lily laughed at that. "And no, Harry didn't exactly give me chocolate." Seeing Ellen's confused expression, Lily dug under her pillows and showed her trophy.

A large jar of Nutella.

"Harry gave you that?" Ellen asked, still confused.

"Potter was teasing him about that Mars bar again, saying how superior magical candies are," Lily explained. "I told Harry how much I miss Nutella." Lily frowned. "What I don't understand is why, if Harry can get me Nutella, he doesn't get himself some Mars bars."

"Harry is odd that way," Ellen agreed. "If he needs something, like those astronomy magazines, he finds a way to get them. If a friend of his needs something or even wants something, he gets it for them. But if he just wants something, he doesn't bother."

"True," Lily agreed. "What did you get?"

"Cards from Remus and Harry, and sweets from Harry," Ellen admitted.

"What, exactly?"

"A chocolate heart like Potter gave you, except mine didn't explode . . . at least not yet, and some little cinnamon hearts." Ellen shook her head. "I had told Harry about liking those last November, when I was telling him about my trip two years ago to New York."

"Harry might be giving us both sweets we crave, but you're the one he's giving hearts to," Lily said. "So, maybe you can stop worrying about me stealing his heart when get older."

Ellen, with a birthday in late-September, was one of the oldest students in their class, while Lily, born in August, was the youngest. Ellen's nature was also more romantic than Lily's, so she would be about two years ahead of Lily in her interest in boys. At this point, Lily's outlook on life was still fairly androgynous, for which Ellen was grateful.

Chapter XI

Sunday, April 30, 1972

Harry woke up, sore and stiff. Old habits asserted themselves, and he took stock of his situation before making any movement which could alert anyone where he was, let alone that he was awake.

Aside from feeling slightly achy, only the back of his head really hurt. Something or someone had hit him there. Simply breathing told him three things: he was in the Infirmary, and Lily and Ellen were to the right. His next reaction was spontaneous -- a whimpered, "Mum?"

"Neither of us is your mother, Harry," Lily said.

"What happened?" he muttered.

"What's the last thing you remember?" Ellen asked, taking his hand on hers, and real worry in her voice. Lily placed a hand on his upper arm, and he could tell she was worried as well.

Harry frowned at their actions, and then remembered that they had been told he had had amnesia once before. He concentrated, and said, "We were coming out of the League meeting." Ellen's and Lily's grips slightly relaxed. "There was a group of a dozen Pure-Blood types, mostly from Slytherin, but with some Ravenclaws." He thought about that. "Eight Slytherins, four Ravenclaws, all at least Fifth years. Shackbolt asked why they were there, and things were said by both sides."

Then Harry remembered the rest. One of the Slytherins had looked at Lily and said, 'We don't want filthy Mudbloods like you reproducing and polluting our Pure world.' He had been lucky to have been wearing robes, because they partially deflected the vicious kick Harry had delivered to his groin. Harry flushed.

"I think he remembers," Ellen said.

Lily stood and said, "Thank you, Harry." She sat on the bed and gave Harry a hug.

Harry almost convulsively hugged Lily back, because he could not remember any of his birth mother's hugs.

"Are you sure you don't want to mother him?" Ellen teased. "It looks like he needs it."

Lily gave Ellen a wry smile, but said, "Sure, why not? I don't know if you know the term, Harry," she said, stroking his hair, "but I'll be your Wendy-lady if you want, and be your mother away from home."

To the girls' surprise, Harry's response was one sob, and he held on to Lily for some minutes. Slightly embarrassed when he finally let go, Harry merely said, "Thank you, I needed that." He turned to Ellen, and she was happy to share a hug as well. Madam Pomfrey came and chased the girls out a few minutes later.

Although Harry didn't realize it for some weeks, his fate with Lily had just been sealed. Although

she was never obvious about it, Lily was in most ways even more maternal by nature than Molly Weasley. However, she could never be romantically interested in someone whom she looked upon maternally. Harry, and Remus as well, now became her 'lost boys'. Although younger than both, she basically became their big sister/surrogate mother.

Even though Harry had an excellent surrogate mother in Mary Potter already, and Remus' mother cared for Remus as best she could considering his affliction, both boys were happy to be petted, primed, loved, and nagged by Lily for the rest of their time at Hogwarts and after.

Normally, this would have resulted in a fair amount of teasing aimed at the two boys. It was already very clear to everyone in Gryffindor, however, that Harry Potter was not a boy to be lightly teased. In fact, only Ellen and Lily could get away with any.

As for the twelve Pure Bloods, when Dumbledore refused to punish them, Hogwarts and 'the Founders' punished them instead, refusing to allow them out of their common rooms for the remaining Sundays of the school year. The same punishment had been inflicted on six of the League members who had been too enthusiastic in the brawl that had grown out of the confrontation. Nine others had to spend fewer weekends confined to their common rooms as well, including Harry, who was sentenced to three.

Neither Dumbledore nor the Governors were happy about the active role the castle was taking, as it was the first time in centuries that it had happened so openly, but there was little they could do about it. In fact, the Governors were reminded that since the castle had never magically accepted the Board they had little magical standing in the matter.

The Board was offered a chance to exercise some real power, but none of the members were willing to submit to the castle's approval of their own appointments.

4 May

Dear Mum and Dad:

First of all, thank you for not making the letter a Howler. Being told about the Sunday confinements on my birthday was punishment enough, I promise you. Still, I am a Potter. Did you really think I could make it through an entire year without officially getting into trouble at least once?

Secondly, congratulations! I know how much you want another child, and of course I won't tell anyone until it's further along, not even James. Since it will be due just before Christmas, maybe we can name it Holly if it's a girl?

inally, I've been thinking about the summer. I was wondering if we might have some guests. Actually, James was wondering about inviting Sirius first, and I offered to write about it. The less time Sirius spends with his family, the better off I think he will be. I would also like Remus to spend some time with us as well, if it is possible. Again, yes, he is perfectly safe. The full moons this summer are at 7:24 am sun time on 26 July and 18:22 sun time on 24 August. Despite the stories, he won't transform during daylight hours, although he will be ill and cranky.

I was also wondering if two girls in our class might join us for shorter times: Lily Evans and Ellen McGregor. Lily is Muggle- born (yes, that Muggle-born, although she has magical ancestors). Their addresses are attached. We shouldn't have either of them there at any time Sirius is there,

assuming you allow any of the visits, unless Remus is there as well. James and Sirius together are just too much for either of them, unless both Remus and I are both watching them.

love
Harry

"What do you think he's up to?" Mary asked her husband.

"I have no idea what he's up to with the girls," Harold admitted. "Still, I don't see any reason to refuse him. I suppose I should talk with the Blacks and the Lupins."

"And I'd be glad to talk with the others," Mary said.

"I'll send Black a note tomorrow."

Walburga Black glowered as she followed her elf into her husband's library/office. She had married him because he was the senior Black, and had nearly all the family property. His father had lost much of the family's liquid assets, however, and he had married his cousin because her father had managed to make a large pile of gold. Being older and richer, and of the same ancestry, Walburga always resented those times when she was not the one in control. Still, when a private message came magically sealed for her husband, she knew enough not to touch it.

Orion looked at the seal in surprise. "Potter? What can he want?"

"You look worried," Walburga stated.

"I am," Orion admitted. "Your donations have brought the spotlight on us. We both have had dealings with people even more associated with Voldemort, like the Malfoys, and not all those dealings would look good if exposed."

"So?"

"So Potter is the new force in the Wizengamot," Orion reminded her. "He might not be a blood traitor, but he and his group aren't that far from being so either. If he's decided to revive the Wizengamot's investigatory powers, we could be in trouble."

"I doubt he's have sent anything like that under his personal seal," Walburga pointed out. "Blackmail?"

"The Potters? Not likely, and if they did, they would have gotten someone else to expose themselves." Orion shrugged and opened the letter.

"Well?"

"I was wrong, it is blackmail, of a sort."

"What does he want?"

"He wants Sirius to spend part of the summer with his sons," Orion answered. He held out the letter.

Walburga frowned and took it to read. After doing so, she had to nod. The letter was brilliantly phrased, she had to admit. There was not one real threat in the letter. However, it was also clear that it would be in the Black family's interests for their son to be associated with people like the Potters. The fact that Walburga and her older brother had been fined for donating to Voldemort's movement, and that her niece had died as a Marked Death Eater had been skated over, but present.

"We can't fully disinherit the boy, more's the pity," Walburga growled, tossing the letter on her husband's desk.

Orion shrugged. "Who can tell how the boy will turn out in the long run? If worst comes to worst, he'll get the property and my idiot brother's small horde, and Narcissa can marry Regulus and that will keep your father's fortune together. We can't disinherit Sirius from the property, but we can disown him from the family title and give that to Regulus if we have to."

"True."

"And at the moment, the tide has shifted against us and towards families like the Potters. It might not be a bad idea to have a foot in that camp, as Muddy as that camp might be in the future."

"So you'll meet with him?" Harold had offered to meet with Orion in any of several different ways.

Orion nodded. "I need to go to Gringotts next week in any event. We can meet in a coffee house."

Walburga didn't like it, but knew that Orion was right. Therefore, she merely nodded.

Monday, May 8, 1972

Rose Evans and Bonnie Jean McGregor were both surprised to see envelopes propped near their stoves that morning. These contained notes from Mary Potter, asking if she might visit sometime over the next two weeks. Rose, interested in learning more about her daughter's world, the world she and her husband's grandparents had alluded to, wrote that she would be happy to welcome Mrs. Potter any afternoon between 3:00 and 4:30. She was thrilled with the return notepaper disappeared when she sealed it as directed. When told about the impending visit, her husband was a bit thrilled, and Petunia planned on spending her afternoons away.

Bonnie Jean consulted her husband, whose eyes went wide when he realized who was coming to call. Bonnie Jean decided that she needed to clean the silver tea service, and so invited Mrs. Potter the following Wednesday or Thursday for tea.

Eliza Lupin was manning the counter when the stranger walked in. Strangers were rare, but hardly unheard of. Granted, their village was in about as boring a place as there was in England. There had been no battles within twenty miles. There were no ruined abbeys, pretty churches or other interesting architecture, great country houses, cities, or anything to draw a tourist within fifteen

miles. Nothing of importance had ever happened, and no one famous had been born, lived, or died in the vicinity. Still, people did get lost.

On the other hand, the front window near the counter had a good view of the car park, and that was empty except for their old delivery lorry. And the man was dressed far too formally, and his shirt, loud tie, and shoes did not really match the expensive suit. "May I help you?" she asked, placing her hand on her wand under the counter.

"Mrs. Lupin?" the man asked in a polite voice.

"Yes?"

"I was wondering if I might have a word with your husband? Or with you and your husband, for that matter?"

"May I ask in regards to what?"

"In regards to your son." Eliza gripped the wand more tightly. "My sons go to Hog . . . go to school with him. My name is Harold Potter."

Eliza's eyes went wide. The man smiled. "No need to worry. It's nothing bad." He had just realized what fears the parents of a young werewolf might have.

Eliza supplied tea in the office behind the counter. Paul Lupin sat down with Harold, while Eliza listened in and stood at the counter, in case there was a customer. "Again, I apologize. I didn't mean to startle either of you," Harold said.

"We understand," Paul answered. "What can we do for you?"

"I suppose you know that your son is friends with my twin boys, especially Harry."

Paul smiled. "Remus is a good lad. He writes often."

Harold returned the smile. "Like many of our kind, we live somewhat . . . outside of society. My boys asked if their friends might come and visit this summer. I do realize, of course, that you will want to spend time with your son, and that he will want to spend time with you. Still, we hope that Master Remus would be interested in spending at least two or three weeks in total with us. We thought at least a week in July and then from the Twenty-eighth or ninth through the Thirty-first of August. We would spend at least three days in Diagon Alley. We would make certain he gets any supplies he needs and gets to the Hogwarts Express."

"The Twenty-eighth. . . ."

Harold nodded. "We know you will want your son with you during the full moons, even if they are during the daylight hours in July and August."

Eliza gasped and Paul dropped his teacup.

"There is no need to be afraid," Harold said. "The names of werewolves are public information, you know. I talked this out with the Headmaster last summer, and my wife and I were well-assured that

there were no reasons to fear, even if the experimental potion had not worked as well as it has. My son Harry knows as well, and helps make certain that the information doesn't become widely disseminated, and helps keep silver from touching your son by accident. I understand they've become close friends. Your secret, his secret, is quite safe."

"You . . . you don't mind. . . ?"

Harold grimaced. "Well, I think we would all prefer that your son had not been bitten, of course. And I must admit that if most children told me their best friend was a werewolf, I might have been apprehensive. Both my sons have good minds and good hearts, traits Harry assures me your son shares as well. My other son, James, doesn't always have the best judgement, which is why he does not know the secret. Harry, however, does. Between what he and the Headmaster told me . . . well, let's just say not that I don't mind but that I have no qualms about inviting your son into my home and to offer him houseroom." Their eyebrows went up. 'Houseroom' meant that, if Remus ever needed sanctuary, the protection of a powerful House, he would have it with the Potters. And that 'making certain he gets his supplies' meant that the Potters would be paying, sparing them some expense. In short, Remus was being offered formal protection from a very powerful family. The Lupins were not poor, but they were closer to poor than being well-off. "If it meets with your approval, Harry will extend the invitation to him. If not, then young Master Remus need never know."

Paul and Eliza exchanged a look and both nodded. Just then a customer walked in. Eliza shut the door, so that the two men could discuss dates in peace.

Rose watched Mary look around the ground floor of the semi-detached house. Except for her passion for flowers, demonstrated by the many plants and even some awards from various garden shows, it was a typical mid-range middle class semi-detached suburban home. It had an entrance hallway, a large front parlor, a dining room, a large kitchen, a small pantry, a small laundry room, and the door which led to the garage and from there into a larger-than-usual back garden. None of the furniture was antique or valuable, but everything was neat and comfortable.

"Have you never been in a, well, a regular house before?" Rose asked.

"Actually, not really," Mary answered. "One friend of mine at Hogwarts came from a mixed household, but they lived mostly magical." She frowned. "They did have one room where electronics, excuse me, electronics worked, but that was all. Is that a television? It's much larger than the one they had. Not that we ever watched it. That was still during the War, and it wasn't receiving then."

"Yes, that our tellie," Rose answered, holding back her worried smile. Her family had not gotten a television until 1955, and Rose knew that only the upper classes had had televisions before World War II. She gestured at the kitchen table, already set. "Let's have some tea, and you can tell me why you've come."

Mary sat and simply said, "We were hoping to invite your daughter to stay with us towards the end of August at the very least. We will be inviting several other of Harry's friends throughout the summer, and then all of them at the end of August, offering them houseroom. We will take them to Diagon Alley once or twice, just in case they need anything for the upcoming year, and see that they get safely on the train."

"Harry's friends? Not James'?"

Mary smiled. "James' best friend is also a good friend of Harry's, and the reverse is true as well. From what I hear, neither James nor Sirius get along terribly well with Ellen McGregor or your daughter."

"Will you be inviting Ellen as well?"

Mary nodded, "Yes. Most likely separately during the summer, and then at the end of August as well. From what Harry has said, it might not be wise to have James and Lily too close to each other for too long."

Rose smiled at that. "Lily and Ellen have already talked about seeing each other during the summer. If Lily is interested, I see no problem, although I will of course talk to my husband about it tonight."

"And I shall be visiting Mrs. McGregor for tea this Wednesday," Mary said.

"Do you think Harry might like to visit here?" Rose asked.

"I don't know," Mary admitted. "Still, just as it will be educational for Lily to see a purely magical household, it might interest Harry to see your home. I shall mention it to my husband. I would imagine we shall be content to allow the children to decide."

Rose smiled. "You don't think your other son would be interested?"

"James can be quite the handfull," Mary said with a smile. "And, to quote what Harry says, James sometimes 'acts more than a bit stupid' around your daughter. At the moment, while James might like to visit, I don't know if your daughter would really welcome him."

"We shall see." At that moment, the timer on the oven rang. Rose got up to pull out freshly-baked scones, to be served with strawberry jam and clotted cream. She reminded herself to ask Bonnie Jean what 'houseroom' meant.

The next afternoon, the patrons of 'Adolf & Abdul's -- Fine Coffees Since 1692' were shocked to see the heads of two very old and powerful families, families which had not seen eye-to-eye in the 900+ years of their mutual existence, meet at a private table.

"Orion."

"Harold."

The waiter came and took their orders, and was soon back: a Turkish coffee and two small pieces of Turkish delight for Orion, a cafe-au-lait and a current scone for Harold.

"Tell me honestly," Orion said, "are you trying to steal my son?"

"Formally, no, of course not," Harold answered, "although we will offer him houseroom. Are we trying to protect him from some of your political views? Well, to be honest, I wouldn't mind."

"Some?"

"I have not endorsed the so-called 'League of Founders' positions, have I?" Harold asked.

"None of them?"

"Not the political ones, that's for certain," Harold answered. "We need to stay totally separate from the Muggle community. That doesn't mean hating them or their magical children. Come now, you know as well as I that there are very few truly Muggle- born. They mostly have some Squibs on both sides of their family, and usually just three or four generations back. I would bet that all the others are a result of some wizard sowing some wild oats directly or after a generation or two. I rather like the ideas the Founders put forth for teaching the Muggle-raised more about our culture."

"Well, that one point was a decent one," Orion conceded. His wife loathed it, of course -- 'Keep those Muddy brats away from proper children!' had been her response.

"However, along with any 'suspect views', let me remind you of something else I hope to teach your son, along with my oldest."

"And what's that?"

"The only reason why your father-in-law made a fortune was because the Muggles offered him that money for air bases during the last war, especially that money for the land in Iceland he'd inherited from his mother. All of it was just laying there, unused except for bragging rights about how many acres he owned. He then made the same mistake your father and grandfather did -- he put all of it into wizarding enterprises. If he had properly invested it in the Muggle economy, it would be worth at least three times the amount now, more likely ten times."

"Come now, don't make that sort of face," Harold went on. "How do you think the Malfoys made most of their money, at least until they sold the best bits off too cheaply, to pay their fines and to start rebuilding their house this past year?"

Orion smiled grimly at that, it was nice to have some rumors confirmed. "And you'll teach my son what exactly?"

"Over the upcoming summers, at the very least how not to make the basic errors our kind make when dealing with the Muggles. I hope to teach them some basic business as well."

Orion thought it over. "You'll be taking the boys to Diagon Alley, I suppose?"

Harold nodded.

"Sirius would like to play Quidditch."

"From what Harry says, all three have a shot next year," Harold agreed, knowing he had just agreed to buying a racing broom.

"Then we have a deal."

Chapter XII

Bonnie Jean McGregor was in a defensive mood, but she wasn't fully certain why. In part, it was from having to explain to her new friend Rose what 'houseroom' meant -- the Potters would be fully expecting to take care of all costs associated with the visits, including, from the set-up, all school supplies. The fact that Rose had blithely invited one of the Potter twins to stay with the Evans' also meant that they had to extend the same curtesy. When Rose had nervously asked if they needed to extend 'houseroom' as well, Bonnie Jean had taken a little pleasure in explaining the minimum required if they did: arranging and paying for all transportation, costs of hosting, buying anything needed to make the boy's stay more comfortable, and any aid needed, including the assumption of any medical or legal expenses -- and to shelter him if called upon for the rest of his life.

"Now you know why I merely asked if Lily wanted to visit," Bonnie Jean had concluded.

Although Bonnie Jean was classified as a Muggle, in truth three of her four grandparents had been Squibs. She had gone to them when she had met her husband, and they -- and two of their parents, still living in the magical world -- had given her a thorough grounding in magical customs.

The Potters were about as high in the rankings as the magical families got in Britain and Ireland, except for a few dozen families who usually ignored the regular magical world as much as the regular magical world ignored the Muggle. Her one fully-Muggle grandfather had been a union steward in a Birmingham factory from before the start of the Great War, and then a strong local Labour politician in the lean 1930s and during World War II. A bit of his attitudes towards social class, she realized, was also coloring her reactions to the aristocratic Potters.

The general attitude most in the wizarding world had towards Muggles didn't help much either. She wondered exactly why the Potters were bothering with the plebeian and mostly Muggle-raised Ellen and the totally Muggle-born Lily. Finding that out was one of the main reasons she had agreed to meet Mary Potter.

"May I assume that Rose Evans has spoken to you since Monday afternoon?" Mary asked when ensconced with a cup of tea in the immaculate parlor (the cleaning service to do the carpeting had been hastily been called to clean the day before).

"She has," Bonnie Jean answered. "Would I be correct in assuming that you have come to make the same offer to Ellen?"

"Indeed," Mary answered, wondering why she felt a thin veneer of hostility, but willing to work with it. "This was all our son Harry's idea. James would probably been happy to have had his friend Sirius visit, and perhaps the other boy in their room, Remus. Harry, however, says he's quite close to Remus, Lily, and Ellen."

Bonnie Jean nodded her understanding. "My husband and I were wondering a few things, however. First, why houseroom instead of just having them visit?"

"Ah. Well, I am certain your husband, and probably you, have been well-aware of the recent internal hostilities within wizarding Britain."

"Those Death Eaters, you mean? Yes, we were starting to worry that they might even attack us, or at least other families like us." The McGregors had in fact been massacred in the summer of 1974 in the original time line -- Elaine McGregor, Ellen's Squib identical twin and mother of Natalie MacDonald, had survived because she was on a girl guides camp-out.

"Well, Sirius' family are sympathizers, especially his mother and her branch of the Black family."

"That girl who was killed after the magical accident at Hogwarts? She was his sister?"

"First cousin," Mary answered. "Sirius' father does vaguely see that the tide is turning away from his preferred positions. He is willing to offer his son as what he would see a hostage to bad fortune. If the Pure-Blood agenda fails and more moderate policies prevail, one of his sons will still come out clean."

"No offense, but too many of the policies I've seen your husband advocating in The Prophet still seem very conservative, just not bigoted or reactionary."

Mary smiled. "People with what you might call openly liberal ideas don't get selected for the Wizengamot."

"Good point. Don't get me wrong, we're happy to see even these minor changes. But what does this have to do with offering Ellen houseroom?"

"Well, I think it does explain why we offered it to Sirius Black. We really did need to make it official. The Lupins have had some run-ins with some of Voldemort's allies, and my husband has learned their shop is suffering from competition from larger stores some ten miles away, as their Muggle customers dash about in their automobiles more than they used to. Our manor is well-protected, and we are taking measures to strengthen the wards and other protections. It was no great leap to make the offer for Lily and Ellen." Mary tilted her head slightly and looked pensive. "Why does it bother you so much?"

"If I understand the tradition, it was most often offered to social equals and dependents. We certainly aren't your social equals."

"Ah," Mary said. "I must say, we didn't think of that. Tell me, if despite all our precautions Potter Manor was burnt to the ground, would you give us shelter for the night? Would you allow Harry to stay here for a few days? Would your husband see to it that we were given the potions we might need?" Mary raised her tea cup. "Would you offer me comfort and tea?"

"Yes, of course I would," Bonnie Jean answered.

"Then you would already offer anything we could ask of you if you accept."

"In that case, I accept," Bonnie Jean said, pouring her guest another cup of tea.

"Was there anything else?" Mary asked.

"No," Bonnie Jean answered. "If we were of the same social class, though, I'd have wondered if all this were a prelude to a marriage negotiation."

"It is not, but don't discount that for the future." Mary only grinned on the inside as Bonnie Jean

dropped the teapot. She had her suspicions about Harry's feelings towards young Ellen.

Sunday, May 14, 1972

Harry and James invited Sirius, Remus, Lily, and Ellen into a classroom, where they managed to have a sweet tea set up, mostly due to the fact that Harry had made close friends of all the house elves earlier the previous autumn. (Harry's knowledge of how to get into the kitchens had also been used often). All four noticed that Harry looked pleased, and James rather torn.

Harry shyly started in, "James had an idea, which we thought about and asked our parents about." The four students looked interested. "Basically, we'd like each of you to spend part of the summer with us. Our parents talked with your parents, and they came up with a rough schedule, if any of you would like to come and visit. Sirius would be there most of the summer, while Lily would just come for a few days in July. Remus and Ellen, you'd be with us between those two, well, extremes. The six of us would also all get together for a few days in early July and visit Diagon Alley, and again on the Twenty-eighth of August. You'd stay with us until the First, and our parents would see us all to the train. If you're at any interested, that is."

"And," James prompted, teasingly.

"Wait until they decide, James," Harry said.

"Well I certainly say yes," Sirius said.

"So do I," Ellen agreed.

"And I," put in Remus.

"Are you sure you want me?" Lily asked James.

"Oh, yes," James said hurriedly.

Harry smirked to himself, having long ago realized that James purposefully annoyed Lily just to get her attention, much like Ron had picked fights with Hermione.

"All right, I will," Lily said.

"I was told to tell you two that you could still visit back-and- forth as you were planning," Harry said to the girls.

"And what was the other news?" Remus asked.

Harry flushed a little. "Well, I was invited to stay with the McGregors' and the Evans'."

"This will be fun," Ellen said firmly.

Harry stayed in the small room after the other students left, feeling rather content. After a while, he

heard a whisper in his mind, 'You are truly happy for the first time since we have known you.'

Harry smiled. Now that he knew what the Four Founders sounded like, he thought that the Sorting Hat sounded like Slytherin's voice but with Gryffindor's speech patterns. Likewise, Hogwarts sounded like Ravenclaw with Hufflepuff's speech and maternal concerns.

'I am,' Harry thought back. 'I still need to find that stupid pocket diary of Riddle's, and then kill him, but the rest of my life seems good for once.'

'Pocket diary?' Hogwarts asked. 'You never said 'pocket diary' before. What is it? We envisioned what you were searching for as one of the diaries the students' keep, at least a moderate- sized codex.'

Harry recalled the memory of the pocket appointment diary Riddle had placed his first Horcrux into.

'That we know,' Hogwarts declared. 'Riddle hid it in a secret place in the Slytherin common room fireplace. Lucius Malfoy checked on it last September, but left it there.'

'Riddle must have told Malfoy how to retrieve it, but he was waiting until the Yule Break or the end of the year,' Harry thought. 'Great. The final current Horcrux down, just the body left to go afterwards.'

Harry retrieved the diary at 4:48 the next morning, as the Slytherin common room was clear. He took it down to the Chamber of Secrets to destroy.

It was difficult to resist the urge to write in the Horcrux. Had Harry not realized that this came in part from a compulsion charm from within the diary, he might have even given in, despite knowing that it would be a potentially dangerous act. Therefore, he did not give in to his ego, which really wanted to taunt Riddle and boast of Harry's accomplishments. 'I may not be an evil overlord, but I must remember the list. Taunting the enemy is counter-productive. Just kill him and move on.'

Harry had preserved one basilisk fang for just this purpose. He stabbed the fang through the thin pocket diary, and as before the ink poured out. For a brief moment, the image of a very startled looking 16 year old Tom Riddle appeared, before disappearing in a flash of green light and a puff of smoke.

Harry slumped on the floor. The most dangerous part of his task still lay ahead, but now it could be accomplished.

Monday, June 19, 1972

Severus Snape and Peter Pettigrew sat comfortably on a soft piece of turf, enjoying the sunny day and watching a group of Hufflepuff and Gryffindor Second years playing tag with the whomping willow.

"Snape, Pettigrew," said a voice in greeting.

"Hullo, Potter," Peter said with a warm smile. Despite being a sycophant by nature, young Peter did have a charming way about him, Harry had to acknowledge. It was easy to see why the other three Marauders had been taken with their fourth room mate in the other time line. As for Peter, since this Potter never harassed, teased, or pranked him, and even sometimes offered sweets, he was always welcome.

Harry nodded at Peter and turned to Snape. "Congratulations," he said sincerely. "Well scored."

"You aren't upset I scored the highest final grade in Potions?" Snape asked, slightly surprised. Professor Slughorn had told Snape that he had earned the highest score any First year had ever earned from him -- 111. Lily and Harry had tied the old record of 108.

"Why would I be?" Harry asked, puzzled.

"Well, Potions was the only subject you weren't first in," Snape pointed out.

Harry shrugged. "Friendly competition is good." He turned to Peter. "You nearly had me in History."

"Almost," Peter agreed. He had only been a point behind Harry, and he and Remus had tied for second in that class. Despite all of Harry's advantages, he had not allowed himself to run-away in the scores in any of the classes -- except Defense.

"I may be a good brewer, but I'll never be the type who can sit down and think out new potions," Harry told Snape. "You, and maybe Lily, are. I was wondering if you might tackle an idea for me starting this summer?"

"What's the problem?" Snape asked, curious.

Harry handed him a roll of parchment. "Each of these three potions are used in warding areas. However, they each react against each other, canceling the effects. I was wondering if you could figure out a way to modify them so that at least two of them could be used together. The resulting overlaying wards could be much more effective. I think something in this class of reagents might do the trick, but I could be wrong." Harry would not remember which of the reagents had been used, as the problem had been partially solved in the other time stream.

"These all use very different ingredients," Snape said. "I really think this is still too advanced for me . . . right now."

"I know," Harry agreed. "Still, I wondered if you would take this on for me as a long-term project. None of these require any direct magic to brew. I thought you might like to brew them a few times this summer, to get a real feel for the process, unless you have other things planned that is."

"I don't," Snape said eagerly, but then his face dropped. This was a chance to do some real brewing, and learn a lot, but the ingredients would not be cheap.

"I can arrange for enough ingredients to brew each one five times," Harry said. "You'll know enough about brewing them then, and you can work on the problem every summer until you figure things out. I can also arrange for you to sell the potions, if they're good enough. You'll have to pick the ingredients up, though. Deal?" He offered his hand.

"What's the final deal?" Snape asked.

"If you succeed before anyone else does, you get the credit and you get to name the resulting process. I handle the licensing, you get ninety percent of any royalties."

Snape shook Harry's hand.

"Would it be easier for you to pick things up at Hogsmeade or Diagon Alley?" Harry asked.

"Hogsmeade, actually," Snape answered happily.

Saturday, June 24, 1972

Albus Dumbledore stretched his long, still powerful body, and sighed contentedly. The students had left the day before, and he had nothing on his schedule until Monday. The previous 13 months had been very stressful.

The arrival of Harry Potter had been, to say the least, stunning. It gave him great hope for the defeat of Voldemort, but it had taken months before he trusted that the powerful warlock in the child's body was not in any way Dark.

Harry had his gray spots of course, although fewer, Dumbledore now believed, than he had himself. The problem was, Harry's gray areas did not match well with Dumbledore's.

Harry was not really manipulative, nor very devious. Incredibly stealthy, but not devious. (Here Dumbledore was slightly underestimating Harry.) On the other hand, Harry was more ruthless. He was also more idealistic, and he was also determined that the magical world at least think about his ideals.

Dumbledore hoped that at least that last aspect of Harry's campaigns would be put on hold for a while.

That hope lasted until Dumbledore saw the envelope at the foot of his bed.

With great foreboding, Dumbledore performed his morning ablutions, got dressed, and then sat down and read:

A PROPOSAL

There has been much speculation that this Order would very much like to overthrow the Ministry and the Wizengamot. Neither is true, despite our strong disagreements with them on policy. However, we do make one recommendation to change the Wizengamot.

We believe that ten seats should be added to the Wizengamot. We believe that these seats should be secured by election from all wizards and witches over seventeen who are citizens of the area controlled by the Wizengamot and Ministry (ie, the United Kingdom and Eire, to use the current Muggle names, plus the three magical islands in the Atlantic and Caribbean and under Ministry control, obscured to the Muggles).

These would not be life-term seats, as forty-five of the current seats are. Instead, let there be two members elected every year with five year terms. In addition, no one should be elected to consecutive terms. Also, no member of the Ministry should be allowed to run for such a seat, and if named to one of the five Ministry seats they, like the regular members, would have to give up their seat. We would further suggest that the minimum age to hold such an office would be forty.

Should such a member die while in office or leave for some other reason, whomever comes in third in the next race could fulfill the rest of their term. If an elected member were to be removed from office by a vote of the Wizengamot (as they can do with any member), there should be an election to fulfill the rest of the term with 40 days. These elected members would have an equal vote in all matters with the other members, except that they would not participate in the selection of the representatives of the 15 Most Noble Family seats, nor the 15 Noble Family seats, nor should anyone elected to such a seat ever be named to one of the Most Noble or Noble seats.

The Ministry shall, of course, not act on this suggestion. If anyone is interested in this Proposal being adopted, perhaps you should ask to speak at the next Wizengamot meeting. Anyone filling out the proper form has to be accommodated. We all have the right to speak, if we are over 17. Be warned, if you fill out the form and do not show up to speak, you will be fined three Sickles. On the other hand, if you are not allowed to speak, you are to be paid five Galleons.

Dumbledore winced when he saw that the next page was a copy of the magical form. He wondered how many people would send it in, just for the chance to get five Galleons? He hesitatingly turned to the third page.

It occurs to us to add this, as the Ministry might otherwise have refused all but a select handful the right to speak. These would then speak against the Proposal, and the Ministry would say that they were representative of all those who were to speak. Beware such tricks!

Below this was proof that while Harry rarely acted deviously, he did understand the deviousness of others, was an addendum:

Albus:

Perhaps you could arrange a payment of one Galleon to all those petitioners who give up the right to speak, in exchange for signing one of two parchments. One in general favor of the proposal, one against.

Dumbledore had to admit that was a fair out, although he noted that many in the Ministry and Wizengamot would oppose the idea for that very reason.

He also wondered when the questions would start being asked about those three islands. All three were exclusively owned by syndicates made up of some of the most hard-core magical families in England. Then Albus remembered that this Harry had been the heir to the Black as well as to the Potter fortunes, and therefore knew of them -- and that most of the people living on the island were Muggle slaves.

The fact that the Order of Founders knew of these islands would ring alarm bells, and would especially make those in the establishment worry what other secrets the 'Order' might know.

Class Standings

Astronomy . . . Charms . . . Defense . . . Flying
01 Harry. . . 01 Harry . . . 01 Harry. . . 01 Harry

01 Lily 02 Lily 02 James 02 James
02 Sirius 04 James 02 Remus 04 Sirius
03 Remus 05 Sirius 03 Sirius 08 Severus
04 James 06 Remus 03 Severus 11 Remus
06 Ellen 07 Severus 06 Lily 14 Lily
07 Severus 08 Ellen 08 Ellen 16 Ellen
12 Peter 11 Peter 12 Peter 24 Peter

Herbology . . . History . . . Potions . . . Transfiguration

01 Harry 01 Harry 01 Severus 01 Harry
02 Ellen 02 Peter 02 Lily 02 James
03 Severus 02 Remus 02 Harry 03 Sirius
05 Lily 04 Sirius 04 James 04 Lily
07 Remus 05 James 05 Sirius 06 Ellen
09 James 07 Lily 07 Ellen 07 Remus
10 Peter 08 Severus 10 Peter 08 Severus
12 Sirius 10 Ellen 12 Remus 13 Peter

Final Ranking, First Year

01 Harry
02 James
04 Lily
06 Sirius
07 Severus
08 Remus
10 Ellen
15 Peter

Chapter XIII

Wizarding Britain and Ireland were in an uproar. In the end, over 18,000 Petitions to Speak were submitted for the next regular meeting (at the September equinox) before the end of July. To the surprise of some Wizengamot members, the five Ministry members were overjoyed with Dumbledore's idea to pay just one Galleon for those willing to sign petitions. Their rationale was in part simply to save money, the rest because they believed that this course of action would cause less trouble in the short run, and likely in the long-term as well.

The Wizengamot membership gave in on a close vote (27 to 23). In the end, the petitions ran 16,152 (79.79%) in favor, 4,611 (22.21%) against, with one signer (Dung Fletcher) disqualified for trying to sign both. Over 80% of those eligible to sign did so. This started a political battle which lasted over a year, but in the end, the expanded membership of the Wizengamot was approved (the final vote was 26-24), and the first two members were elected in late 1974, and took their seats in 1975.

"What's your problem?" Harry demanded. It was a glorious day in early July and the two brothers were flying around the Potter estate.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, you've been sulking for weeks, and it's getting worse," Harry nearly snapped. "Don't you want our friends to visit?"

"Our friends?" James snapped back. "Sirius is my friend, and Remus is too, even if he's more your friend than mine. Evans and McGregor don't like me."

"Well for one thing, start calling them Lily and Ellen," Harry said. "For another, stop showing you're such an ass when Lily is around. I get it, James. You like her. Stop acting like an ass, and a pompous one at that, and stop acting like a prat, not just towards her, not just towards her and Ellen, but in general."

"You just don't understand the fine art of pranking," James said in a superior tone.

"Who turned all the Slytherins' teeth green for three days?"

"You did," James admitted.

"Who planned the prank that made all the Hufflepuff's brooms go backwards during their last practice before the Quidditch final?"

"You did," James admitted. "So why doesn't Evans, Lily, despise you?"

"Who dropped the chopped flobberworms down the back of her robes?"

"I did," James confessed.

"And the eye of newt down the front?"

"I did," James had to agree.

"And the . . ."

"All right, all right, I get the idea," James yelled. "I don't know why I do those things."

"And how about why you pulled Pettigrew's trousers down at that League meeting?"

"Sirius dared me!"

"Pettigrew can't stand up to you, me, Sirius, or Snape. Picking on him in front of Lily is like picking on an ugly puppy. She doesn't like it, but still feels sorry for it. And picking on the weak ones makes you look like an arrogant bully."

James winced.

"Face it, when you and Sirius get together, sometimes the pair of you are exactly that -- arrogant bullies. It's not the dominant parts of either of your personalities. If it was, you'd be in Slytherin."

James winced at that as well.

"Still, combined with how you act around Lily, it's no wonder that she thinks those are your dominant characteristics, along with showing off."

"When. . ."

"Who danced on a broomstick?"

"I did," James confessed.

"Who did cartwheels and backflips all the way to dinner?"

"I get it! I'm an arrogant, bullying, showoff, and Lily Evans likes you better," James pouted, resentfully.

"She likes me as a friend," Harry said. "She tries to mother me, and I realized before the end of term that she'll never be more than just a friend to anyone she has to mother. I'm the brother she never had. She replaces the sister I lost. It will bring us closer together, but it will never be more than that."

James considered those ideas, and decided, if they were true, he could live with Harry and Lily being close.

"In the meantime, stop showing off," Harry said. "Stop trying to get her attention. Trust me, you've got it. Treat her more like you treat Remus and you might get to be friends by this time next year."

James thought about that, too. "Well . . . maybe. . ."

Snape's mother had been surprised at her son's plans for the summer, and even more surprised when

a rather doubting representative of Magi-Watch! arrived to inspect the first batch of potions in the first week of July. She had helped her son, and was able to assure the representative (who had actually been a Ravenclaw in the year behind her, and so she knew the Prince reputation for Potions).

In the end, Magi-Watch! had not only bought the first batches of the three potions, but Mrs. Snape had found herself a sub- contractor, producing potions for the company. While she would not move from Spinners' End, the dreary house would gradually be transformed into a home on the inside. This time, Mrs. Snape would not fall into a deep depression and commit suicide in 1977.

Severus Snape of course could not know all that as the Magi- Watch! rep paid them nine Galleons that first Wednesday in July and made the suggestion that his mother supply potions. He just knew that life had gotten better.

He also knew that he owed one person for this chance -- Harry Potter. And Severus Snape was grateful, because this was not charity. This was a chance to earn his way. When his mother learned of his deal with Potter, she had agreed to help him, on the same terms.

When they solved the problem of inter-mixing the ward potions together in 1975, their income was assured.

The sextet was first brought together at the Leaky Cauldron on Thursday, July 6. They would stay there until Saturday afternoon, and then floo to Potter Manor. Ellen and Lily would leave the next afternoon, while Remus would stay another week and Sirius would stay two.

The Potters arrived in the late afternoon, and saw that Sirius was already waiting for them. He and James were hoping to bunk together, but the Potters quickly vetoed that idea. They had a good idea from Harry of the potential for mayhem the pair could create, and wanted it contained at their Manor, where the house elves could help prevent major disasters. The pair therefore contented themselves to toasting a vast quantity of crumpets, although that did force Tom to chase them away from the public floo back to the regular fireplace repeatedly.

Ellen and Lily came in, having been dropped off by Mrs. Evans, just in time to see Tom chase the boys back to the regular fireplace once again, this time after a witch wearing a bottle- green robe and a hat with stuffed vulture on it emerged from the floo and had been covered with crumbs and even some butter. Harry offered them the choice of cold butterbeer or lemonade while watching the entertainment.

Remus arrived in time for dinner, although James and Sirius were rather full. The six friends were allowed the run of a small parlor after dinner. With just a little encouragement from Harry, James and Sirius filled the other three in on all the shops of Diagon Alley. Remus and Lily had each only visited the Alley once, and Ellen only three times.

Since they would be shopping all the next day, there was no reason to hurry or just hit the stores they needed to visit to help along their summer homework. They could dawdle and investigate. When James and Sirius both expressed a hope that the group might sneak a peek down Knockturn Alley, Harry merely commented that the two of them might stand a better chance of getting in unobserved without the other four tagging along. Harry wondered to himself, for close to the fortieth time, at how much James and Sirius reminded him of Gred and Forge.

Remus, Lily, and Ellen all admired at how Harry had adroitly spared them the chance of getting into trouble, while manoeuvring James and Sirius into having to make a dash at Knockturn Alley or be thought braggarts or cowards. Harry had not actually thought of that, but he had done so much that the three sometimes endowed him with a reputation nearly equal to Dumbledore.

Since James and Sirius had stayed up late, joking and laughing, they were the last two down for breakfast. Still, they were told to be down before 8:00, and having made it to breakfast at 7:57 refused to feel repentant about being more than half an hour behind the others.

"Nothing much opens before Eight-thirty anyway," James finally said.

"I just thought you'd want to spend some time looking at the broom displays, since each of you is getting a broom," Harold said with a shrug.

James and Sirius' jaws hung open for a moment, and then they finished off their breakfasts in less than two minutes.

While the pair was slaughtering what was left on their plates, Harold turned to the other three guests. "I know these two and Harry are planning on trying out for Quidditch. How about the three of you?"

The three admitted that they had no real interest in playing. "That's fine," Harold said. "You should still have good brooms. Racing brooms are great short-term items, but they rarely last more than five years. Then the stabilization charms start to go. That's part of the trade-off for being stable at high speeds. A good family broom can last thirty years if they're treated right. The Germans and Americans make some nice ones, and the Japanese have a new model that is supposed to have superior notice-me-not charms, so that you can fly in Muggle areas. We'll see what they have."

Therefore, the first and one of the longest stops of the day was at Quality Quidditch Supplies. James and Sirius each opted for the latest Cleansweep. Harry, however, went for the Nimbus 777. Lily, Ellen, and Remus all preferred the Japanese A-Ko. Harry noted that it was similar to the old broom Remus had flown from Privet Drive to Grimmauld Place, and wondered how he had acquired it in the original time line.

The rest of the morning was spent poking into all manner of shops, before lunch at an outdoor cafe. After lunch, they spent over two hours in Flourish and Blotts, for all six were readers.

The group went back to the Leaky Cauldron for a light tea, and then the friends were sent off to dress in Muggle clothing. They spent the rest of the afternoon shopping in the Muggle district around the area. Harry smiled, as he saw that this was designed in part so that Ellen, Remus, and especially Lily could act as tour guides to Muggle products. Sirius became instantly fascinated by the hard rock being played in one of the record stores, and came away with fifteen albums, once the Potters assured him both that they could be easily enchanted to play and that they needn't ever cross the threshold of Grimmauld Place, where they would be instantly pointed out by Kreacher and destroyed by Sirius' mother. Lily had all the albums she liked, but was happy to guide Sirius and Harry, as she liked all sorts of popular music.

Remus and Ellen both preferred classical music, while Harry was eclectic and liked most genres, although he had been turned on by big band music by Hermione's father after the War. The three of them also picked up some albums. James was the only one who was somewhat indifferent to music.

The next morning, the group went to Harrod's. Harry hadn't known that they had a small magical section, and also had a number of Muggle-raised witches employed to help the more lost members of the magical community blend in. Unlike most magical people, the three purely magical pre-teens could now easily blend in with Muggles.

After lunch, the group went to Potter Manor. It was not startling in any way to Sirius. It was a bit larger than his cousins' country house, and a bit smaller than Malfoy Manor had been. It was a great deal cheerier than either of those two manor houses, however.

To the other three, it at first appeared more of a palace than a house. When Lily said that, however, Mary Potter merely shrugged and said, "It only has ninety-six proper rooms, dear. It's hardly a palace."

Remus wondered if it had only needed four more rooms to qualify as a palace, but said nothing.

Despite being allocated a room of his own, Sirius and James announced that they were 'camping' together. Remus therefore was allowed to stay in Harry's room and Ellen and Lily decided to share a room as well. When they saw the size of the rooms and the beds, the visitors all knew they would not be crowded.

That night, as Lily brushed her flame-red hair and Ellen brushed her long wavy light brown hair, Ellen asked, "So, what do you think of all this?"

Lily's eyes darted around the luxurious guest room. "Well, when Harry said the Potters were part of the magical aristocracy, they weren't kidding!"

Ellen woke up early the next morning, having set her new magical alarm wrist watch to vibrate at 6:15. She was still too late to see Harry start off on his morning run, but it turned out that most of his route was on the huge side lawn of the manor, where the breakfast room had a grand view. When an elf inquired if Miss wanted breakfast now or wished to wait for the others, Ellen asked for a pot of hot chocolate. Seeing where Ellen's attention was directed, the elf merely nodded and disappeared.

Dobby brought the hot chocolate a few minutes later. Placing it near the girl, who thanked him, Dobby dared to ask, "May Dobby ask Miss a question?"

"Sure," Ellen said. She had of course long heard of house elves, but had never seen one before the previous night.

"Miss is friend of Master Harry?"

"I am."

"Is Master Harry happy?"

Ellen frowned and looked at the elf. She could see that the elf was indeed concerned. She looked back out onto the lawn and scowled in thought. Was Harry happy?

"That's a difficult question, isn't it my dear?" Mary Potter said, coming into the room.

Dobby made a squeak of worry and surprise. "You may stay and listen, Dobby," Mary said. She turned to Ellen. "Dobby is Harry's elf, and he is devoted to Harry's welfare even more so than is common." She poured out hot chocolate for her guest and for herself. "Harry often appears happy, but there is always the underlying feeling that he is carrying some great burden, and that he's smiling to make us happy, rather than being happy himself."

"Exactly," Ellen agreed with relief.

"I feel it. Dobby feels it. Apparently you feel it as well. Does anyone else?"

"Remus and Lily," Ellen admitted.

"And if I talked with you about this, will you share with Remus and Lily?" Mary asked.

Ellen looked out the window and saw Harry go from a dead sprint into a series of dives and rolls, mimicking a magic attack, before leaping up and going into a determined run again. Harry was driven. "I won't share," she said, "not unless you or Harry tell me I can."

"Good," Mary said, "because I do ask you to keep this to yourself, at least for now. I can't tell you all I know, of course, and I doubt I know most of the details in any event. Still, how powerful is Harry?"

"I don't know," Ellen admitted, "but I do know he is very powerful."

"He is likely the most powerful wizard alive, and will only grow more powerful," Mary said, actually down playing how powerful Harry really was. "He is not, by nature, as studious or even as intelligent as James, although he is closer than he believes himself to be. However, he is driven to prove himself worthy of his gifts."

Ellen merely nodded.

"Think of his character. How would you define it?"

Ellen thought hard, and came up with, "Noble. Self-sacrificing." She blinked, a bit surprised she had come up with that second term.

"Ah, you've realized something."

"Harry loves Mars bars," Ellen said. Seeing a slight confusion on Mrs. Potter, she explained, "A Muggle chocolate bar. But even though he's shown that he can get treats for us from the Muggle world, he won't get any for himself." She frowned. "You know Friday, when he bought those three big band albums? That's the first time I ever saw him do something just for his own pleasure, and he certainly looked uncomfortable doing it."

"He did not buy those albums," Mary said. "I insisted he pick some out, and I bought them for him. Harry does not feel worthy of his great powers, and that makes him feel unworthy in general. He is still amazed he has such good friends." Mary grimaced, and said, "He should have died a year ago May, and instead he lived and somehow came into this great power. He believes he was spared for some great task, which both frightens him and drives him."

"That's about the only sort of thing I can imagine frightening Harry," Ellen said.

"True," Mary agreed. "Now because he feels unworthy, he is surprised when anyone actually cares for him. He doesn't remember much from before the attack. He accepts that his father and I love him, but we were unable to really show him how much last summer, as his sister, aunt, and grandmother had all been killed in the attack, and his grandfather was dying. All that took up much of our attention. James loves him, but Harry went from 'junior twin' to what he is now, and James is still off- balance in dealing with him. Remus now provides true fraternal support, more than James does, although James seems to have lost nearly all the jealousy he had developed, and regained most of the brotherly feelings he had. Sirius is a good friend. Lily seems to treat him, and Remus, well. . . ."

"She calls them her 'lost boys'," Ellen said. "Do you know the Muggle play Peter Pan?"

"No, I can't say as I do," Mary said.

"I'll send you a copy. Lily is treating them like little brothers, and both adore it, because they both need the affection, even if neither will admit it." Ellen smiles. "Both claim that they go along with Lily's pampering so that the other won't feel embarrassed."

"And that leaves you, my dear," Mary said with a smile. "How do you regard our little paladin?"

Ellen blushed and looked away.

Mary smiled and looked at the near-teen, who was just starting to develop some serious curves. She guessed that Ellen would barely reach average height, if that, and would turn into a rather curvaceous teen. If her mother and the photos of her grandparents were any indications, Ellen would also be amazingly top-heavy.

Her hair was light brown, and had a few natural blonde and even red highlights amongst the long, thick waves. She had brilliant cornflower blue eyes, which nearly matched the brilliance of Mary's own and Harry's. She had a cute nose, and looked like she would retain her very kissable cupid's-bow lips. And she seemed very nice.

"Muggles do not understand that people, even Muggles, can sometimes form a magical bond with another, even at your age," Mary said. "I do not know if you and Harry will form such a bond or not. I think your mother is afraid of it, and that Harry's social position would prevent him from entertaining acting on such feelings."

"Not to mention how bloody noble he is," Ellen said, and then colors from embarrassment. "I'm so sorry. . . ."

"That's alright, dear," Mary said, secretly amused. "Now, if Harry were the oldest, and if Harold and I made a great fuss out of it, Harry would feel obligated to make certain to marry a Pure-Blood, or at least a Full-Blood, and from an important family for that matter. However, we have never made much of a fuss about that, and Harry isn't the oldest. So, if things move in that direction for the two of you over the next few years, don't have any qualms."

Ellen smiled. "Thank you, Mrs. Potter."

"You're quite welcome. Oh, and here," Mary took out her money bag and handed Ellen a Galleon.

"What's this for?" Ellen asked.

"Have your father exchange it for Muggle money, and make certain that son of mine has some Mars bars next autumn." Mary decided that Ellen had a very pretty smile.

Chapter XIV

Lily and Ellen left shortly after lunch on Sunday. The six friends had spent most of the morning in the air, but as there were storms gathering, the four boys had to spend the rest of the day inside.

James and Harry showed their two friends the Manor in detail. After all, when there are 96 'proper' rooms (storage closets, water closets, baths, and the like didn't count) spread over three floors, plus the attics, cellar, and an old sub-basement now used as a wine cellar and elf room, that can take up an entire afternoon and evening, with time off for a cream tea.

The rest of the week was fairly nice, and so the four boys spent most of their time out of doors. It was three miles to the village of Godric's Hollow, and half that distance, plus for about ten miles to the west (over the Welsh border), it was both Potter land and also forest. The boys went exploring and mudlarking, and came back every afternoon dirty at the least, and completely covered in mud twice.

The house elves merely sluiced them off with warm water and brought them changes of clothes.

The only school work they did was their astronomy observations, on the one totally clear night that they had. The quartet set up to sky watch on the flat part of the Manor's roof. In all, they had fun, and the Potters were nearly as sorry for Remus' visit to end as their sons were.

On that Sunday night, the holiday switched gear, as Harold Potter told his sons and Sirius to present themselves, fed and dressed in decent robes over good Muggle clothes, in front of the floo fireplace at 8:25.

The three boys did as they were commanded. Harold inspected them and decided they passed muster. "James, Sirius, it's time the two of you understood something. You are both the elder sons of important and well-off families. Nearly all the properties in both of our families are entailed. That means it goes to the oldest son." Sirius' eyes went wide, and James looked guiltily at Harry. "Most of the Potter fortune is also entailed, as part of the Potter Trust. Harry will be able to claim a substantial allowance, but it will be in part up to you, James, to see to the family fortune once I'm gone. Sirius, the Black fortune in Trust is much smaller, but you still need to know the basics of business. So, the two of you are going to be spending the week with me at my office, and also being taken on tours of some of my businesses, magical and Muggle. It's just a taste, but it will let you know the breadth of what you both will have to deal with some day."

Seeing the looks on the boys' faces, Harold went on, "Having such fortunes is a great responsibility. To be blunt, Sirius, your great-grandfather and grandfather were spendthrifts and wastrels. Your father has proven to be a far too-conservative steward. Your family fortune should have been a close second to the Malfoys' in the section of society your family closely associates with. It is instead fourth, and that only because of the money your mother brought back to the main Black line. When Grimmauld Place was built by your great-great grandfather, and by that I mean the entire area, it was a solid upper-middle class neighborhood. The next three stewards have let the area decline into a rather poor neighborhood, with a resulting loss of income."

He glared at them. "Money does not make itself. Even my father, as he made his way up the ladder of the MLES, spent most of his free time overseeing the Trust. It didn't grow very much under such an arrangement, but it more than held its own, which was satisfactory since he was doing other

important work. What important work did your immediate ancestors, do, Sirius?"

"Nothing," Sirius said bitterly. "They just sat back and complained about Muggles and their losses."

"Exactly. Your father realizes that he won't change, but that you could reverse the decline of your family fortunes, with some tutoring from me. You are both going to get it over the next few years." Harold turned to Harry. "You expressed an interest in learning more about banking and the goblins. You'll be spending the week with them." He held out the floo powder. James, Sirius, and he flooded on to Harold's offices. Harry then flooded through to Gringotts.

Of course Harry was not going to be spending the week learning about goblins and banking, although he had some very interesting conversations with various goblins. Instead, he spent most of his time in the first vaults, learning even more secrets of Merlin, the Triad, and the Founders.

Harry was scheduled to go to the Evans' for tea on Thursday, July 20. He therefore emerged from Merlin's vault early that day for lunch. The eyes of the goblin guards all went wide when they saw that Harry was carrying an object out of the vault, the first object to leave Merlin's vault for over 1100 years.

Harry was carrying a six foot magical staff. It was one of three staves of Merlin which were stored in the vault. This one held 13 different magical cores, which all worked together. One of these was a feather from Fawkes. Voldemort's wand could not work against it, but because of the other 12 cores, it could work against that wand.

"I am the Heir of Merlin," Harry declared. "I say declare this to you, because of the reverence Merlin had for your people, because of the veneration you have for Merlin, and because of the deep respect I have for you." The large roughly-cut diamond sparkled with power, and the staff disappeared. "Never doubt that it is with me," Harry said. And with that, he went off to the carts, so he could go back to the Leaky Cauldron to grab his trunk.

Harry wandlessly shrunk and lightened the trunk and stuck it in his pocket, and went off to the Underground. He would ride to a point some six miles from the Evans' house, which was in Surrey. He would then need to take a taxi. Mr. Evans would be driving him back to the Leaky Cauldron after Church on Sunday.

"One freak, in addition to you, in the summer isn't enough? You have to bring along another one?" Petunia sneered.

"I believe five of our eight great-grand parents were magical, and eleven of our sixteen great-great grandparents were," Lily retorted. "In this family, what does that make you?"

"They became normal," Petunia argued back. "You're the throw- back."

"I think you should keep that mouth of yours quiet while Harry is here," Lily warned.

"Why? Do you think a scrawny, undeveloped witch like you already has a boy friend?" Petunia teased.

"If I look like you when I'm sixteen, then you can call me scrawny and undeveloped," Lily retorted.

Petunia's face went red, and she was about to strike her sister when Rose intervened by coming to the doorway of their room and saying, "Stop it, the pair of you! Petunia, one more word, one more insult, and you'll be grounded all next week. Do you understand?"

Petunia sulked.

"I asked you a question!"

"Yes, mother," Petunia answered through clenched teeth.

"If you persist in acting like a small child, I shall sit you in the corner, and you won't be going out with Verne tonight."

"Vernon, mother," Petunia corrected, a hint of desperation in her voice.

"Sorry, Vernon. Now, the two of you behave!" Rose stalked from the room.

"Vernon? A new one?"

"He attends Smeltings," Petunia said in a superior tone.

"Those bully boys? You mean you've already slept through all the locals to the point they all know about you?"

"You keep your mouth shut about that!"

Lily sneered at her sister and softly hissed, "Which would shock Vernon more? Learning that you're from a magical family or that you've been earning your pin money giving blowjobs for a pound a suck for the last three years? Or is that why he's interested?" Petunia was wild with rage, but didn't dare actually hit her sister since their mother was still nearby.

"If you're polite to my friends, not nice but polite, I won't tell Vernon, and you can pay me five percent instead of ten percent of your suck money."

Petunia reigned in her anger. "I can do polite," she managed to say. "But they had better be polite as well."

"Agreed. Deal?" Lily asked, putting out her hand.

Petunia grimaced but shook Lily's hand. A soft glow showed that their previous deal had been modified.

Harry was not thrilled by the idea of being in the same house as Petunia, but was very interested in meeting his original maternal grandparents. Harry had at least seen photos of John and Rose Evans at the Dursleys', although the images were either just of the two of them or had Lily cut out of the photos. For some reason, they had all been black and white.

Rose was between her daughters in looks, although she had the same deep green eyes as Lily. John had receding light red hair, and the same hazel eyes as Petunia. The surprise was Petunia, who had the same hair color as her mother. Harry had never known she dyed it to be less noticeable, but he

decided that he shouldn't have been surprised.

Harry politely sipped his tea and ate one fairy cake, which Rose Evans had baked fresh that morning. He answered the questions the Evans' had about the magical world as best he could, downplaying anything too 'odd', mostly for Petunia's benefit.

It was odd seeing the Evans' meeting Vernon Dursley for the first time. Vernon was 17, and unlike his later self he was a very fit individual, if very husky. It turned out that Vernon competed in field events at Smeltings (shot put and hammer throw) as well as Rugby and boxing. Harry was a bit impressed despite himself.

Vernon had preened a bit in Harry's slight admiration, and it was difficult to see where the nasty Vernon he had known came from in this polite if slightly self-centered, muscled young man. Harry had easily seen the sour, vinegar-spirited, neighborhood old cat in the 16-year-old Petunia. Harry decided that Petunia had been worse for Vernon than Vernon had been for her. He had always thought it had been the other way around.

Vernon was already thinking about University, where he would major in mechanical engineering. Harry knew that in the last time stream, Vernon left with his degree in 1977 and immediately landed a job at Grunnings, where his job combined consulting and sales. His parents died in 1977 and 1979, and he had used his small inheritance for the down payment on the house on Privet Drive, marrying Petunia in June of 1979, several months after Harry's own parents had in fact married in the previous time stream.

"Nice kid, that friend of your sister's," Vernon said as he and Petunia left to go to the cinema.

"He's not as bad as I expected," Petunia allowed.

"Dinner, movie, and then a little cuddle on a back lane?" Vernon asked.

"Vernon! Not on the first date!" Petunia exclaimed. She had made that mistake with the local boys, and had gotten a reputation. It had earned her a fair amount of money, but she was determined to change that image. She would be proper and normal for the rest of her life, if she had anything to say about it, at least when it mattered.

"I have to admit, I'm surprised at how unsurprised you are about the Muggle world," Lily said to Harry Saturday as they walked home from the cinema. Harry shrugged off the compliment, but she had noticed that he had not been impressed or surprised by television, the movies, or the electric appliances. From what she had overheard in the common room, she had thought Harry would be amazed.

"Some magical people live in total ignorance of Muggle life," Harry agreed. "Most of the rest of us live near it and just don't pay attention to it. Take James and Sirius. James has played with the boys in the village our age for years. We've been to the village dozens of times. We've been to Muggle London a few times. Sirius lives in the middle of residential outer London. Yet both were taken by those silly metal toys in that toy shop near the Leaky Cauldron and felt lost inside Harrod's." Harry shrugged again. "They don't pay attention." Harry remembered Mister Weasley's fascination for plugs and batteries, and Mrs. Weasley's misunderstanding of stamps. "I bet most of us who live purely magical lives couldn't make a phone call."

"And they seem to think it's good," Lily said, shaking her head.

"If the magical world was revealed, what do you think would happen to us?" Harry asked. "Would we be accepted, or feared? I think we'd be feared and used. The Muggle world is just as bigoted and prejudicial as the magical, and I think any tiny minority like us would be taken advantage of. If you can accept that as possible, if not probable, you can understand the magical mindset."

"In what way?"

"Did your grandparents tell your parents about their magical ancestors?"

"No, not really," Lily admitted. "Not until I started showing that I had some magic."

"So, every time a Muggle-born or someone from a family with some distant Squibs in it is brought into the secret of the magical world, so are their parents and siblings. Every time someone magical marries a Muggle, another Muggle learns about us. The chances are good that not all their children will be magical -- more non-magical people in on the secret. We live with an underlying fear that we will be discovered and have to go deeper underground to escape persecution. That, and the natural arrogance of any group of self-contained people, explain most Pure-blood attitudes."

"Just most?"

"If Muggles knew that most magical beasts were real, how many would want to go hunting for dragons, griffins, or even unicorns?" Harry asked, and Lily had to admit to herself that was likely true. "How long would it take Muggle science to track magic, at least large-scale use of magic, and if needs be send a missile in to attack some place like Hogwarts? How long before our rather primitive economy would be overwhelmed by the Muggle, and we'd be selling our magic for food and shelter? I don't agree with ninety-nine percent of the Pure-blood agenda, but I do understand the underlying fears that help cause it. I also know that we can never control the Muggle world." Harry smiled. "If we could, we would have long ago, before Muggle technology became so powerful."

"So, you don't think much of our chances?"

"Our chances for what? Improving the magical world? I do think we can do that. The League is a good first step, if we can keep it going once we all leave Hogwarts. For ever integrating the magical and Muggle worlds? At least in our lifetimes? Or even our grandchildren's? No, not unless we ever gain more numbers. We're only about one out of every twenty-seven hundred people. We'd have to be at least one out of every hundred to stand a chance."

"That actually makes some sense," Lily had to say. These were difficult concepts, but Lily was very bright for her age. "Still, I don't think I could give up magic."

"I couldn't either," Harry agreed, "even if I were the richest Muggle in the world instead."

"Harry," Lily asked, "may I ask you something?"

"I would imagine so," Harry teased.

"I'm serious," Lily said. "You seem to know these kind of things, and you'll give me an honest answer. Are we superior to Muggles?"

Harry sighed. "Yes, in some ways," he answered. "We live longer, we're more resistant to injury

and disease, we tend to have slightly better memories." He shrugged. "That's about it."

"Really?"

"Really," Harry said. "If your sister takes care of her self and is lucky, she could easily make it to her early eighties, and maybe into her nineties. Ellen's sister should make it until her nineties. You and Ellen should easily make a hundred and forty or more, and at seventy you'll probably still look like you're forty."

"You're kidding!"

Harry shook his head. "The Headmaster is a hundred and twenty- seven. You saw those people who came to examine the Fifth and Seventh years?" Lily nodded. "Three of those examiners taught Dumbledore, and another one of them had already quit the Hogwarts' staff and become part of the first examinations board the year before Dumbledore showed up at Hogwarts, which is when the N.E.W.T.s were started."

"Wow."

"Merlin was two-hundred and fifty three when he was killed, and there are probably a half dozen magical people alive just over the age of two hundred. Some legendary magical users made it to three hundred, but those could just be legends, or maybe they somehow artificially extended their lives."

"But that's not enough to say we should rule the Muggles, is it?"

"I wouldn't think so," Harry agreed. "Besides, if we had always ruled the world, the world would probably still be neolithic farmers and hunters-and-gatherers. We seem to always take the easy way out, and get most of our new ideas from Muggles." Harry smiled. "Of course, the environment would be a lot healthier if there were less than fifty million people and we were all neolithic farmers and hunter-gatherers."

"Much less pollution," Lily agreed. She thought a moment. "Is that why the Pure-Bloods are afraid of Muggles?"

"Almost every Seventh year at Hogwarts could throw up a shield that will stop a bullet, given sufficient warning," Harry answered. "Not one wizard out of a hundred can throw up a shield that will stop twenty bullets fired at it in less than a minutes. Not one wizard in a thousand can contain the power of a simple hand grenade, and the Muggles have much more powerful ways of killing that those. The Communists used Muggle-born infiltrators to wipe out large chunks of the old Magical communities in Central and Eastern Europe, not to mention in China, Indochina, and North Korea. All those Muggle-raised magical users did was point out where the magical communities were. They were wiped out, often in pitched battles, by the Communist Muggles. That tells us right there that the Muggle world can't just be trusted."

"My goodness," Lily said, shocked. "It's not simple, is it, Harry?"

"No," Harry had to agree, "it's not."

Chapter XV

Sunday, July 23, 1972

"So, was Harry as bad as you thought he would be?" Lily asked Petunia.

"Actually, no," Petunia admitted. "Now you tell me, are he and your friend Ellen typical? I mean, would the others fit in as well?"

"No," Lily admitted. "Some could fit in easily enough, while many could but are too lazy to try. Some others are just plain too weird to pass in either the Muggle or magical worlds without being noticed, and some just seem to hate everything about the 'regular' world, just like you seem to want to hate everything magical. Most probably fall in between."

"Well, I hope you can at least keep the weirdos away," Petunia said, stomping off to earn some pocket money. She wanted to look nice for Vernon on their next date.

Lily watched and wished Petunia would be more open to the magical world.

It couldn't happen of course. Petunia would always be jealous of Lily, the prettier, smarter, younger sister, who not only had all those advantages but was magical as well. Still, this Petunia would not grow to loath magic quite so much -- this time she wouldn't be terrified the hearing of the murders of many of Lily's friends (such as Ellen and her family), especially those with Muggle backgrounds. Their own parents would not die under mysterious circumstances, nor would James and Sirius terrorize her and Vernon nearly so much this time around (thanks to Harry).

Nor would she be forced to raise a magical child. She would have two more children instead. When a magical grandchild arrived in 2010, Petunia was far from thrilled, but she accepted the fact, much as she did a later grandchild (Dudley's only child) with Down's Syndrome.

Vernon would be more accepting of magic as well. He always liked Harry and Ellen, although he never wanted anything to do with James or his friend Sirius.

Friday, July 28, 1972

"Welcome to our home," Bonnie Jean greeted Harry when he almost fell out of the floo. (Harry was determined to master floo travel in this life.)

"Hi, Harry!" Ellen said. She and her twin Elaine quickly brushed Harry off, to his slight embarrassment, and then Ellen gave him a hug, which he returned. "This is my mum, and this is Elaine."

"Good morning," Harry said. The twins were indeed identical in face and form. The only difference between them most people could see was their hair (Harry could see the difference in their auras). Both had thick, light brown hair. Ellen's was naturally wavy and formed curls on the side, and she had let it grow since Christmas (only because Harry had said how much he liked long hair, although Ellen had not admitted that even to herself). It was now nearly reaching the middle of her back and

had blonde and red highlights.

Elaine's, to put it simply, was bushier and only had blonde highlights. Harry wondered, seeing that Mrs. McGregor's hair was similar, if Ellen's was affected by her magic.

All three were beaming at Harry, because he had taken Ellen's hand in his without even noticing.

The next morning, Ian McGregor shook his wife awake at 6:20.

"What?" she growled.

"Come here and look," Ian said softly.

Bonnie Jean rolled her eyes and then rolled out of bed. She hoped he wasn't going to try to show her fairies or some other thing that only the magical could see.

It was Harry.

Bonnie Jean was glad they had a small enclosed back garden and that there were plenty of trees to hide what was going on. Harry was doing a routine that looked part gymnastic and part martial arts. She blinked as he started doing pushups while in a handstand. "Is that normal for a wizard?" Bonnie Jean asked.

"That's not normal for anyone," Ian said, "except maybe gymnasts and maybe a few commandos."

"The boy is driven," Bonnie Jean said. "I wonder. . . ." She stopped, as Harry apparently levitated a few small sticks and then destroyed them before they hit the ground -- all wandlessly.

"I've never even seen an auror do that," Ian said as Harry dropped and started one hundred sit-ups to end part of his routine.

"What does it mean?" Bonnie Jean said in a worried voice.

"Sometimes things work out in the magical world in ways that the Muggle world can no longer accept," Ian said.

"Meaning?"

"Meaning, there is a great evil in this part of the magical world. It looks like Magic has provided its opposite."

"Are you sure?" Bonnie Jean asked.

"If that's how and why Harry has this much power? No," Ian said. "Now, you tell me. Is that boy evil?"

Bonnie Jean thought back to the night before, of Harry smiling as he helped wipe the dishes; as Harry lost four out of five games of backgammon to her daughters, obviously caring more about their companionship than if he won or lost the game. "If he is, it's a kind of evil I never heard of before," she admitted.

"Mummy, don't be frightened of Harry."

The pair turned around and saw Ellen.

"You've seen him doing this sort of thing before, haven't you?" Ian asked as she came in, barefoot and only wearing her summer nightgown. She had been watching Harry from her bedroom and had heard her parents' voices, even if she did not know what they had been saying until their last exchange.

Ellen nodded. "Mrs. Potter said that the curse that made him lose most of his memories, that nearly killed him, did something to his magical core. He knows he's very powerful, and he hates it."

"Does he really?" Ian asked.

Ellen nodded. "He'd rather be a regular wizard, well, a regular wizard who is fantastic on a broom, anyway. She said there's a saying, 'with great power comes great responsibility'. Harry works so hard because he wants to be worthy of his power." She paused, thoughtful.

"What is it?" Bonnie Jean asked.

"I just realized something," she said.

"What?"

"You know that Meritocracy League I wrote you about?" Her parents nodded. "That was really just an idea some of the Ravenclaws were playing with. It was Harry who went over and became the first non-Ravenclaw to join and who encouraged the whole thing to grow into a real organization."

"And you just noticed that?" Ian asked.

"At the time, it just looked so. . . ."

"Spontaneous? Genuine? Natural?"

"Exactly," Ellen agreed. "It was Harry who encouraged the first Slytherins who joined. And even if we suspect that he has been behind some of the biggest pranks, he also keeps an eye on his brother and Black. They were pretty nasty at times, but he really got them to be at least a bit less nasty and bullying."

"A prankster?" Ian asked. "Well, he's not a saint, I see."

"Mrs. Potter called him a paladin," Ellen said.

"I think she might be right," Bonnie Jean said. "Well, we're having a big cook-out for dinner. What do you have planned for your paladin between now and then?"

"I thought I'd take him around to the used record store, and maybe those shops on Degas Street," Ellen suggested. These were mostly used books stores, curio shops, and used furniture shops, plus a few pawn shops.

"If you don't cross past McGrundy's," Ian warned. The shops further away from that large pawn

shop led towards a rougher neighborhood.

"Do you think Harry would really like that?" Bonnie Jean asked.

"It's odd," Ellen agreed. "I mean, his family is really rich, and he must have a nice allowance. He likes spending money on other people, but doesn't like spending money on himself. I'm hoping he might if it's used things."

"And what about your sister?"

Ellen shrugged. "I doubt she gets past the record shop."

Elaine was indeed happy to tag along, and she did not go past the huge used/discontinued record shop. Assured that she would be happy in there for hours, Harry suggested they take a quick look at the other stores. They skipped the large pawn shop that marked the end of their route, along with the cheap jewelry store and the various used clothes and furniture stores. That still left them with two used bookstores and six curio shops.

At first Ellen had been impressed by how much Harry was buying, until she reached for a book he had picked up and he had blocked her hand. "Sorry, but the book is cursed," Harry whispered. "If a woman touches it, she will be compelled to keep touching it, and the more she touches it the less fertile she'll be."

"Harry, are all these things magical?"

Harry nodded. "And dark for the most part. There's even a wand core in the walking stick. That book in Greek is filled with necromantic rituals. Wearing those amber earrings would mean you would get drunk more quickly. Should I go on?"

Ellen's face fell as they exited the store. "I wanted you to have fun."

Harry stood Ellen in front of him, and packed all the dark material, plus the walking stick, into a small pocket of his magical rucksack. "Well, I've cleaned this little corner of Greater London of its Dark items, which as certainly been interesting. And I've been with you, which is fun. What can I do to have fun that you'll approve of, before I buy you and your sister fish-and-chips?"

"You're my guest, I'll buy the fish-and-chips," Ellen stated. "Let's go get Elaine. They know her really well at that store, so she can leave the stuff and buy it, and more, later. After lunch, I really wish you would buy yourself some records."

"Sounds like a good plan," Harry said. "Is there anything else?"

"Would you hold my hand again?" Ellen asked, both shy and hopeful.

"Eew, girl cooties," Harry teased, taking her hand and kissing her cheek.

Ellen blushed, and they went to get her sister.

Harry turned most of the dark material over to his father, although he kept the walking stick and a few items he thought might be useful. Harold Potter turned it all over to the Ministry. A later investigation revealed a rather dark young witch lived in the area and liked putting dark enchantments on items and selling them around London.

When Sirius and Remus came for their next visit on August 4, Remus had heard about Harold's plans to teach Sirius and James about business, and shyly asked if there was anything he could do. Harold therefore took all four boys with him each morning the next week.

Watching Harold deal with his messages was somewhat boring, but because he shared some of their contents, they could at least see why it was necessary. Some of it dealt with the Wizengamot, and Harry found that even more interesting.

From there, Harold took the boys to different businesses and explained how they worked. Harry, who had overseen the Potter Trust, was impressed at how well Harold knew the businesses, especially the Muggle ones.

James and Sirius teased Harry after they had visited one of the Muggle porcelain factories, where Harry had picked up an old-fashioned chocolate service in the factory store. Granted, the main color was a very delicate shade of light pink, but it did match the paint in Ellen and Elaine's room.

On the first weekend and the three nice afternoons of the week, the boys were in the air. The other two afternoons and most of the second Saturday, when it was raining, the boys played an elaborate version of hide-and-seek.

James, Harry, and Sirius didn't have as much fun the second Monday and Tuesday of Sirius' visit. Mary Potter kept them indoors much of the day and was tutoring them on geography, both physical, and political (Muggle and Magical), as well as deportment and dancing.

"All three of you are of the elite," she reproved them as they grew restless. "That does not make you leaders. Still, you must be able to move within the power-structure of our world as easily as you can walk through the Muggle world unnoticed. If you can do both, you will have a much easier and pleasant life."

Wednesday, Sirius and James were allowed to go with Harold. Harry was held back, although he would be going to commune with the Gringotts vaults on Thursday and Friday. The boys would still have to dance each night.

"You're up to something," Harry teased as they sat down.

"I am," Mary answered. "Tell me, what are your feelings for Ellen?"

"It's rather confusing," Harry admitted. "I like her. I like being with her. Sometimes, with James, Sirius, and Remus, it feels like I'm playing a game. It's almost like when I was minding Hermione and Luna's oldest children, who towards the end were ten and eleven respectively. Sometimes, especially with Remus, I forget I'm playing the role of a twelve year old. Lily mothers the pair of us so much, it's easy to fall into the role with her. But with Ellen, it's as if I am in large part a twelve year old. A very confident and powerful twelve year old, but not someone who's thirty-three."

"So, no improper thoughts about Miss McGregor?"

"Even though I certainly remember everything, it feels as if my libido matches my body," Harry

said. "Do you want me to be really frank?" Mary nodded. "When I fantasize about making love with Ellen, it's based on what I think she'll look like around the age of twenty. Certainly NOT her at twelve."

"So you do fantasize about girls, or just her in particular?"

"Trust me, by last Christmas, I had to teach Sirius and then the other two silencing and cleaning charms," Harry retorted, "and yes. And the other women in my dreams haven't been born yet." "And why Ellen at twenty?"

"Ellen and her family were massacred at some point, I don't exactly remember when. Elaine was the only survivor, because she was staying someplace over night. Elaine's oldest daughter was magical and a few years behind me. She missed her family very much, and had all sorts of scrapbooks. She wasn't taking Muggle Studies, of course, but would take the books to show the classes. One day, some Slytherins hexed them, mostly hitting them with water charms. To make a long story shorter, a bunch of us spent the weekend restoring them, and I happened to see a picture of her mother when she won a beauty contest when she was twenty or so. She ended up as the runner-up to Miss England in the Miss Universe contest." Harry smiled. "I remember Hermione remarking that it was a tribute to Elaine that she got so far, as those contests rarely select shorter, very busty women."

Harry grinned. "Aren't you sorry you asked?"

"A little," Mary admitted. "What would you think of a fully-arranged marriage with her?"

Harry was stunned. Finally, he said, "What?"

"You do know the components of a fully arranged marriage, don't you? No? Well, it would first entail what's miscalled a compatibility spell. Actually, what it measures is if you two really like each other. If you do, then the betrothal spells are cast. You will grow together, you will love each other. You may fall in lust with another now and again, but you will still love each other." She gave Harry a twisted grin. "If you don't start out liking each other, you're as likely to end up hating the other person as loving them."

"Why?" Harry managed to ask.

"Several reasons," Mary answered. "First, I think having her in your life will give you something to live for other than your mission. You're too driven, Harry. Also, there are loyalty oaths built into the full betrothal and you can add more. You'll be able to safely share your secret with her. That will help you deal with the pressures you're under. Who knows, maybe you'll sleep more than a few hours every night. And, while her family isn't nearly important enough to marry ours, they are very good people. The old bloodlines can stand to be renewed."

"Now, from the McGregors point of view, they know you're going to be rich, and from some discrete inquiries I gather they saw you training and have a good idea that you're going to be very powerful. They also like you, even if they are a bit scared of your power. They also know Ellen is crazy for you. All parents of adorable girls who are going up to be drop-dead sexy are worried about what their little girls are going to be up to with nasty little boys. Under the betrothal spells, you will not be having sex until the wedding night."

Harry smirked. "That depends on how you define 'sex'," he said.

"If you know ways around some of the supposed restrictions, I suggest you keep them to your self,"

Mary scolded. "If you actually have intercourse before the wedding and final magical bonding, it will severely injure your magic."

"That I do know," Harry agreed.

"So?"

"So?" Harry asked. "so would I be willing to become betrothed to Ellen? Yes. When?"

"Tomorrow."

"What!"

"Well, actually, we'll do the compatibility spell tomorrow night, if Ellen agrees this afternoon. We'll do the betrothal Friday. On Saturday, there is a family get-together of Bonnie Jean's most prominent magical family, the Crouches, and their relatives. It will be announced there."

"Is this why we are learning to dance?" Harry asked.

"Yes," Mary said. "Sirius will be escorting Elaine, and James will be escorting Lily."

Harry looked at her.

"As Ellen's best friend, she may be present at a family announcement," Mary defended herself. "The same with your brother, and a guest under housework."

"Yeah, right," Harry said, amused at his mother's match making.

A very elderly witch conducted the compatibility ritual the next morning. She pronounced the couple was as compatibly as they could be. Everyone then left the couple alone for half an hour.

"I can't believe you agreed to this," Ellen said, her voice filled with emotions.

Harry was glad she was not crying. He'd hate to think he would be marrying a Cho. He took Ellen in his arms and said, "I'm glad you agreed. I think I need you in my life."

Ellen hugged him back, smiling.

Chapter XVI

Friday, August 18, 1972

"I wish you'd let me go shopping with you," Mary growled.

"Mother," Harry warned.

"What kind of betrothal jewelry can you buy for two Galleons?"

Harry glanced around and saw that they were not likely to be overheard. "Didn't you know Grandfather left me a large keg of gem stones?" he whispered.

"A keg? No. He said 'a few'," Mary replied.

"Am I a powerful wizard?"

"I take it that is a rhetorical question," Mary reproved.

"Do you think I'm powerful enough to reshape two Galleons into a necklace, a ring, and a pair of earrings, all set with blue diamonds?"

"With you, that might be close to a rhetorical question," Mary had to admit.

"Thank you for arranging this," Harry told her. "You were right. I do need this in my life. Something, someone, pure and innocent."

"Try and keep her that way, at least for a while," Mary said drily.

"She's twelve," Harry answered, offended.

"In a little over a month, she'll be thirteen," Mary answered.

"Then stop worrying for at least, say, thirteen months, okay?"

"Very well," Mary answered.

The betrothal was a simple, mostly family affair. The four Potters, plus Sirius and Remus, as well as the five McGregors, plus Lily. Dumbledore was present, as there had to be a Wizengamot member present who was not an immediate member of either family. There was also a middle-aged witch who would be conducting the actual ceremony and a young clerk from the Ministry.

Harry and Ellen were dressed in nothing but plain white robes. They would have to open these in front of the witch to she could place some of the spells on them. They first had to announce that they were making these pledges of their own free will, and then they pledged their lives to each other.

While Harry allowed most of the spells to affect them, he did alter those which could in any way

injure them or their magic should they become actual lovers in the most technical sense. Harry knew that he wouldn't 'jump the gun', as Ellen would still get pregnant after that first time, no matter what precautions they took, but that would be the only penalty.

The pair closed their robes and Harry placed the diamond ring he had made on Ellen's finger. It looked a little clunky on her slim finger, but Harry would use the surplus to easily expand the ring over the years as needed. He then went further than he had to by hooking the gold chain with its large diamond and six smaller diamonds around her neck, and handing her the earrings to insert herself.

With that, the ceremony was over, so Harry gathered Ellen in his arms and they apparently portkeyed away. Only Dumbledore saw that Harry had instead double-apparated them, leaving behind the correct sound effects and masking what he had done from the Ministry apparation and under-age sensors.

New fully-betrothed couples had to spend the week together. With all the spells on a betrothed couple newly in place, premature sex could lead to death. This was a test, and why most families opting for the most-traditional of arranged marriages often had the ceremonies before either participant was eleven.

"Where are we?" Ellen asked.

"It was a games keeper cottage," Harry answered, "that my grandfather expanded into a small guest house. It's about two miles into the woods from home." Harry had been uncertain about this, as this was where his parents had died in the other time line, but now he smiled. "Actually, I should say that my parents' house is about two miles from our home."

"Our home?"

Harry gestured. "We have a life-lease on this. This is our home, Ellen."

"It's rather empty," she said. There was nothing in the room but the fireplace.

"Right now, it's only set up with the kitchen, dining room, and one guest bedroom and the nearest bath," Harry said.

"Why?" Ellen asked.

"Why, so we can decorate it over the next few years the way we want it," Harry answered. Ellen smiled, and Harry put his arm around her.

"How many rooms does it have? I mean, Potter Manor has ninety- six and your mother calls it a house. What about a cottage?" Ellen teased. "Fifty?"

"Nine bedrooms, a master suite of three rooms and a bath, five other baths, a library, two parlors, two dining rooms, and a kitchen," Harry answered, "not counting the attic, an enclosed front porch, the wine cellar, the storage cellar, the elf loft over the kitchen, the pantries. . . ."

"Right, just a cozy little cottage," Ellen said nervously.

"There's nothing to be nervous about," Harry said. "That event is at least seventy months plus away."

"How do you figure that?"

"The soonest we should get married is the end of June, 1978," Harry reminded her. "A little more than seventy months away." He smiled. "We get to really know each other, and love each other, like no one else on Earth who hasn't undergone this Bonding can. And then we can decide on having a family."

"I think we get one nine months after we marry," Ellen pointed out.

"True, but we can decide where to go from there."

"I hope I'll want lots," Ellen said.

"A some-what fake Seer did once say I'd have twelve children," Harry teased her.

"Then I hope we have lots of twins!"

Harry smiled and called, "Dobby!"

Pop! "Master Harry?"

"Dobby? I know you've met, but this is my betrothed, Ellen. You will obey her in all things, save my commands. Ellen, this is my friend and servant, Dobby."

"Dobby is pleased to serve Mistress Ellen," Dobby said, bowing.

"And I am happy you are going to be with us," Ellen answered.

"Dobby, are our regular clothes upstairs?"

"Yes, Master Harry. All clothes there."

"Why don't you get dressed. Dobby, could you show Ellen to the room we're using, and then bring me a pair of boxers, a vest, socks, and my trainers?"

"Yes, Master," Dobby said.

"Come back when you're dressed, and I'll give you the tour. If you have any preferences for dinner, tell Dobby."

The next morning, Ellen stretched in the large bed, smiling very happily. All she and Harry had done was hold each other the night before as they fell asleep, but at her age, cuddling was more than satisfying. Sitting up, Ellen saw that there were clothes laid out for her. She got up and took them into the bathroom with her.

Coming out, Harry was waiting for her at the small table set for breakfast in their room. They didn't have much to say, and so just ate, happy in each other's company. When they were finished, Ellen

asked, "What do we have to do before getting for the party tonight?"

"We need to talk," Harry answered. "Could you get your wand?"

Ellen went over to her dresser and brought the wand over to Harry. He took it, and it glowed for a moment. "I removed the tracking charms. That's one of the ways the Ministry tries to keep an eye on people." That Harry could do that was a real shock. "Now that we are betrothed, I would like to tell you some very important things, but I would need you to swear a privacy oath as well."

"So that I can only talk about things with you?"

"And my parents," Harry agreed. "I'm willing to share my life with you, and it's a lot more complicated than any twelve-year-old's should be."

"Of course I will swear it," Ellen said.

"Actually," Harry said thoughtfully, "there's one other person I should tell. Dobby!"

Dobby popped in. "Master Harry?"

"Could you bring that little foot stool from the red parlor here?"

"Dobby would have to ask Master or Mistress Potter," Dobby said, since he was taking property which did not belong to Harry.

"Go ahead."

Dobby was back with the foot stool in less than four minutes.

"Thank you, Dobby," Harry said. "Please sit down."

"Master Harry?"

"I asked you to sit, Dobby. I have a long story to tell, and I want you as well as Ellen to hear it." Shocked, Dobby sat.

And with that, Harry spent most of the next five hours telling his story. Dobby was upset that he didn't have time to fix a proper lunch, but Harry assured him that sandwiches would be fine, as there would be plenty of food at the Crouchs'.

When the story was finished, Harry sat back and drank some hot tea with honey. Dobby looked at Ellen, and when he saw she wasn't ready to speak, said, "Dobby now understands why he was called to Master Harry, and many of the things Master Harry has said to Dobby. Dobby does not think he would like to be really free, but Dobby is glad that not only does he work for the greatest of wizards, which Dobby already knew, but that he works for the kindest and wisest of wizards as well."

Harry looked embarrassed.

"Master Harry does not really believe Dobby," Dobby said. "Perhaps Mistress Ellen will convince

him. Now Dobby must get your clothes ready for tonight." He disappeared.

Harry looked at Ellen. "It's a lot to believe, even though of course I believe it," she said. "So I died?"

"Yes," Harry said. He had spent a lot of time in one of the many forgotten rooms in Hogwarts, working with a penseive to retrieve the minor memories of the first time line. One thing he had looked for was Natalie talking about her family. "Don't worry, the time line is very different now. If we don't count his time at school, it took Voldemort fifteen years to build the basis of an organization, and then about eight years to begin any sort of even minor attacks. In terms of his British support, he's almost a leader with no followers."

"And outside of Britain?"

"He had a few outside followers, and they are the three known to have escaped. They did have ties to old Grindelwald factions, so it is possible he might tap into them this time. He didn't the first time until 1997."

"It sounds so odd when you say that!"

"How about 2010," Harry teased.

"Even odder," Ellen admitted. "One set of details you left out. Lily is your mother?"

Harry nodded. Ellen breathed a sigh of relief.

"So, what does this mean for us?"

"It means, until Voldemort is killed, I might be disappearing at odd times. You have to not notice if I'm not where I should be."

"Or even give you a false alibi?" Harry colored. "Oh, Harry! Do you think a white lie, given to help my future husband save wizarding Britain, would bother me?"

"I love you," Harry answered. "I don't want anything sordid to ever touch you." Ellen shivered as she felt Harry's raw power, and the love behind it. "My mother wanted us together mostly so I would have someone with me at all times I could share my self with. I also needed someone to fight for, someone pure and wonderful, not something abstract. And that could only be you."

Ellen flushed from embarrassment, but said, "Don't make me more than I am, Harry. I am not perfect."

"No," Harry teased, "you're not. Your left little toe is a bit bent, and you stole the sheet last night."

Ellen scowled and looked at her left foot. "H'mm," she said, "so it is. She lifted it towards Harry. "Can the most powerful wizard alive fix it?" she teased.

Harry knelt and set the foot on his knee. He covered the little toe between his hands and concentrated. A rush, not quite pain but certainly not pleasure, coursed through Ellen's body. She shook her head and looked down. "I was joshing!"

"I know," Harry said. "Just remember, I would do just about anything that isn't immoral for you."

"Then I hope I never ask for anything that even makes you think it might be," Ellen answered.

Harry stood and hugged her. "Let's get ready for your relatives."

Barty Crouch Sr. looked over at the newly betrothed couple, not quite children, as most were, but certainly not adult. He beckoned Bonnie Jean over. "We have not treated your part of the family very well over the years, have we?"

"To be truthful, cousin, while you and your wife have always behaved correctly, the others have been downright rude and nasty," Bonnie Jean answered.

Crouch smiled slightly. "Considering your sharp tongue and sharper brain, that's hardly surprising. You were supposed to be grateful for every crumb of attention the magical parts of the family gave you, and you have always preferred to show them up."

"I think they more than held their own," Bonnie Jean retorted.

"So they have," he agreed. "I would hope things improved at least somewhat after your marriage."

"Ian's background wasn't magical enough for most of them, although if he were from an old family, they would have disapproved of that," Bonnie Jean answered. "And they were just so nice when only one of the twins was magical."

"I can imagine," he answered, amused. "Well, they are all green with envy tonight, my dear."

"Because Ellen is the center of attention?"

"Because the future Mrs. Henry Potter is the center of attention," Barty corrected. "Harold Potter is a powerful figure in magical finance, and he has started to translate that into real political power. The Parkinsons over there, and the Puceys are unused to not being the centers of attention at these get-togethers. I was surprised we could trace no donations to Voldemort from any of them."

"So am I, but I know you tried," Bonnie Jean acknowledged. Her cousin had been one of the few of ancestry and influence in the Ministry to back much of The Order of Founders' agenda, at least where the Death Eaters had been concerned.

"Now Adrian Pucey and Carlotta Parkinson have been trying to trip the young couple up all night. Young Adrian has a temper, and looks about to lose it. Shall we see?" He offered Bonnie Jean an arm.

Bonnie Jean took it, and they moved towards the two couples. Others in the large reception also sensed trouble, and turned or moved to watch. Adrian, a large soon-to-be Seventh year Slytherin beater, was getting red in the face, and was finally heard by any to say (since the crowd had suddenly gone silent), "You do realize your children will be half-bloods? She is, after all, little better than a Mudblood herself."

Carlotta, realizing that nearly everyone had heard that, started to back away. Ellen went pale. Harry glared up at Adrian, who was over a foot taller, and stated just as clearly, "I'd rather any of my children be a bit muddy than heaping piles of pure manure like you, Pussy." Harry knew how much

Pucey's son had loathed being called Pussy, and was betting this one felt much the same.

He did. Adrian went for his wand.

And suddenly, he wasn't there any more.

Ellen looked down. "Oh, look! Someone turned him into a newt!"

Harry shrugged. "He'll get better." He escorted Ellen away, wondering for a moment why neither she, Elaine, nor Lily were laughing, until he remembered that *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* hadn't been made yet.

Barty Crouch restored Adrian, and Adrian's grandmother sent him home early. As Bonnie Jean went over to see to her daughter, Amelia Bones walked over to Barty. "Do you think young Potter did that wandlessly?"

"He must have, but I don't see how it's possible," Barty answered. He looked at the young boy, and realized that here was the future.

At that point, the small orchestra struck up another tune, and many of the couples started dancing.

Tuesday, August 29, 1972

Mary Potter escorted the six 12 year olds to Diagon Alley for the day. She left Harry and Ellen at Madam Malkins', as they needed some dress robes. Barty Crouch Sr. had apparently taken an interest in the couple, and they would be invited to several Ministry social functions not usually open to those under 16.

The Alley was moderately busy, but since the weather had been glorious the previous few days, most of the returning students had already come, unless they or their families were still putting off a visit to the last two days. As the group exited from the main apothecary, they heard screaming up further up the Alley.

Suddenly, the Dark Mark appeared over where the screams had come from.

Voldemort had returned to Britain.

Harry and Ellen had just stepped out from Madam Malkins' when, for only the second time since he had travelled back, pain shot through Harry's scar.

"What is it?" Ellen asked.

"Duck into this little alley," Harry said, pushing Ellen in to where several doors let tenants out of upper stories. "I love you. If you love and trust me, do not move from here," Harry said.

"Alright," Ellen replied, frightened as screams were now starting not far away.

"These are just glamours," Harry said, changing his appearance. And then he disappeared.

Voldemort and twelve foreign Death Eaters appeared in the very heart of Diagon Alley, not too far from the entrance of Gringotts. All thirteen shot off indiscriminate Killing Curses, and then six of the Death Eaters laid down short bursts of the Cruciatus while the other six kept watch.

After a few seconds, the six torturers changed targets and Voldemort launched the Dark Mark into the sky. "You thought you were rid of me! Fools! This is just a reminder that no one can oppose Lord Voldemort! No one can save you! You will all bow to me, sooner or later. Or else you will die!"

Suddenly, deep red smoke shot up into the sky, where a red dragon formed -- the Mark of Merlin, not seen in over 1000 years. The Red Dragon shot through and destroyed the Dark Mark.

The crowd of screaming, cowering figures parted, and a lean wizard of not quite average height appeared. He had wild white hair, and two lightening scars, one over each eye. He wore black trousers, a black shirt, a black cape, and dragon-hide boots, and carried a long staff.

A wave of the staff, and the twelve Death Eaters froze. "Tom Marvolo Riddle, who calls himself Lord Voldemort," the wizard stated, "I, the archdruid of the Order of the Founders, the Heir of all Four Founders, the Heir of Merlin, condemn you and your followers."

"Avada Ked. . . ." Voldemort never finished the spell, for the wizard had muted him -- and the Killing Curse had to be voiced.

The staff waved again, and the twelve Death Eaters screamed back to life, and Voldemort screamed even louder. The Dark Marks burned through their forearms, and the connecting symbol on Voldemort's forearm did as well. Then, their arms started to dissolve, crumbling into ash as the black glow crept up their arms. They were being killed by their own Dark Magic.

Voldemort was the only one who acted quickly, using a cutting curse to sever his own left arm just below the shoulder and then portkeying away. The twelve Death Eaters completely dissolved into ashes.

The 'archdruid' was already gone.

Chapter XVII

That evening after dinner, Harry and Ellen met with his parents. "That was you in the Alley, I presume?" Harold asked.

Harry nodded. "Yes. Since I could confront Voldemort under glamours, I thought it better to do so. If I can destroy him without revealing that it was me who did it, I'll lead a much simpler, happier life." He took Ellen's hand.

Harry frowned as Ellen shivered. "What's wrong?"

"You're not upset?" she asked.

"About what?" Harry asked.

"Well, you only betrothed me to help support you in your fight," she said. "If you end it soon, you were sort of under incorrect assumptions."

"No," Harry said, "we were allowed to be betrothed for that reason. I was eager to betroth you because I love you, and this way, I know we'll always be together."

"Really?"

"Really," Harry assured her, hugging her.

"Even when Voldemort is gone, Harry will still have great power and great responsibility, even if it might not be overwhelming if this monster can seem to be destroyed by someone else," Mary pointed out. Ellen nodded.

"But Voldemort isn't dead, is he, Harry?" Harold asked.

"No, not yet," Harry said. He pointed to his scar. "When he gave this to me back in the original time line, it made a magical connection between us. The scar and the connection came back with me along with my magic and my memories. I've repressed the connection through Occlumency, but his feelings did bleed through twice, including today."

"I've let up on the Occlumency shields to some degree. I can feel that he is in agony, which is how I was able to slip a tracer on him without his noticing it. I should be able to trace the connection and end everything tonight. And I need to do so. He made the Horcruxes to extend his lifetime indefinitely. Had any existed, he could not have been injured as he was today, although he might not realize that yet, but he will, sooner or later. So, if I allow him to recover, he will likely check on two of the Horcruxes, and he will find them gone. He will then make at least one, and then I won't be able to kill him until it's discovered and destroyed."

The three nodded in understanding. "When you will go?" Mary asked.

"Ellen and I will go back to our cottage," Harry said. "I'll leave from there when I feel Voldemort slipping into sleep again."

Mary turned to Ellen. "If you want company while you wait, send Dobby."

"You are welcome to come, Mother Potter," Ellen answered. "However, since I'm not worried, you don't have to."

Harry appeared in the ruins of an old abbey just before midnight. A very feverish Tom 'Voldemort' Riddle lay on a filthy cot near the area his followers had used for cooking. The cot had been used by Muggles once enslaved to do the basic work. His portkey was set for an alcove nearby, and this had been as far as he could stagger, as the adrenaline rush had ended, and the shock of his lost arm of course affected his system. Under the single burning torch, he looked pale and sweaty.

Harry looked at Voldemort. "You can stop faking, Riddle," he said.

Voldemort managed to turn his head as he opened his eyes. "Who are you, boy?"

"I am the entire Order of the Founders," Harry answered. "I am the heir to all Four, plus the Heir of Merlin."

"I knew you were under glamours in the Alley, but I would never have guess you were a child," Voldemort hissed angrily. His hiss turned into a Parseltongue command for Nagini to come and strike.

Merlin's staff appeared in Harry's hand, and a flash of light disintegrated the snake in her hiding place. "Nice try," Harry commented in Parseltongue.

Voldemort tried to activate his other emergency portkey.

"Sorry, anti-portkey wards," Harry said. "Say hello to your victims."

Wizarding Britain awoke to find another missive from the Order of the Founders.

After our Archdruid's battle with Riddle in Diagon Alley, we tracked him down and destroyed him. We left his body outside the building called 'the Shrieking Shack' in Hogsmeade and notified Albus Dumbledore.

One Dark Threat has been destroyed.

Do not count on us to save you again.

You have made the first steps towards making the magical government of Britain and Ireland more open and fair. If you keep on this road, no matter what the trials, your chances of providing good lives for yourselves and your descendants will increase.

We hope you never need hear from us again.

The mystery of the Order of the Founders was never solved, as they were never heard from again, at

least by the public.

The Ministry and old elite were very glad of that, but kept looking over their shoulder. Just in case.

Saturday, June 27, 1998

Hermione Granger and Luna Lovegood were puzzled. They had thought they had known why they had been summoned to meet with Professor Potter the morning of the last Saturday of the school year. After all, Hermione was dating the eldest of the Professor's sons. John James, known to everyone as 'JJ', was a very Gryffindor young man. In same ways, he was more like his Uncle James than his father, although without the arrogant streak that James Potter had sometimes exhibited while at school. He and Hermione had become friends during their First year, as he acted as her guide to wizarding life, and as they grew close, she helped give his life direction, while he tempered her occasional stodginess and bossiness.

Quidditch Captain (Seeker for three years, and since then Keeper) and Seventh Year Boy's Prefect, JJ hoped for a short career as a professional player before going into auror training. Hermione had already been accepted into an apprentice program at the Ministry, which could lead to various research careers. They hoped to become engaged by Christmas.

Although less than 30 minutes younger than JJ, Ronald Herman had been born on New Year's Day 1980, while JJ had been born on New Year's Eve, 1979. Except for slightly different shades of blue eyes (JJ's matched Harry's, while Ron's matched Ellen's), they were identical -- slightly huskier versions of their father and uncle. Ron (only Luna called him Ronald) had become the first Potter Sorted ever into Ravenclaw. Except when playing Quidditch (Beater), he was regarded by most as a rather stolid, even boring scholar. Both of the Potter boys excelled at Defense, but JJ was superior in Charms, while Ron was superior in Transfiguration. Both had vied with Hermione for the position of ranking first in their class over-all. Since Ron also had a magical gift for languages, it looked like his far-superior scores in 'Runes and Languages' might outstrip even Hermione's record scores in Arithmancy.

No one had been more surprised than Luna that Ron had come to her defense when some of the other girls had started picking on her during her First year. Even though she was slightly less-eccentric than her counterpart in the other time-stream, she was still a Seer and just as dreamy as she went through life. Ron had protected her, and the pair now extended that same chivalry to others, as Head Boy and Sixth year girls' prefect.

Both girls had been thrilled when their boyfriends' father had come to Hogwarts to teach Charms for a year, while Professor Flitwick took a sabbatical. Harry Potter was famous. He was the public face of Magi-Watch! Security, and had brought down several gangs and dark practitioners throughout the world over the years. He had also championed the rights of intelligent magical beings, and had helped end the out-right slavery of house elves in Europe (they had long been emancipated elsewhere). He was also known to dedicated readers of Hogwarts: A History as the only person in the last 800 years to have taught more than two subjects at Hogwarts, for he had held sabbatical appointments in Defense, Flying, and Transfiguration as well as Charms. He had also been selected to one of the open seats in the Wizengamot in 1984, the youngest person to take such a seat in over four hundred years. From there, he had broken the news of the islands where slaves

were still held by many of the Darker families, and used the scandal to break their hold over the Ministry.

He had already turned down the position of Minister once, as well as the position of Director of the MLES three times, despite his young age. In short, he was easily the most famous wizard in Britain, if not western Europe, after Dumbledore. Only Ron Weasley and a few others were in awe of him because he had flown for the Chudley Canons, leading them to their only Quidditch finals in over a century. (They had lost, 300-180, but Harry had caught the snitch.)

So meeting with their boyfriends' father along with their boyfriends had not been surprising, if slightly unexpected because of the timing. Nor was the fact that his wife, heavily pregnant with her twelfth and final child (tenth pregnancy), was present a surprise. James and Lily Potter were surprising, however. True, three of their six children were in Hogwarts (Rose was a Sixth year Hufflepuff, James Harold a Third year Gryffindor, Melody a First year), but it was still unexpected. Professor Lupin, the Defense teacher for the last twelve years, was also surprising, even if he was Harry Potter's best friend.

The final person present, a young auror named Nymphadora Tonks, was confusing to everyone but Harry, including her.

They were also all meeting in a room none, save Harry and Ellen, had ever known existed. The Room of Requirement was not even marked on the copies of the Marauder's Map s each twin had.

"Thank you all for showing up," Harry said. The Room had set up loveseats for two, all facing the one Ellen was gratefully sitting on (she was due in less than three weeks) and Harry was standing in front of. After briefly explaining the abilities of the Room of Requirement, Harry went on, "Some of you have noticed some anomalies in me, or abilities I shouldn't have. All of you, except Ron and JJ, are directly concerned in my story. As you two seem determined to cleave to Hermione and Luna, I thought I would include the two of you as well."

"But sir," Tonks protested, a little uncomfortable seated next to Professor Lupin, whom she'd always had a crush on, "we've never even interacted, outside of your being my teacher my First and Sixth years."

"You haven't interacted with me, but I have with you," Harry said. "Ellen knows most of the story, but I did promise James, Lily, and Remus explanations of certain things someday. Today, I explain. This will take all day, so we'll eat here." Harry thought, and note pads and self-inking quills appeared. "Jot down any questions you might have, because if I answer them as I go along, we'll be here through Monday morning."

And with that, Harry told his story. He started with the death of Henry John Potter in May, 1971, and told the story of the alternative time line. That took from 9:16 that morning until nearly 2:45. From then until just after 6:00, he told the story of their time line from his prospective.

After an early dinner, the room changed back to the loveseat configuration. "JJ, Ron, you two don't get to ask questions." JJ scowled, but Ron was still stunned by the earlier revelation that he was named for Ron Weasley, whom he didn't especially like, and Hermione of all people.

"Let me go first," Tonks said. "I probably have the fewest questions."

"Alright," Harry agreed.

She turned to Remus. "You're a werewolf?"

"I was," Remus agreed. "Somehow, Harry modified the curse so that I became a wolf Animagus, the summer between our Second and Third years."

"The ritual only works if the caster has great power, is a mammalian Animagus, and has affection for the werewolf. The werewolf, in turn, has to have affection and great trust in the caster," Harry explained.

Tonks nodded and said, "And I was married to him?" Harry nodded. "Cool," she said, winking at Remus. "We can talk about that, later, if you're interested."

Remus blushed, which made James and JJ laugh.

Tonks looked at Harry. "And you and I were also intimate, and I gave my life to bring all of this about?" Harry nodded again. "I made the right choice," Tonks said, and gestured that she was done.

"Let me go next," Luna suggested. "You and I were also intimate, weren't we. You, you, myself, and Hermione."

Harry wasn't surprised that Luna had somehow known this, even if he hadn't mentioned it. "After Ginny was killed, you and Hermione both took it upon yourselves to bring me out of my depression and anger together." Hermione colored. "I hope that doesn't change how you four feel for each other," Harry went on. "After all, they were different versions of the two of you, and from my perspective, it was nearly forty years ago."

"At least we know why you never teased us about these two, like you have all the other kids about who they date," Ron said.

"Dad said the same thing to both of us," JJ agreed, turning to Hermione. "'You're dating one of the most special girls in the world. Hurt her, and you will regret it'."

"You haven't been threatened properly until Dad does it," Ron agreed.

"You two are special," Harry said. He looked at Hermione.

"I guess I don't have any personal questions," she said. "Should I wait with the more general ones?"

"Really?" Harry asked, surprised. "None?"

Ron sniggered.

"None that you could probably answer," Hermione replied. "And I'm sure we'll all want to know more about the Founders, the Triad Council, Merlin, and the like."

"True," most of the group agreed, while others expressed similar sentiments.

"Okay," Harry said, "we'll come back to Hermione. Remus?"

"I had a few pieces figured out, although I have to admit I'm surprised I was actually right," Remus said. "I figured you were in contact with the Order of Founders, but I never figured you for the entire Order, including the Heir of Merlin who did in Voldemort!"

Harry shrugged.

"I'll just say you played your hand very well," Remus said, "and thank you, on behalf of all werewolves and this former werewolf for bringing the Wolfsbane Potion back in time twenty years, and arranging for subsidized distribution."

"You're welcome," Harry said.

"I'd always wondered why you were so interested in werewolf rights," James admitted. He looked at Remus. "I have to admit, you had me and Sirius fooled. We never suspected." He glared at Harry. "And now I know why you and Remus became Animagi so easily! Over two years before Sirius and me. 'Superior ability and brains' my arse!"

The group laughed, and JJ chided, "Uncle James! And you believed him?"

"Yes, well, your father does have a way with getting his points across and making people believe just about anything he says," James pointed out.

Harry smirked. It faltered when he saw the look James and Lily were giving him.

"I think I'll let Lily deal with the more obvious issue," James said, knowing that Lily had always had a less difficult time dealing with Harry than he had. "I always knew you were bloody noble, but I can't believe that you saved Snivellus and Pettigrew."

"After twenty-seven years, you'd think you and Sirius would have dropped that nickname," Harry complained.

"You used it first!"

"It slipped out by accident! And I never used it to his face, like you two!"

"He's still a greasy git, even if he does wash his hair every once in a while," James declared, "even if he finally did stop snivelling about how Lestrange and Malfoy threatened him."

Harry sighed, knowing he wasn't going to win James over. "Snape is one of the most brilliant potions creators there is, and I'm glad he's the chief potions researcher at Magi-Watch! He's made a fortune for us, and for himself."

"He's still a greasy git."

"No, he's not," Harry insisted. "Greasy, that is."

"So we can at least agree he's a git?" James asked hopefully.

"He's moody, snarky, rude, and at times just plain nasty, and the rest of the time, he's anti-social," Harry agreed. "'Git' sounds about right. As long as you remember he's a very talented one."

"Fair enough," James agreed unhappily. "Whatever happened to Pettigrew?"

"He's a low-level employee of the Department of Magical Transport," Harry said. "He does maintenance work on the floo network."

James shrugged Pettigrew away.

"At least I know why you never liked Petunia," Lily said. "Still, you have at least made an effort."

Harry nodded, but added, "She isn't quite as nasty as she was in the other time stream, and neither is Vernon. Dudley isn't as spoiled or nearly as fat, either. Not to mention they have the two younger kids. They ruined my original childhood, but it looks like Dumbledore didn't do them any favors my dumping me on them, either."

Harry and Lily looked at each other in silence for a few moments. "We're stalling, aren't we?" Lily asked.

Harry nodded.

"That time back in First year, when you were hurt . . . that's why you called me 'Mum' when you woke up, isn't it?"

Harry nodded. "You and James were both always two sets of people. The parents I didn't know, and the two of you. So, every once in a while, the line got a little blurry, especially with you."

"At least it explains why you always have let me mother and pamper you, even more so than Ellen in most ways," Lily said. "I am your mother."

"My Wendy-lady," Harry said with a smile.

"I have to admit, I don't know how to feel," James said. "I mean, the Henry I shared the womb with and lived with for eleven years died twenty-seven years ago, and I never mourned him, and you're my son from an alternate time-stream." James struggled with the ideas for a few moments, has he had all day, but just went on, "Still, at least now I understand a lot more."

"Understanding is a good start," Luna said.

James looked at Harry curiously. "What did you look like?"

"Before I was crippled, which was actually today in the other time-stream, I probably looked like an even skinnier version of how you looked when you were about sixteen, except that I had Lily's eyes." He smiled and added, "You married six months later in this time stream, and none of your children look all that much like I did."

James, Remus, Lily, and Ellen envisioned that for a moment. Harry concentrated, and the room provided a penseive. Harry pulled out a memory and placed it into the bowl.

The others hesitatingly touched it, and were drawn into a static scene. It was the front lawn of Hogwarts, a moment before the actual battle had started. Voldemort, his Death Eaters, dementors, giants, trolls, and inferi had swarmed the grounds. The students, staff, and Order of the Phoenix were drawn up in a defensive position.

Remus and the students recognized nearly all of the students of that alternate date. Hermione noted that she looked a bit fitter in the memory than she was now.

Still, the attention was on the scrawny boy in glasses, his face one of determination, and there was power literally glowing in his green eyes.

"It could have gone so much better," Harry said sadly. "Ginny was determined to be at my side, and Voldemort repossessed her. He used her to almost destroy me. I managed to kill him, and that killed all the Death Eaters, and it also killed Ginny. Ron Weasley never forgave me, and I suppose I still haven't forgiven me, either."

"And who exactly knows, outside of us?" James asked.

"The only people who know most of this are Dumbledore and Mum and Dad," Harry answered. He still didn't know what had happened to Harold and Mary Potter in the original time stream, but they were still going strong. "Oh, Dobby knows as well. The Sorting Hat and the Headmaster and Headmistress portraits know, as do the Vault Guardians and Hogwarts herself," Harry said. "The higher ranking goblins know about my being the Heir to the Vaults, but not about the time travel."

"You haven't told Jean, have you?" (The Potters, being in an arranged marriage, had given into their feelings and formally Bonded during the Easter break their Seventh year. Ellen had been over two months pregnant when she left school, and their eldest child, Jean Lilac, had been born in early January, 1979.) "And you're not going to tell the other kids when they hit seventeen?" Ron asked.

"I wasn't planning on it, any more than I plan to tell your Aunt Holly." This was James' younger sister, born a few minutes before Christmas back in 1971.

"I think you should," JJ said. "If not when they turn seventeen, then when they leave Hogwarts, and you should tell Jean soon." The twins looked at each other. "As for Aunt Holly. . . ."

"She's flighty, but trust-worthy," Ellen said.

"You should, since Mum and Dad know," James pointed out.

"And you really have to tell Sirius, if he ever stays in one place and shows any sign of growing up," Remus said. Harry had always thought that Azkaban had made Sirius a perpetual adolescent, but it turned out that it was merely his nature. When his parents had tried to arrange a marriage between him and Narcissa, he had fled the country, coming back only after Narcissa and Regulus had married in 1982.

"Harry," Luna started, to the surprise of everyone except for Harry and Ron. "What? The term is essentially over and it was only a one-year appointment."

James snorted.

"What?" Luna asked.

"Albus will announce his own and Filius' retirement at the Feast Thursday," Harry said.

"I'll be taking over Charms for Filius," Lily added.

"And Harry will be taking over Hogwarts for Albus," James snickered.

"You . . . you're going to be the Headmaster?" Hermione asked, eyes wide.

Harry grinned and nodded. "Wait for it," Harry and JJ whispered to each other as Hermione gathered steam.

"According to. . . ."

"Hogwarts: A History," Harry, JJ, and Ron chanted together.

"Stop that!" Hermione demanded.

"I know, I'll be the youngest Headmaster in the history of the school," Harry agreed. He turned to Luna. "Still, in private, feel free to call me Harry."

"Thank you, Harry," Luna replied. She looked at him. "This world sounds better than the one you left. If so, that was due to you, and to the sacrifices Professor Lupin and Miss Tonks made."

"And the faith you and Hermione had in me," Harry agreed. "And yes, this is far from being a perfect world. Relations between the various sections of the population can be tense, the Muggles are still a potential danger, and on and on and on. Still, the government is more responsive and slightly more representative, the Ministry has fairer hiring practices, and not only isn't there any current sign of any Dark Lords in Britain, there really aren't any signs of any anywhere. Sooner or later there will be one, but we'll keep hoping it's later."

Luna stood up and walked over to Harry, kissing him on the cheek. "Then thank you, Harry James/Henry John Potter," she said.

THE END